



Bath remodeling has eye appeal

MANY PEOPLE who have decided to remodel their homes one drop at a time are choosing to start in the bathroom, with everything from faucet fixtures to tubs and toilets.

Whirlpools, exercise equipment, tubular glass shower stalls — all exemplify some new ideas in bathroom designs.

Some bathtubs in high-rise apartments, for example, are being placed next to the window, giving bathers a panoramic view of the skyline. In some country homes, shower stalls have one side opening into the surrounding woodlands. And, where possible, some new bathrooms feature irregularly shaped tubs in the center of a mosaic-tiled room surrounded by palms and cactus.

INTERIOR DESIGNER David Frye of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., recently created a turn-of-the-century bathroom that used traditional fixtures but incorporated untraditional bathroom colors, including rich greens and muted yellows to suggest a Victorian parlor more than a powder room.

His design includes a tub with brass-plated claw feet, a sink with gold-plated faucets and fittings and a centerpiece — an early 20th century barber's chair, upholstered in green Naugahyde fabric.

Modern luxuries in it include a reading lamp, telephone and stereo speakers.

Spacious bathrooms were something of a status symbol in the 1880s, Frye said.

"Most new houses of that era were built with bathrooms of a generous size, with many containing stained glass, panelled woodwork, rugs and armchairs.

"It's simple to create a contemporary reflection of this theme."

"**THE BATH, WHICH** had been the last room in the house to receive attention from a design viewpoint, now is considered one of the most important remodeling priorities because people want it to be a spa where they can unwind and pamper themselves," says Lee Mills, Naugahyde's director of design.

Beautiful baths boost home value

According to the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA), the once forgotten bath has blossomed into one of the most important rooms in the home. No longer merely functional, the bath is fun, with enough amenities — whirlpool tubs, saunas and exercise equipment — to keep the occupant in a state of pampered bliss.

"The bath has actually overtaken the kitchen as the most remodeled room in the house," said Francis Jones, executive director of the National Kitchen and Bath Association. "New baths are beautiful and enjoyable. For years, these qualities have inspired homeowners to re-do kitchens. Now they are being applied to the bath, as well."

A well-done bath represents an investment in home equity, notes Jones. The consumer can expect to recover 89 to 120 percent of the remodeling cost when it comes time to sell the home. In the meantime, he or she realizes the advantages on a daily basis.

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