



dream homes

A Santa Barbara Builder's Perspective

by **Bruce Giffin**



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whether old or new,
simple or grand,
has the potential
to become
extraordinary

Our homes are our sanctuaries. They are the places that recharge us and nourish us. Instinctively, we set out to make our homes reflective of ourselves.

As a home builder with 27 years of experience, I've found that homeowners tend to notice what doesn't work more than what does. People are far more likely to notice the too small entry, the awkward kitchen or the misplaced window than the perfectly sized bedroom or the living room that's great for entertaining. Spaces that do work are often taken for granted by their owners. Yet every home, whether old or new, simple or grand, has the potential to become extraordinary.

The best homes are not too large. Instead of voluminous spaces, they have distinctive details. They are site specific, acknowledging the piece of land, location and topography. Ideally, they are oriented to the southeast to capture morning sunlight, while western exposures are minimized or shaded by trees that protect from the afternoon heat.

Santa Barbara's temperate climate is one of our finest assets. Patios that expand living spaces into the outdoors and comfortable outdoor dining spots provide some of the greatest, yet simplest, of life's pleasures. Plan these places so that they take advantage of the sun's warmth on cool mornings as well as creating shady spaces to retreat to when temperatures climb.

Well-designed homes have transition zones that provide easy entry into our private realms. The best homes feature a subtle, yet seamless, transition from public to private space. Each area should flow

easily to the next sequentially—beginning with a sense of arrival at an entry into a relaxed living area, then a warm, working kitchen to sheltered family spaces and finally to the intimacy of bedrooms and baths.

Every person should have a domain in their home. To accomplish that, some living spaces may have to do double duty. Parents need a space to themselves, children need play areas within sight of their parents while women (and men) need a room of their own. Large alcoves work well for providing individual places for work or retreat.

Kitchens need to be warm, inviting and functional with adequate counter space and walkways that are the proper width. Well thought-out cabinetry will make a kitchen more convenient to work in. Also nice, a place for people to hang-out, watch the chef, converse and participate in the preparation of meals.

Bedrooms should be restful spaces with pleasing colors and meaningful objects. The best bedrooms have focal points. It might be the way the bed is placed in the room or a cozy place to sit, such as a windowseat, offering a view of the garden.

Our dream homes are works-in-progress. Like our lives, they change to mirror our current needs, wants and desires. They are living, breathing spaces that reflect the uniqueness of the individuals who inhabit them.

Bruce Giffin, of Giffin & Crane, is a Santa Barbara native who has been building and remodeling homes in Santa Barbara since 1978.