

Remodeling Your Home

Part Four --Good Reasons for Remodeling

If you're thinking about remodeling your home, let's explore some of the typical reasons that homeowners remodel. My experience with hundreds of home remodels has given me some real insight into what makes sense, and what does not. You know the remodeling process can involve a lot of money, time, personal energy, and perhaps 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. Let me share with you some of the best reasons for planning a remodel.

"We just love our street--the trees, our neighbors. Our house is just too small to meet our growing family's needs."

There are some things about a property that money cannot change. No matter how large your expenditure on a remodel, you will not be able to change how big your lot is. You also can't change what your street feels like when you walk or drive down it, or the character of the mature landscape, such as a canopy of sixty foot shade trees overhead. You won't be able to have much effect on how well your neighbors maintain their homes, no matter what your resources. Money also won't affect how well you and your family get along with your neighbors, or whether they contribute to your enjoyment of living in your home or take away from it.

If the things that you can't change with money are *right* at your present home--if they are part of the positive that you weigh when you think about where you live--then count yourself lucky. You definitely have a great thing going. Even if other aspects of your house are not ideal, they can be changed. With financial and other resources, we can change just about everything else about a house: how big it is, how it works, what it looks like, how it functions, how easy it is to maintain, even

when you stand in the street and look at it.

With careful planning, a remodeled house can look like it has always been that way. It can flow seamlessly from old to new with no clues to give away what has been changed and what has always been. Sometimes, I think a well done remodel is like a favorite pair of shoes. Have you ever had a pair of shoes that are so comfortable you can barely tell that you have them on? By the time a pair of shoes is "broken in" to the degree that they're that comfortable, they're often worn and beat up. Remodeling is like making those comfortable shoes *look and function* like brand new shoes, while still having that same comfortable feel when you slip them on. Your remodeled house will be familiar and comfortable with the same streetscape, neighbors, and mature trees. Yet, it can look and function like a brand new house.

"We love our neighborhood, but our house just doesn't fit our lifestyle. We need more open spaces and more light. Also, our son started taking piano lessons, and it's driving us crazy because of clashes between the piano, the T.V., and reading."

Major changes can be made on how a house functions with very little change to the structure of a house. I have seen instances where altering just a few walls has made a radical difference in light, flow, function, and acoustic privacy. Often, the best design solutions for these types of issues involve reconfiguring existing space. Many times the opportunities are surprising!

The design possibilities are almost never all obvious. Just walking around and looking at a house, even if you have lived in it for years, will not reveal all of its potential. In fact, the longer you have been living in a house, the more difficult it can be for you to see it objectively. By drawing the existing house,

we are reducing the house to a set of lines on paper. It becomes an abstract collection of spaces. At that point, we can easily and quickly manipulate those lines to explore many variations and possibilities. Sometimes, we come up with as many as a dozen different scenarios. Each of these can be quickly evaluated, so we can distill them down to a manageable range of possibilities for a homeowner to consider.

As an Architect, I never assume that we can come up with an "ideal solution." That would imply I could read someone's mind. Instead, our goal is to explore all the possibilities that make financial, functional and aesthetic sense. We then put those possibilities into a form which a client can understand--sketches and notes. That way, our client can look at the pros and cons (basically perform a "cost-benefit analysis") and decide what approach makes most sense for them.

There are a lot of good reasons to remodel. 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 along side the feelings, the notions, the ideas, and what feels comfortable to you. Remember, it *is* important to go through some type of decision process and not just dive in and hope for the best!

Copyright 1998, Michael F. Malinowski