

Remodeling Your Home Part Five -- More Good Reasons to Remodel

You know the remodeling process involves a lot of money, time, personal energy, and maybe some aggravation thrown in for good measure. You also know that if you make a mistake in remodeling, it could be a BIG mistake, that probably won't be undone. In earlier columns, we reviewed a lot of the Bad Reasons for remodeling your home. Last column, we hit on some Good reasons for remodeling. We'll continue in that positive vein in this last installment of this series. Based on my experience with hundreds of residential remodels, following are some additional good reasons for planning a remodel.

"Our house is big enough; it works great. It's just plain ugly. What can be done?"

Sometimes a design project consists of solely changing the look and character of a house. We have changed Tudor houses to Spanish style houses (for example at 1400 8th Ave). We have also changed "post war cracker boxes" to Tudor cottages (such as happened at 3410 24th Street, and 551 46th Street). Sometimes, the detail and proportions of a house need be fixed (such as happened at 1219 Teneigh). In fact, just about any style house can be changed into just about any other style of house.

House styles should be appropriate to the streetscape that they are on. This is especially important in the older, more traditional neighborhoods. It doesn't make sense in a neighborhood where a primary determinate of value is the look of leaded glass and romantic cottages to put a bold and contemporary design. It will always be out of sync with it's surroundings. In another neighborhood, which is predominately made up of ranch style houses, the same logic hold true. In those surroundings, a house with a steep roof, ginger bread, fairy tale cottage would look like something flown in from Disneyland.

Either of these examples could be interchanged, and be in harmony. It's the context that's important in determining what styles work.

Sometimes "face lifts" on houses - projects which are mostly directed at changing how a house looks from the street - are expensive. These types of projects need to be carefully weighed in terms of what they will cost versus the value they will add to a home. Bear in mind, that the primary determinate of value of any structure is square footage. It's true that other factors, including aesthetics (what the appraiser calls street appeal), will affect value, but they will not carry as much an impact as the square footage does. All factors, including how long you will likely be living in a house, need to be carefully considered.

"We really like where we live, but our house is too small. With our limited budget, we have not been able to come up with many alternatives. What about doing the work ourselves, or stretching it out over phases?"

If the neighborhood and street are right (the things that you can not change), you may well decide that a property will be able to serve your family for an extended period of time. The first thing a wise home owner should do is in this case is to develop a master plan for the property as a whole. This includes everything from property line to property line, not just the house. The master plan should consider how your needs will change as your family changes. To the degree that you can, you envision your future, and consider how the house might fit, and how it might need to be adapted. Although no one has a crystal ball and knows exactly what the future holds, it is always better to proceed with a plan on any major investment. With a plan, at least you have an idea of where you are going. You can always change direction, but at least

you *have* a direction.

A good designer will act as a facilitator and draw out these considerations in an interview process. Once this information has been brought out, then the designer's job is to translate the resulting program notes into real design alternatives, with information on cost, function, and aesthetics for each for you to consider. These might be presented in two, three or four different scenarios. Once you see how all the pieces fit together, you may do some mixing and matching. What you will end up with is a master plan; a vision for your property, which encompasses not just your house, but your entire property.

Zig Ziglar, the famous motivational speaker, talks about the power of having goals. Once we have an idea of where we are trying to go, we can move deliberately, at whatever speed we can, in a consistent direction. If we have set our sites clearly, even if on some distant point on the horizon, we are all amazingly resourceful at determining ways of getting there. With your home, those ways might include a whole grab bag of ideas. Examples might be hiring a contractor for the "shell" - the structure and exterior skin of an addition - and then managing the finishing of the project yourself.

outs and special deals on materials, doing parts of the work yourself, or phasing the project over time. There are many other examples of how limited resources can be extended to accomplish great things. Your vision, *the master plan*, is what makes it possible to keep moving forward toward a projected goal in an efficient way. Even if the steps are small at least they are all going in the same direction.

Just to wrap up, there are a lot of good reasons to remodel. There are also reasons that should be carefully considered before you decide to move forward. My experience has been that there are combinations of factors which affect the feasibility of remodeling. In deciding whether it makes sense for you to consider remodeling your home, it is helpful to consult with a professional. An experienced Architect or designer can help you sort through the options, the pros and cons, and lay out the cold hard facts alongside the feelings, the notions, the ideas and what feels comfortable to you. Even if you don't use professional help to make your decision, thought, it *is* important to go through some type of decision process and not just dive in and hope for the best.

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