



An Article Of Interest...

Bungalow Craftsmanship Stands Strong

When the bungalow style first debuted during the early 20th Century, it was the answer for many people who questioned whether or not they could afford a home.

Even as a less expensive option, the homes were flush with craftsmanship: hardwood floors, leaded-glass windows, expansive front porches, well-designed pantries, cave ceilings, and built-in cabinetry and bookcases. And because it was spread out on one level—or in some cases, with an additional half story—bungalows were fairly low-maintenance.

Most bungalows were built in first-tier suburbs immediately following World War II. “The most democratic of housing became popular for first-time home buyers,” says Louis Wasserman, who with M. Caren Connolly, wrote *Bungalows: Design Ideas for Renovating, Remodeling, and Building New* (Taunton Press, 2006). It was also the first housing type to include a garage, he says.

Even the kitchen sported minimalism: “It had a pared-down kitchen on purpose, because they didn’t have a lot of staff and a lot of time,” says Connolly. Due to the human-scale construction throughout, and no wasted spaces, “it’s a house that fosters intimacy.”

Somewhere along the line, however, in conjunction with migrations to the outer-ring suburbs, bungalows fell out of popularity. It wasn’t until the mid-90s that the style resurged as a complement to smart urban planning.

A Sought-After Compact Design

Because most of today’s bungalows are tucked into pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, it’s an attractive buy to a younger generation that thrives on walking or bicycling to conveniences like a grocery store, bank, post office, restaurants, shopping and schools. For buyers who want to shrink their carbon footprint, living in a bungalow, and having everything they need within a short radius, might be the answer.

“They’re green because you’re moving into an older [home]—which is usually in the center of town and a shorter commute,” says John Brinkmann, publisher of *American Bungalow Magazine*.

It’s definitely in tune with the “[not so big house](#)” trend, says Wasserman. “They maximize on a small lot with a small footprint. And windows help order the space with light, but most bungalow

gardens have a strong connection to the interior. Bungalows have wonderful bones.” ([READ: How Bungalows Differ Regionally](#))

Just as in the 1910s and 1920s, buyers today view the bungalow as a good value. Part of that rationale is because they are in areas with established social services, says Wasserman. It’s also a sought-after design, one that marries well with furniture styles that are more than from the Arts & Crafts period.

“There’s nothing about bungalows that’s extra—they rely on craft as an expression of beauty, as opposed to decoration,” says Brinkmann. “Craftsmen were literally showing off their skill, such as complex joinery and sturdy construction.”

During the ‘70s and ‘80s it was rare to hear the word bungalow used in real estate. “It meant you lived in a part of town that wasn’t all that great,” Brinkmann says.

Today, however, due to increased buyer interest, several real estate practitioners even specialize in selling bungalows.

A Bungalow Niche

Steffie Hands, who sells homes in Long Beach, Calif., entered into a real estate career because of her love for architecture. Almost all of Long Beach’s 22 historic districts have bungalows. They are from 900 square feet and start at \$250,000. Most are 1,400 square feet or smaller and list for between \$500,000 and \$700,000.

“A 900-square-foot bungalow in that area will start at about \$400,000 and go on up,” she says. “We have some extremely large Craftsman-style homes near the water for a couple million dollars too.”

In Hands’ market, what drives up the bungalow cost isn’t its number of bedrooms or overall square footage. Homes closer to the beach, and entertainment districts, command a higher asking price. “With the bungalow you have a sense of place in the neighborhood,” she says.

Like Hands, Rick Fifer, a REALTOR® in the Seminole Heights area of Tampa, started selling homes specializing in bungalows, after being drawn to old houses and his love for the neighborhood.

“It really does come down to a specialized niche. It was a good fit, when going into real estate, to stick with what I know,” says Fifer, who has bought and renovated two historic homes.

Bungalows, he says, “offer a sense of community you really don’t find in suburbia.” Seminole Heights, a nine-square mile section within Tampa, is the largest identifiable neighborhood.

“It’s kind of unique in the city—committed activism is pushing the neighborhood forward. We’re charting new ground in a lot of ways. If you really want a sense of community, you need homes with front porches,” Fifer says.

Rambo Halpern, a REALTOR® in Portland, Ore., began selling bungalows in 2004—the same year he got his license—after he had a lot of fun restoring two bungalows. He refers to himself as the "Bungalow Guy." In Portland, which has an urban-growth boundary, there are many bungalows, which range widely in size (from as small as 600 square feet) and asking price.

"I've sold bungalows in the million-dollar range, and as cheap as under \$200,000," says Halpern. "The majority of my traffic now is in the \$300,000 range."

Buyer Appeal

"The architecture attracts people first," says Halpern. "A lot of people love the details and the craftsmanship—the built-ins and the leaded-glass windows, especially." Many of his buyers are from the San Francisco Bay Area and familiar with craftsman bungalows.

Hands has discovered that buyers of bungalows like the appeal of a light renovation project. "If there's anything done to the house that's not true to the style," she says, "the first thing they'll do is strip it off." (A common modernization of bungalows is to paint over the woodwork and cabinetry.)

Bungalows have also become desirable to an aging demographic that foresees a time when using stairs might be difficult due to declining health issues. Because the majority of living space inside a bungalow is on the first floor only, there is comfort in knowing they can remain in the house for some time.

A nostalgic feel appeals to empty-nesters and retirees. "The Baby Boomer generation probably had a grandmother who lived in a bungalow," says Brinkmann.

Hands agrees. "A lot of people have nostalgia for bungalows. They remember when their grandparents lived in a house like that. For a lot of people, that's their vision of the American dream. Plus it's a very classic design. It will never go out of style."

