

## Industry Leader Cites Four Wellness Design Innovation Trends For 2021



**Jamie Gold**

Contributor

[Real Estate](#)

*I write about wellness design and home trends.*



Products with antimicrobial features like fabric sanitizing or surface protection are surging in ... [+] PHOTO COURTESY OF LG ELECTRONICS USA // WELLNESS BY DESIGN (TILLER PRESS, 2020) (C) J. GOLD

It's no secret that the pandemic has created a surge in demand for wellness design features. These were already increasing in popularity before a killer virus drove millions of Americans into their homes for most of a year. Architects, builders, remodelers, retailers and interior designers are all getting increased requests for home features that can enhance health and well-being.

Dr. Susan Chung, the vice president of research for the [American Society of Interior Designers](#), one of the industry's leading professional organizations, shares four innovations she expects to lead this area in 2021 and beyond.

## 1. Antimicrobial and antibacterial properties



Cork floors are an example of antimicrobial surfaces that are surging in popularity. PHOTO COURTESY OF TORLYS SMART FLOORS, WWW.TORLYS.COM // NEW KITCHEN IDEAS THAT WORK (TAUNTON PRESS)

Chung cites materials and finishes with antimicrobial and antibacterial properties, like “quartz, microbicidal paint and cork flooring.” Copper sinks and countertops are also growing in popularity, according to national retailers, and kitchen and bath specialists are reporting heightened demand in antimicrobial finishes throughout those spaces. Manufacturers are responding with products like germ-killing shower walls and sprays.

## 2. Touchless technology and voice activation



Voice control is expanding to manage and simplify a wide array of home features. PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSH.AI LLC, PHOTO BY NICHOLAS FREEMAN // WELLNESS BY DESIGN (TILLER PRESS, 2020) (C) J. GOLD

These have long been part of smart home technology trends, Chung says, but now have a “higher adoption among homeowners and developers, and with a

keenness towards wellness.” Several faucet brands enhanced their offerings during the pandemic to match Centers for Disease Control timing guidelines for hand-washing.

Voice control has also gotten more sophisticated in the past year, with commands for temperature setting in kitchen faucets and widespread integration with smart home technology suites that offer simplification. For example, you can open or close window coverings, start a shower, turn the heat up or down and play your favorite music, all with a themed voice command.

Touchless technology is also showing up in toilets, cabinetry and appliances. In addition to helping inhibit germ spread, they can also make life easier for those suffering from arthritis, Parkinson’s and other mobility-challenging conditions.

### 3. Upgraded air filtration

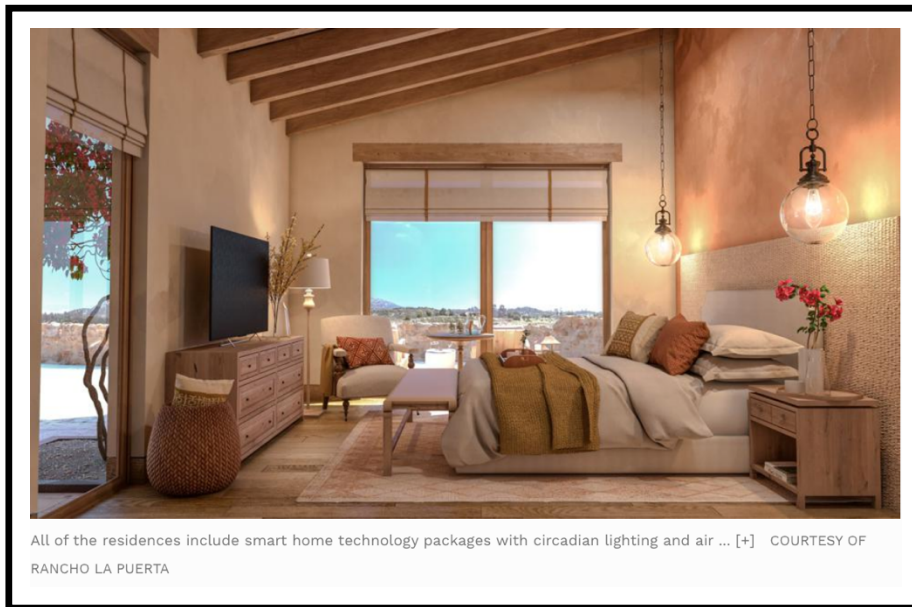


Lighting with UVC capabilities have tremendous potential for killing pathogens at home. BIG ASS FANS / HAIKU

Two external events helped drive this trend. One was [wildfires making indoor air quality crucial](#) when windows had to stay closed against smoke and ash. The other was the CDC guideline showing that the virus causing COVID could be transmitted through aerosols spread through poorly-ventilated spaces. This meant “upgrading air filters (HEPA, higher MERV ratings) and increasing outdoor air intake in HVAC systems,” Chung explains. It has also increased demand for portable air purifiers. Models that filter small air particles improve air quality and can be effective in removing viruses in the air,” she says.

“UV-C lamps with 254 nm wavelengths (that don’t create ozone) in HVAC systems can be a way to inactivate COVID-19,” Chung notes, but it does have limitations for safety and isn’t yet widely available for residential settings. There is definitely development happening in this space for [safe, effective UV-related technology](#).

#### 4. Human behavior supports



“Human behavior is part of prevention strategies, too,” the ASID researcher points out. “Smart home technology (including the Internet of Things) can learn human and environmental behavior to create a program that fits occupant needs” Chung cites the example of indoor air quality management. “I envision technology that monitors outdoor and indoor air quality and temperature together to prompt occupants to open windows for natural ventilation or automatically run ventilation/purification systems to ensure good air quality while also considering occupant preferences.”

This is a growing category of smart home technology, with industry leaders and emerging competitors all marketing to builders and design professionals. National home builders like KB Home and Shea Homes are tying air and water quality monitoring into their wellness offerings and luxury developers like [Rancho La Puerta](#) are tapping into the trend too.

It’s likely that this trend will extend into more affordable price points with a national focus on learning the ventilation lessons from Covid and possible inclusion in the president’s [infrastructure bill](#).

## Conclusions



National builders like KB Home are partnering with wellness organizations to help meet increased ... [+] KB HOME / WELL LIVING LAB

“Designers can lead in having wellness as essential design by advocating for it to be embedded in codes and standards,” Chung recommends. “Policy created to have wellness available to all should push industries to innovate for more affordable solutions.”

She notes that interior designers can also partner with product designers and manufacturers to collaborate in finding affordable solutions that address wellness design. This has happened in the luxury product sector for years, with prominent professionals creating product lines that enhance both brands.

Can it also happen at the affordable wellness end? If anything spurs this into reality, it’s likely to be designers realizing their potential to make a positive difference in the aftermath of a life-shattering pandemic. Production builders tapping into wellness design demand can also bring this about sooner by driving increasing demand for wellness products.

Previous pandemics – including the Spanish Flu a century ago – have altered our home spaces to include screened porches, powder rooms, radiators,

subway tile, even new zoning codes expanding single family residential units instead of denser apartment complexes.

Housing density proved to be a Covid risk again last year, and runs hard into demand for increased availability of affordable units. It may be that innovation, especially in ventilation, has to help solve that challenge.