

Remodeling your home to suit your needs

By Mary E. Hart

With the housing market taking a downward turn in 2006 and into 2007, more and more people are keeping their homes off the market and waiting for the real estate tide to turn in their favor. But, what if you're completely bored with your house and want to start fresh? Consider remodeling your current home to make it exactly what you want, instead of putting your house on the market right now and losing money in the process.

"Based on national surveys, the most important thing to know when you're remodeling is that any money you spend on remodeling your kitchen or bath today, you'll get a 100% return on investment tomorrow if you sold your house then," says Mark Karas, CMKBD (Certified Master Kitchen & Bath Designer), General Manager of Adams Kitchens, Inc. in Stoneham. "If you've lived in your house for over a decade and have equity in your house, your better course of action with the current real estate market is to keep the house and neighborhood that you love and simply remodel the interior to suit your needs. Then, when the market turns, you can sell and you'll always get that money you spent back."

"If you spend \$100,000 on your remodeling project, your house will immediately increase in value by \$100,000," says Karas. However, that doesn't mean you should run right out and spend \$100,000 to remodel your kitchen. You have to make sure that by remodeling your home, you're not going to out-price the neighborhood and suddenly have the most expensive house on the block. That will be tough to sell no matter what shape the market is in. The typical complete kitchen remodeling project can cost from \$50,000 to \$80,000 and \$100,000 and above, but Karas says, "We do have something for almost every budget, so let us know what your budget is and we'll see what we can do."

Once you've decided to remodel, the first place to start is your kitchen. "If anything in your kitchen is more than 20 years old," says Karas, "the quality and style of those items has changed so much that it's not worth using what's there. Instead, gut the room down to the studs and then insulate the walls; install new energy-efficient, low-heat windows; new heating and plumbing, and then build back out with brand-new walls and appliances."

For new cabinetry for your kitchen, the best brand out there according to Karas is the "Brookhaven line by Wood-Mode. Wood-Mode has been around since 1942 and it's a family-owned company. Brookhaven is one of the finest cabinets you can buy in today's marketplace." Brookhaven offers built-to-order cabinetry that will look as great down the road as it does today thanks to its fine craftsmanship.

Bathrooms are the second most popular room to remodel. Costs for a complete 5x8 bathroom remodel averages about \$20,000-\$30,000. Note: That's not the cost for just changing the toilet or the sink -- that's not considered "remodeling". Instead, that price reflects a complete down to the studs and building back up remodel, which is the ideal solution for remodeling a bathroom, since "it's almost impossible to piece-meal a bathroom," says Karas. "You'll have the carpenters, plumbers and tilers all crammed into a 5x8 space. It's much easier to do everything at once. While you're doing the remodeling, have the pipes and plumbing checked out. If it's at least 25 years old, it should be looked at and replaced with newer pipes."

In other rooms of the house, you could consider adding in a fireplace surround. Karas is having a fireplace surround installed in their showroom, which will feature cabinetry on either side of the fireplace with a plasma TV above it for a truly dramatic show piece.

When you're remodeling your house, you want to turn to a company that knows what they're doing. That goes without saying. Mark Karas has been a member of the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) for the last 20 years, and is actively involved with the association. In fact, he was just recently elected National Secretary after serving as president for the local chapter of NKBA. He is also a member of the Better Business Bureau and is on the faculty of the Boston Architectural College (BAC).

To contact Adams Kitchens, Inc. about your remodeling project, visit them online at adamskitchens.com; call 781-438-5065 or visit their business on 125 Main Street in Stoneham. Happy remodeling!