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SPECIAL HOME SECTION

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Interior designer Dindy Foster worked with the client to turn a dim, lackluster master bath into a gleaming spa-like retreat.



out limitations of an existing home.

On the other hand, says interior designer Dindy Foster of Dindy Foster Interiors and Associates, choosing the renovation route allows a homeowner to start small and take the process gradually. They can do a room at a time instead of the whole residence at once.

"People feel they can afford to do small areas of houses," Foster says. "It's easier for them to live with that, too, instead of tearing up the whole house."

Jordan, whose company, Tony Jordan Building Company Inc. renovates within existing space as well as builds add-ons to homes, says that finding continuity is another issue homeowners need to be aware of.

"If we're adding it on, we do not want it to look like an add-on," Jordan says. "We want it to look like it's part of the original house."

There are some things renovators need to be aware of before they begin, says Foster.

"You will have a lot of 'unexpecteds' you're not counting on," she says.

Older homes may harbor surprises for anybody who tears into their inner workings, ranging from previous remodels to strange wiring.

"It's going to be very hard to totally estimate the cost of the job for the contractor," Foster warns, "because you don't know what might be behind the walls. When you're building from the sticks up, you're aware of that."

Jordan agrees, noting that building new construction allows for an easier budget estimate.

"Sometimes the cost of remodels can be as much as a new home due to all the work that has to occur," he says.

He also warns that it could take years for a house to recoup the value put into it in a remodel.

"You'll usually get the max out of your house, but you don't get what you put into the remodel," Jordan says. "If it's long term, though, that's not a problem."

"The biggest challenge is making sure (the homeowners) understand what the true cost of the remodel will entail," he continues. "They need to see the whole picture...It's important to have a complete set of plans in order to have a true cost."

There's also the frustration factor in renovating, he notes. If people continue to live in their home during the renovation process, they may have to get used to having crowds of strangers hammering and sawing away at their beloved abode.

"We try to make it as convenient as possible," Jordan says. "But when you're working on someone's house, in their personal space, it's challenging at times to keep everybody happy."

Building a new home, on the other hand, offers an option unthinkable of just a few years ago — a smaller home.

After the market collapse, many Americans started to rethink the "bigger is better" mentality.

"A lot of people are starting to think about scaling back on the square footage," Jordan says. "The economy is one (reason),

but people are starting to think more about energy efficiency, and size does matter. Homeowners are putting more thought into the quality and efficiency of a home than its sheer size."

Also, a smaller footprint has another nice benefit, Jordan added: Less property tax.

Design Trends

The trend of smaller homes ties in with another movement Foster has noticed from her clients.

"The trend right now, especially with younger people, is less clutter and cleaner lines," she says. "Whether it's contemporary or traditional, we see (design) trending in that direction."

Foster says her office works in all design styles — they don't have a signature look — but she is starting to enjoy the cleaner, uncluttered looks.

"It's soothing to me," she notes.

Jordan has also witnessed a more contemporary look, he says.

"It seems like we're taking a more traditional style home and doing interiors, kitchens and baths that are contemporarily influenced," he notes.

Aspects of design not noticable to the eye are also seeing changes toward more energy efficient or green methods of building, he says.

He has started to install more spray foam insulation and geothermal heating and cooling units to increase energy efficiency.

New homes are being built so energy-effi-

Renovations don't have to be complicated and costly affairs; here a guestroom is completely transformed with largely cosmetic changes.



cient they are virtually airtight, Jordan says. To help keep fresh air circulating, he has seen homeowners choose to install energy recovery ventilator (ERV) units.

Working With One Another

One way to help get the home you want, whether it's new or a refit of your current home, is to collaborate closely with your builder, designer and architect.

That's something Tulsan Dee Duren found out firsthand when she renovated her home.

Duren renovated her kitchen and three bathrooms with new sinks, faucets and granite countertops.

It was the first extensive work to her home since it was built in the 1960s, she says.

Duren chose to renovate instead of new construction because her home was paid off and she loved her neighborhood, she says.

"We questioned whether we were investing too much," Duren says.

Foster says a designer or builder could help someone make that decision.

"Designers are pretty resourceful," Foster says. "They can save (homeowners) money and mistakes if they'll work with and listen to them."

If a professional gets in on the ground floor of new construction or a remodel, "then we can carry it through completely down to the carpet, drapes and furniture," Foster says. "We can be full service as much as they want us to be."

Living With It

Living with older parents, Duren knew that

a refit of her home was in order, especially after seeing others do the same.

"The thing that probably inspired us the most was seeing friends and relatives take the plunge and admiring the results of their renovations or – in one case – a new home," Duren says.

Duren stressed the importance of researching and asking questions from experts.

"Understand that this is going to be a very stressful time in your life," she says. "Be kind to yourself and each other. We had several family members, each with different opinions and desires, involved in the renovations. It's hard to understand, until you go through it, how much stress it can put on a family."

Duren says the hardest part about renovating her home was knowing where to stop.

"Before we signed a contract, we wrote down everything we were considering in each room and checked off whether or not we really wanted to have it done," she says. "Out of the hundreds of decisions we made, there's only a very few things I'd do differently, so I count that as a success."

Foster says that helping a client realize their vision – whether a new home or a renovation – is her ultimate goal.

"We like to have the client involved in it," Foster says. "We are the tools to expose them to the newest and open their eyes to other possibilities they haven't thought about. We want the house to reflect them." ■

Things To Consider:

- 1. How much are you willing to spend?** If you're tight on budget, you may choose to renovate one room at a time in your home. If you can afford to, building new will allow you to see your dream home realized from the ground up.
- 2. Do you want to move?** For Tulsan Dee Duren, the love of her neighborhood was one factor that prompted her to choose renovation over new construction.
- 3. Surprise, surprise.** If you are renovating an old home, be prepared to find quirks in construction you never knew about. The cost of renovation will almost certainly go up as work goes on.
- 4. How private are you?** Renovating means that contractors will be in your home, ripping out its guts and creating a lot of noise and dust. For some people, this is a major consideration.
- 5. Fast or slow?** If you choose to renovate a room at a time, keeping the homogenous look of a house means gradual progress, more revolutionary than evolutionary.
- 6. Scaling down.** Many people are choosing to reduce their footprint and move into smaller houses. That virtually eliminates remodeling.
- 7. How green can you go?** Energy efficiency, insulation, green building materials. It's easier to build a truly green home from the ground up.
- 8. Land.** New construction requires an empty lot. Renovating your home lets you use what you've got.
- 9. More land.** Renovating a home can alter your land's drainage and terrain. Be prepared for this.
- 10. Recouping expense.** If you renovate a home, you should be prepared to wait before your house gets its value back. Builder Tony Jordan warns that it could take several years before your home can be sold for its true value after renovation.