

## Remodeling for resale—tips for consumers

By Erin K. Witt

**Today's historically low interest rates are driving many homeowners to refinance. And often, the funds garnered through refinancing are put straight back into the home—through new furnishings, appliances, and in some instances, remodeling.**

**Although the best reason to remodel is for personal enjoyment, or to add needed living space to a home, some owners choose to remodel in anticipation of selling their home.**

A great deal of the money you invest in home improvement is added to the resale value of your home. According to *Remodeling Magazine*, the top remodeling investments are:

- A minor kitchen remodel will recoup 94 percent of the investment upon sale of the home.
- Bathroom remodeling will recoup 77 percent.
- Siding replacement will recoup 71 percent.
- A home office addition will offer a 69 percent return on investment.
- Window replacement will recoup 68 percent.

The Web site ContractorLocate.com recommends these tips to help homeowners get the most bang out of their remodeling bucks. Remember—be creative. There are often multiple solutions to accomplish a design objective, some more expensive than others. Discuss various options with your contractor.

**Tip #1:** Impress with paint. If all the room really needs is a facelift, make significant changes with paint, as opposed to structural changes. Changing the color of a room can revitalize it. It is also inexpensive, effective, and one of the oldest tricks in the business.

**Tip #2:** Use texture to camouflage flaws. Heavy or textured wallpaper can work wonders. You can save money by wallpapering a slightly damaged wall rather than replacing it. If the wall has grass cloth wallpaper on it, consider whitewashing it for a totally new look. Several layers of whitewash in various shades of white will produce a clean, sophisticated look in any room. Faux finish painting or other textured decorative painting techniques also can hide minor damage or irregularities that flat paint won't.

**Tip #3:** Don't skew your view. Try to keep all existing window locations the same during any remodeling project. Moving windows is not a cost-saving endeavor.

**Tip #4:** Open up, rather than adding-on. Creating more space can be a big budget buster. Once you add square footage to a home, the price increases significantly. One alternative is to steal space from a neighboring room, or space reconfiguration. For example, many bathroom remodels steal space from a linen closet.

**Tip #5:** Use your illusion. Optical illusions can help homeowners “steal space” and make rooms appear larger in a number of ways. To transform a small bathroom, install a bow window or a skylight. Vaulted ceilings also add space to any room.

**Tip #6:** Keep any additions small. When expanding outside the existing home, consider a small bump out of two to four feet. This may allow you to cantilever the floor joists and eliminate the need for excavation and foundation. If possible, be careful not to extend beyond the roofline, which requires adding a new roof to your remodeling.

**Tip #7:** Consider climate control concerns. Whenever you are adding on new space to a home, have a heating contractor determine whether the existing heating and air conditioning system can accommodate the extra space. You don’t want to damage the system and be forced to replace the entire unit.

**Tip #8:** Curb kitchen remodeling expenses. Reuse existing appliances, if at all possible, and build new cabinets around them. This could easily save \$1,500-\$5,000. However, be aware that appliances are sensitive to change, and may develop problems if they are moved. Maintain the present location of major fixtures, appliances and utilities relative to the plumbing, gas and electrical outlets. This could even apply to the location of the telephone. Moving plumbing, wiring and jacks can be extremely expensive.

**Tip #9:** Bank on a refreshed bathroom. Second only to the kitchen, the bathroom is often the most important area of the home to potential buyers, and a good area to update. Consider re-glazing a tub instead of replacing it, especially if it is still in relatively good condition. This can save more than half the cost of a tub replacement. While pedestal lavatories do eliminate the need for vanities and save space, some models may cost more than a separate vanity cabinet and sink. Look at all your options before making a decision. And if you are going to add a large jetted tub to your bathroom, consider dedicating a water heater to that tub. A large jetted tub can hold up to an average of 75 gallons or more, and can easily overextend your existing water heater and cause problems down the road.

**Tip #10:** Go neutral. Select basic colors for paint, wall-coverings, fixtures, appliances and floors. They are less expensive initially, and won’t look dated when the color trends change. And naturally, you run less risk of turning off potential buyers with beige carpeting than you would with fuchsia.