

Designers, architects focus on weather, convenience in building mountain homes

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KEYSTONE — Depending on where you are, luxury can mean something a little different.

In warm places, it might mean large homes with plenty of space for pools or outdoor activities. In the mountains, it often means catering to the active mountain lifestyle.

Tim Sabo, an architect and designer with Allen Guerra Architecture in Frisco, said he always starts a project by looking at “the driveway, where the space is going to be and where the views are.”

“First and foremost, it comes down to the site and where the views are from the site,” Sabo said. “People love to see the mountains from their house, so we orient a lot of the spaces to the views.”

When designing homes in the mountains, architects are also sure to look at their orientation in relation to the sun. While some people may have heated driveways to manage snow, something as simple as putting the driveway in the direction of the sun will do, said Zane Levin, an architect with Collective Design Group.

“(We’re) just thinking about where the sun is throughout the day,” Levin said. “If people like to wake up to the sun, then we may orient the master bedroom in the eastern side of the home. If people don’t like the sun in the morning, then we may put the master bedroom on the western side of the home.”

While many luxury homes are built with winter in



PHOTO BY JONATHAN HUFFMAN

Interior designers work to create mudrooms that are able to hold all kinds of gear and look stylish at the same time.

mind, Sabo said he still has lots of clients who want to have a deck for cooking and spend time outside.

“We’ve always got outdoor spaces that are somewhat protected from the heavy snowfall,” he said.

Snowfall is a major factor in the design of winter homes. Both Sabo and Levin focus on orienting the roof of homes in a way that will prevent snow from building up around windows or doors.

“We’re looking at rooflines very diligently, making sure we’re never shedding snow in front of doors or in front of garages or allowing them to pile up in front of windows if we can help it,” Levin said. “The roof is quite key in understanding how snow is ultimately going to fall off the home and into the areas around the home.”

While architects are tasked with finding ways to design and orient the home for winter elements, interior designers must think about how people use the spaces.

“We always look at the

convenience factors in the beginning,” said Lisa Yates, a senior designer with Collective Design Group. “Typically, that would be for a ski-in, ski-out, so you want to have a well-appointed mudroom.”

Yates said the mudroom and ski storage are key factors in the design of luxury homes. When designing the homes, she looks at features like durable cabinetry, boot warmers and even built-in water bottle fountains for the mudroom.

“In the winter, it’s just so important to have a place for all of the gear, and a lot of people like to be able to hide it behind doors,” she said.

Yates also looks at ways to make homes more fun and relaxing in the winter environment. For example, hot tubs continue to be in style. Yates said she’s seeing more and more hot tubs that are built into the ground so people don’t have to climb up to get inside them.

Gyms and saunas have become more popular, as well, Yates said.

“We’re seeing saunas more and more in residential homes and applications,” she said. “(They’re) not just the little steam closets but full-out rooms that we build to be a sauna.”

Yates said Collective Design Group also has started heating homes with radiant heat to create more comfort in the wintertime.

“Every tiled surface, the wood floor, everything has that nice, cozy feeling to it,” she said.

Because so much can go into the design of a luxury home, it’s important for clients to have a good relationship with their designers and architects.

“Every project, whether it’s a small project or a massive project, has a budget,” Levin said. “To these clients, the budget’s important no matter what the budget is. So having open communication and talking through that throughout the entire design process and into the construction process is really important.”