



Remodeling still smart investment

Nowadays with escalating real estate prices, most homeowners are re-vamping what they have instead of buying something new, contractors and interior decorators will tell you.

Whether rich or poor, those with money invested in property are finding it more affordable to embark on remodeling projects rather than trying to purchase homes comparable to or nicer than the ones they already own, experts say.

In the process, say people such as contractor Steven Wright, the remodeling-minded are gravitating toward plans that make more use of space in their homes. Expansion focuses on kitchens and bathrooms and closets. Master bedrooms and exercise rooms are also keys in their plans.

"People are into lifestyles where they stay pretty active and mobile and they want their homes to fit in with that," said Wright. "The rooms and sections of the home that designers and decorators concentrate on expanding and remodeling are major links with their lifestyles."

AND WHAT LINKS: In some custom homes, remodelers have expanded master bedrooms into large expanses complete with walk-in closets and connecting "his-and-her" bathrooms. Contained in the bathrooms can be self-cleaning whirlpool bathtubs and computerized showers with timers, pulsating massage and automatic back-scrubbing capabilities.

They have enlarged kitchens outfitted with space-saving walled appliances from refrigerator, washer and dryer to microwave, stove and indoor barbecue grill — all of which blend in

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with the kitchen cabinet-work. They have also installed elaborate athletic training rooms, outdoor decks and huge barbecue pits.

Although elaborate and expensive modifications are almost the norm for custom homes, similar modifications are being made in less expensive homes, as well.

The trend is consistent, Wright said, whether a project involves a small average-price home or a huge million-dollar estate.

Melanie Cohrs, an interior designer

HOMEFACTS

How much home can you afford?

Interest rate	Monthly payment for a home priced at:		
	\$80,000 (\$8,000 down)	\$120,000 (\$12,000 down)	\$200,000 (\$20,000 down)
8%	\$528	\$793	\$1,321
10%	\$632	\$948	\$1,580
12%	\$741	\$1,111	\$1,851
14%	\$853	\$1,280	\$2,133

	Monthly payment for a home priced at:		
	\$16,000 (\$1,600 down)	\$24,000 (\$2,400 down)	\$40,000 (\$4,000 down)
8%	\$470	\$704	\$1,174
10%	\$562	\$842	\$1,404
12%	\$658	\$987	\$1,646
14%	\$758	\$1,138	\$1,896



SOURCE: Money magazine

Copley News Service

for 20 years, agrees that remodeling trends are keyed to active, mobile lifestyles.

PEOPLE ARE IN and out of showers a lot, so they want more spacious and creatively done bathrooms, she said. "The kitchen is always the (home's) central gathering spot, so they want more spacious multipurpose kitchens that can be used for cooking and entertaining."

To keep up with the ever-rising cost of living, both partners in many mod-

ern families must work. And both often participate in a variety of activities as well, Cohrs said.

Because of that, "they work, exercise and entertain a lot at home but have little time for extensive home-maintenance projects," she said, "so a master bedroom that can incorporate home offices and studies, walk-in closet space and an enlarged connecting bathroom area is ideal."

The Mediterranean style satisfies the desire for a remodeled home that is light, airy and relatively simple to maintain, said Megan Bryan, a director of interior design.

"The style incorporates indoor, outdoor spacing, large oversize French doors, raised ceilings and a light palette of colors," she said. "It accommodates a more general use of space in the home. It's the style that is in."

WITH EYES focused on this style, remodelers are converting to arched ceilings and raised windows and doorways. They are reducing the number of rooms and installing hardwood and tile floors that are easier to maintain than those with conventional carpeting.

And while replacing the grainy facades of once-popular acoustic ceilings with flat surfaces and increased insulation, they are blending in wall coverings of sherbet peach, teal and avocado green, which along with creative open-space design seem to enhance a home's overall dimensions.

Cohrs and others estimate that a major remodeling job involving reconstruction of a kitchen and bathroom and installing of a cathedral ceiling on an average home could be done well for less than \$40,000.

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