

Whole house Ideas

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Whole House Overview By Lisa Montgomery

The best cure for a good night's sleep-and then some-is to pack the bedrooms with all the comforts of home technology.

Master bedrooms have gone through some major growing pains. From a simple room large enough to house a queen-sized bed and a couple of dressers, the master bedroom has blossomed into a suite that caters to homeowners with a dressing area, a massive walk-in closet, a sitting area, a wet bar and an adjoining bathroom filled with spa-like luxuries including a whirlpool tub, a steam room and a shower built for two. n Technology has struggled to keep pace with the finer things that have become near mainstays in master bedrooms, but items such as music systems, plasma screens and home control devices are definite up-and-comers.

Entertainment

Where's the one place you'd probably end up watching a movie ... that is, if that room were as well-equipped as the family room? If you're like most people who relish the comfort of movie viewing with your feet up and your head on a pillow, the bedroom is a great room to make a home's secondary home theater.

That doesn't mean that you need to invest in a mammoth 100-inch screen that overpowers the room interior (although you could). Nor will you want a stack of audio/video gear blinking at you as you settle down for the night.

A more sensible choice for the master bedroom is a "flat" TV, perhaps a plasma screen or a large LCD screen.

Remember that any type of screen that hangs on the wall still needs electricity for power. Let your builder and home systems installer know about your penchant for a plasma. There's no need to stretch a cord to an electrical outlet- instead ask the electrician to install an electrical outlet higher on the wall.

As in any movie viewing environment, a surround-sound system is essential. Where you plan to place the bedroom furniture will determine the best locations for the speakers. Artwork and other decorative elements may also make it difficult to get the speakers into prime position, so expect to make a few compromises (ceiling-mounted speakers are always a viable alternative).

Chances are, you'll be listening to music in the master bedroom as well. The same speakers that deliver movie soundtracks into the room can be used also to pipe in music, but they might not adequately reach the far points of the room. For this reason, it might be a good idea to also install two speakers in the sitting area, another set in the bathroom, and possibly another pair in the dressing area. A wall-mounted volume control for each listening area might be a useful tool to set the volume level of each area differently.

Lighting

Like the family room, a master bedroom plays host to a variety of activities: sleeping, reading, TV watching and music listening, to name a few. And, like a multipurpose family room, a master bedroom can benefit from a lighting system that fixes the lights to suit the activity of the moment. Together, a lighting designer and a home systems installer can group lights together appropriately, specify the best intensities for each fixture, and configure a system that lets one button control them all.

Control

Next to the kitchen, the master bedroom is the best room in which to incorporate a device to monitor and control the thermostats, security system, lights, and other electronic amenities of the house. There are several places a controller can be located-on a wall, on a table, or built into a piece of furniture. Remember, convenience is the key-you won't use a

controller if you can't find it. 5 Things to Consider for The Whole House Add a little technology and you will truly be the master! Here are 5 things to consider...

- Flat-panel TVs
- Bed-side access to whole-house systems
- Motorized window treatments
- Security system access
- In-wall speakers with distributed audio Whole House FAQs

When my wife and I are in bed, only one of us has a good angle to watch TV. Is there a compromise?

- Consider a wall-mount for your TV. This creates a study area that can suspend the TV, and moves the viewing area to above, so both of you can enjoy watching while lying in bed. Also, many flat-panel TVs come with the necessary hardware so you can wall-mount them.

- I have a TV in my bathroom, so now what else can I do?

Does that TV have whole-house access? For instance, can you view security cameras? This function allows you to keep your eyes on the inside and outside of the home while relaxing in the tub. You can also pipe in distributed audio if you run wire and install speakers in that room. You can even automate your "spa," which will perfect water temperature while you wait or even on your way home from work.

- I really don't have room for a TV and don't want to wall-mount anything. Is there another option?

Well there are a few, actually. You can install a drop-down screen and a projector. That way, when it's not in use, you can hide your equipment. Another option is a handheld touchscreen-the same one you use for home control. Many of them allow you to view cameras as well as video sources. This provides an easy video option to any room, and it's mobile!