

CONNECTICUT BUILDER



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HOBİ TRENDS 2021

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Best Custom Home 4,000-5,000 sf
Hemingway Construction

Photo by Carl Vernlund Photography



A Brandt breakfast table which also serves as a kid-friendly flex space by adding a glass top to the wood surface for easy clean-up of sticky fingers! The nylon area rug is not only beautiful and cozy, but durable too. Beth Krupa Interiors.

2021 HOBI Trends

Covid changed everything in the Connecticut housing industry!

In March, there was the specter of a construction shut down, which was compounded by anxious clients, who cancelled or delayed contracts, and left builders fearful of bankruptcy.

While New York shut down, the HBRA of CT came to the rescue, successfully convincing Governor Lamont that our construction industry should be considered “essential” and open for business.

An exodus from Manhattan and other densely populated areas began. Sprawling homes with multiple rooms and living space,

and an acre or two of land, even in remote Litchfield County, became an asset rather than a liability, and the long suffering Connecticut suburbs became the beneficiaries of a vulture rental and for sale market.

Between March 15 and April 28, moves from New York to Connecticut increased 74 percent over the same period in 2019. New York City dollars went a lot further in Connecticut, and these renters and buyers didn’t quibble about price. We catapulted from an anemic market, known best for its dwindling population, to one of the hottest housing markets in the country!

In 2021, this historic housing market continues to be on fire. Money is cheap, and buyers and renters are plentiful. The biggest challenges continue to be low inventory, supply chain disruptions and escalating material costs. (See “Housing Industry Supply Demand Imbalance” by Calcagni’s Antonio Liguori and “Seven Tactics to Manage Supply Chain Disruptions” in this issue.)

Home Design Trends

In home design, the modern farmhouse style, metal roofs and black framed windows remain popular. Arched trusses decorate soaring ceilings and stained bullnose molding adds detail to Chantilly white walls.

However, a number of this year’s trends evolved from how the pandemic has changed our lives and the way we live and work.



Beth Krupa, Allied ASID, GREEN AP, who won a Special Focus HOBI for a stunning mudroom in Greenwich, commented on pandemic related design trends.

“Clients have definitely returned to the two lost luxuries of time and togetherness – they are really enjoying spending time in their home more than ever, and want it to be a place that showcases who they are as a unique family or individuals. They have been looking for more defined work / study areas, and many times areas that have dual purposes like a formal dining room that can now serve as a flex work area. We also have been seeing many more luxury gyms and spas being added to the home as people are preferring the exercise at home options.”

“I do pay attention to trends and spend about 10-15% of my work-life traveling to design shows that last anywhere from 3-5 days each, but I don’t design based on trend. Trends are fleeting and home design at our level of design is truly an investment and should stand the test of time, really be ageless and timeless.”

– Beth Krupa, BKI Studio



Modern office with a perfectly placed red chaise lounge with a view. A restorative space for taking a much-needed break from the computer or a place to catch up on a good book (and maybe a nap!). Beth Krupa Interiors.



The Organic Luxe Trend

Stephanie Rapp, who won a HOBI this year for Outstanding Home Design, weighed in with her thoughts on what she calls the Organic Luxe Trend.

“When designing for my clients, I am always thinking about the importance of a home being livable and inviting, as well as beautiful. Organic materials that reference natural textures, but in a modern way, help to make a space feel cozy, yet chic. This trend has picked up speed in a post-Covid world, where we find ourselves gravitating towards authentic, natural materials to help create a sanctuary space.”

– Stephanie Rapp, Stephanie Rapp Interiors

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2021 HOBI Trends *(continued)*

I call this trend “organic luxe”, and spotted so many new furniture designs on a recent trip to Design Edge Boston that embrace this style. White oak is representative of the organic luxe trend, as it shows the natural variations of the wood in a fresh and light color. The organic textures look best when juxtaposed with a luxe accent like dramatic brass hardware. It’s the mix that makes for compelling design.” - Stephanie Rapp, Stephanie Rapp Interiors



The way we live today:

Bonnie Paige won HOBI Awards this year for Best Home Design, as well as Best Spec Home “and Best Spec Home Built During Covid”. She addressed the way we live today.

“Just an observation on how we want to live today in our homes. Versatile space, comfort, convenience, outdoor living and electronics connecting us to work, family and friends. This is the new platform to design by.

When we start with a new home, the focus is on the lifestyle trying to be achieved. Generally, a large, eat in kitchen-family room

with fireplace, and direct access to the patio landscaped outside. A pool, built-in kitchen area and fire pit are the most requested. The need for multiple office options are in the forefront, whether open plan, private or in an outbuilding, (see photos of Bonnie Paige converted outbuilding home office on opposite page) they all need high speed, state of the art technology. It is ever-changing. By the time you finish a house, there is something new. Keep it basic, with options to expand. And don’t forget the garage charging station. It is the future.”

Bedrooms and storage: “Families like to have bedrooms on one floor. Four is the normal, but now with a lot of storage. Working and schooling from home, means bringing it all with you. Make sure the office and bedroom spaces have plenty of well organized closet storage and built-in’s. Hide equipment. Just because we are working from home, doesn’t mean it has to look like it. A clear space is a healthy space. Keep it simple, well built and well organized. Light and height: Large windows and high ceilings bring the outside in. We all need an abundance of natural light and nature. Especially when we are all in it together. Let the house breath with a good, open space, floor plan.”

“If you can get all or any of this into your homes, do it! Your houses will sell fast and your clients will be your best future source of business.

A good rule to live by.”

- Bonnie Paige

A big home office & great internet service

Having a place big enough for future quarantines is newly important, and the most requested amenities for those who work at home are a big home office and excellent cell and internet service.

A number of large companies have decided that telecommuting can help them cut office space by as much as 30%, signaling what may be a national shift by businesses. The work at home trend is not going anywhere, and every winning new or remodeled home had at least one home office. These ‘must have’ rooms range from extravagant suites with bath and a place to nap, to office niches tucked under stairs or in alcoves off the kitchen or master bedroom.



2021 HOBI Trends

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Outdoor living

Another Covid-related priority - outdoor living and the indoor outdoor relationship, was evidenced by patios and terraces with multiple outdoor areas for dining and entertaining – all surrounding an inviting pool or waterfront.

Home Technology

The winner of Best Home Technology this year was InnerSpace Electronics, and InnerSpace President, Barry Reiner gave us his take on trends in that space:



“Whether it’s a new build or retrofit situation, homeowners want convenience & entertainment in their homes and are incorporating more “smart home” technology. As DIY (Do it Yourself) products proliferate the industry, our upscale clientele is seeing the value in higher end control systems with single app solutions and personalized service.

In addition to integrated control systems, there is a growing focus on integrated lighting control systems, lighting design, architectural lighting fixture supply and motorized window treatments.”

– Barry Reiner, InnerSpace Electronics



Domus Constructors



Best Outdoor Room Blansfield Builders

A Healthy Home & Air Circulation

Health is top of mind with today’s Covid era homeowner, and that means air circulation. Many HOBI winning custom, spec and remodeled homes were equipped with hydro air systems and multiple air exchangers. Our Best Healthy Home HOBI winner, Nick Sapia, Sapia Builders Corp. built a passive home in East Lyme that is Indoor Air Plus certified.

“Kitchens and bathrooms are continually evolving, and every year seems to bring a new trend.”

– Jonathan Gordon, Design by the Jonathans

Design by The Jonathans won HOBI Awards for both *Best Kitchen* and *Best Bath by a Supplier*. We asked owner, Jonathan Gordon for his thoughts on kitchens and baths.

“We’re seeing quite a bit of wood tone for kitchen cabinetry, and a continued preference for Quartz countertops over granite or marble. Natural quartzite countertops are also very much “in”, often as island accents. Apron front sinks remain very popular, and matte black fixtures and hardware are preferred. Aside from the high-end appliance packages that remain very desirable, GE Café is making a real splash with good quality mid-price appliances.”

Karen Berkemeyer, KB Home, worked with Sandy Effren of Greyrock Homes



on this year’s Outstanding Kitchen for the 2020 Idea House in Norwalk. Karen had this to say about Kitchen Trends.

“We are still seeing simple cabinetry. It could be shaker, slab, or flush inset. The new direction is color & texture. We are seeing bright colors on islands. High gloss color on butler’s pantry. Textured laminates on slab doors give a warm modern feeling. We are seeing white mixed with wood or with color. We are also seeing dark painted cabinets in black or dark gray. Green is surfacing in dark shades or in plant colors.”



Design by the Jonathans winning kitchen.

Tile trends

Karen went on to comment on trends in tile.

“Simplicity or a spa feeling in baths is popular. Gray still works but taupe lightens the look. Large tiles give a clean look with less grout. Mosaics are being used in patterns on shower floors or on feature walls.

- Feature walls with color can brighten the room.
- Different tile patterns are being used on walls such as herringbone, arrow, and hexagon.
- Metal is being mixed with tile and glass giving a new contrasting look.”

- Karen Berkemeyer, KB Home

Bath trends



In bathrooms, **Jonathan Gordon** of Design by The Jonathans sees the continuing demand for large custom showers with a bench, wall niches, and at least one rain head. Matte black fixtures and hardware and painted cabinets with Quartz countertops are preferred, and unique wall, floor, and accent tile installations are particularly popular.”

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2021 HOBI Trends

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In addition, many HOBI winning baths were equipped with Toto eco-friendly, intelligent toilets that included everything from soft close heated seats, bidet, water temp control, night light, Blue Tooth speakers and wifi.

Lighting

The right interior and exterior lighting can make the difference between a ho hum or a spectacular home. **Todd Director** of Connecticut Lighting talked about this year's trends.



"At Connecticut Lighting Centers integrated LED Lighting is becoming more available in both functional (recessed and track lighting) and decorative lighting. Dimming and controlling integrated LED lighting can be tricky, but companies like Lutron have an answer for every application.

"We are seeing a tremendous uptick in simple and affordable lighting control solutions. Products like Lutron Caseta have made lighting and thermostat control available to every consumer. All it takes is a few hundred dollars, wireless internet and changing a few switches to Lutron Caseta devices. Due to rapid change of technology we understand the frustration from electricians and builders trying to keep up with the lighting Industry. We pride ourselves on being the resource for all things Lighting."

– Todd Director, Connecticut Lighting



Design by the Jonathans winning master bath shower

Do well and do good with CET

A final trend in 2021 is allowing builders and suppliers to do well and do good at the same time, by donating excess materials to the Center for Eco Technology (CET).

Michael Sonderman, VP of Operations at Ridgefield Supply Company described their experience with CET:



"Ridgefield Supply donates to CET each time we have surplus building materials. It creates more space for new product in our warehouse, and saves us money on disposal fees. We also receive a donation receipt which we can use as a tax deduction. It's a better solution for disposing reusable materials, than entering the waste stream, so it's great for the environment. Freya Bromwich has been a pleasure to work with each time we are ready to donate materials to CET!"



Fairfield County HBRA President **Kim DiMatteo** had this to say about CET: "CET is an invaluable environmental nonprofit. They have helped and continue to assist many HBRA members in reducing waste from their remodeling projects, and when a supplier has surplus or deadstock of new building materials that is taking up space in storage. They offer a 'greener' solution to reduce waste that would otherwise go into the landfill and another alternative to paying costly disposal fees. For information on CET's donation process, please contact Freya Bromwich, who also serves on the HBRA Associate Council Committee and is a PWB member." 📄