

Carriage House Garage Doors Are Opening Up Homes to Beauty and Value

Garage doors just aren't what they used to be. The garage door is a fundamental part of the blueprint, structural design and sanctuary of a home. The garage door is one of the most important visual features of a home, representing up to a third or even more of the front. They are now eye-catching, beautiful and -- dare we say it? -- even "cool." In a marketplace where enhanced curb appeal, residential diversity, and neotraditional architecture are in demand by municipalities, we're seeing an onslaught of more unique garage door styles, especially steel, three-section, carriage house-style garage doors.

Carriage house garage doors help us recall the charm of that turn-of-the-century swinging barn-door style, behind which hid a jaunty horse-drawn carriage. Today's doors may look attractively retro, but they are also durable and they open overhead like any other modern sectional garage door.

Original carriage house doors were made of wood. Garage doors today are made from various materials including wood, composite and steel. Each type offers its own benefits, characteristics and costs.

Most builders and homeowners want affordable beauty with low maintenance. That means a moderately priced, steel, carriage house garage door. Because they are all steel, all the parts expand and contract at the same rate, preventing misshaping of the door. All-steel doors with steel plant-on boards also provide design shadows more readily visible from the curb. Stamped or raised-panel steel doors can only emboss designs to a certain depth, creating less dramatic shadows. This "curb appeal" is what homeowners, builders and municipalities are asking for more and more consistently.

Homeowners are driving the curb appeal trend by actively expressing their dissatisfaction with living in cookie-cutter housing that cannot show the personality of the owner. With the same front elevations, same tile roofs, same color schemes, and same garage doors, neighborhoods can look plain and uninteresting. Add a few touches of curb appeal -- with

decorative rock, windows, shutters, wrought iron, or an expanse of unique carriage house garage door -- and neighborhoods grow beautifully in character and value.

Carriage house garage doors offer hundreds of design choices which can complement other artistic elements in a home's elevation such as window shapes, shutters, and trim. In choosing the look of the door, builders can choose among multiple designs using "plant-on" board; solid arches; window treatments; and decorative hardware.

Industry experts say the typical, steel, stamped-panel door you see on so many tract homes has hit the top of the bell curve and is on its way down. You can expect to see a large influx of carriage-type product in variations of wood, steel, composite, plastic and possibly some other materials, although steel will remain the dominant choice of material. All it takes is one visit to a project using carriage house garage doors to see the future of the industry. No curb appeal product can more effectively enhance the diversity and value of a home -- for municipalities, builders and homeowners -- than a carriage house garage door.

Earl Rivard is Vice President of Marketing for First United Door Technologies (www.firstudt.com), a Tempe, AZ. – based manufacturer of residential and commercial doors.