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SOUTHERN NEVADANS ARE OPTING TO MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT THEY HAVE

BY CINDI R. MACIOLEK

Now that people are staying in their homes longer due to the state of the housing market, remodeling has definitely seen an uptick. The philosophy is since you're going to be in the house for awhile, you might as well make the most of it. Local interior designers and builders have seen the trend firsthand.

"The remodeling projects began about two years ago," said Jill Abelman, owner of Inside Style Home. "Before, it was always new construction. You have to think, how long do you plan to stay in the house? What is your attention span? It used to be that people lived in a house in Las Vegas

for a couple of years, then moved up to something new. Things are different now."

Leslie Parraguirre, president of Colours, Inc. agrees that people are making the most of what they have. "Your home needs to be your sanctuary while you're living in it because you probably won't sell it for a few years. Our esthetic senses are heightened, too, but be smart about where you spend your money. If you keep a clean bone structure and classic lines, you can adapt the rest to keep current. Recent clients have been looking for that light airy feeling with white walls."



The exterior of this home received a dramatic rework. The front yard had a huge lawn that Parraguirre made smaller, then she added desert landscaping, and created a courtyard that you can reach through French doors off the front rooms. Photo by Jim K. Decker



But staying in their homes longer is not the only reason Southern Nevadans are in renovation mode. Other reasons include the desire to downsize into a new space that may need work, the lure of living in an older, established neighborhood, and the necessity of implementing cutting edge technologies.

“Everyone is asking for a fresher, more contemporary look. Plus, technology is changing, so we have more flexibility in how we design for work and hobby spaces,” said Abelman. “I’d like to think we’re less obsessive about things and more willing to simplify.”

J. Christopher Stuhmer, president of Christopher Homes, cites the trend of living in an established neighborhood. “People are now appreciating the value of living in mature neighborhoods, and that means buying an existing home that often needs to be remodeled. It’s not just about new cabinets or new components. It’s about incorporating new design trends into the overall livability of the house.

“Apart from your health, your family and your friends, your home contributes to your happiness,” continued Stuhmer. “Your home is the greatest reflection of who you are and your unique interests. It should inspire you.”



Parraguirre found a porcelain tile with veining that mimics the master bath’s existing Calcutta Gold marble for the flooring and the entire shower surround. Photo by Jim K. Decker



#### FROM BACHELOR PAD TO FAMILY HOME

Kevin Richards, owner of *ScentsandSprays.com* and store in Las Vegas, was a bachelor when he purchased his home in the northwest part of the valley. Seven years later, he’s now a family man. With his growing family, the floor plan was no longer working as well as it could, so Richards and his wife, Janice, began talking about remodeling.

“The usage of the home changed significantly from when I first bought it,” said Richards. “Now, with a wife and two small children, we had a decision to make. We could deal with the market and the banks, or we could stay where we were and make it work. We decided it made more sense to stay put and make some changes.

“Janice was really interested in remodeling, but I wanted it as a gift for her,” continued Richards. “I kept telling her we weren’t going to do it, but in the meantime, I was interviewing contractors. I wanted to find one that we could trust. We weren’t living in a Christopher home, but I knew of their reputation and I heard they had a remodeling division, so I was excited to have them work on our house.





As evidenced by the before and after photos, Parraguirre reworked this entire kitchen and also converted the walk-in pantry to wine storage. Photo by Jim K. Decker



Jill Abelman of Inside Style had her work cut out for her in renovating this 1878-square-foot condo at Regency Towers from its 1970s interior design time warp.

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"I explained the concept of the game room and upscale powder room to them, and I felt comfortable that they would do a great job. I wanted it to be a surprise Christmas present for my wife, but I was so impatient, two days before Christmas I broke down and told Janice. She then took the time to select all the finishes. Working with Christopher Homes was great because they had relationships with a number of vendors, so it made our life easier.

"The overall planning took about 30 days, but the actual work happened while we were on vacation. We left for four days, and during that time, they took down a wall, closed off a door and added new flooring and lighting. We came home and it was spotless and beautiful.

"Phase I was driven by a family change, but now we're looking at doing Phase II, which was driven by me after I saw what a nice job they did. We're completely changing the feel of the house,

just by upgrading fixtures and finishes. We're planning to stay in this house so we want to be happy while we're here. We're doing the kitchen next – while we're out of town!"

### FROM SMALLER PLACE TO PERFECT SPACE

Parraguirre had already remodeled three homes for this particular client. So, when they decided to downsize, it was important that the 3,600-square-foot space was utilized to its maximum potential. Parraguirre worked with Crisci Builders to make the remodel happen.

"We really did a lot of work with this house," said Parraguirre. "We incorporated an outdoor eating nook into the living space and evened out the back wall of the house creating more indoor room. The entire kitchen was reworked. This is a woman who loves to entertain, so the kitchen was a critical part of the remodel. We also converted the walk-in pantry into wine storage.

"The exterior also saw a dramatic rework," continued Parraguirre. "The front yard had a huge lawn. We made that smaller, added desert landscaping, but most importantly, we created a courtyard that you can reach through French doors off the front

rooms. The back yard had a lovely pool and pergola, but we added a fire pit, moved the barbeque area and added a retaining wall for the landscaping. That helped to control the foliage and my clients gained about six additional feet in their yard."

Managing the budget is always a key element of the remodeling process, and this home was no different. Two areas in particular kept the budget in check. The hardwood on the first floor needed to match, so any additional spaces included a hand hewn burnt walnut. However, an engineered version was used upstairs.

In the master bath, the vanity countertops and the shower dam were a gorgeous Calcutta Gold marble, but it was just too pricey for the flooring and the entire shower surround. Parraguirre found a porcelain tile with veining that mimics marble, close enough to fool the eye.

Another cost cutting move was utilizing a closet company to build out the cabinets in the laundry room and the new pantry rather than purchase custom cabinets like those in the kitchen.

"We had to rethink the use of all the spaces, and decide where best to spend our budget," said Parraguirre. "Now, everything works.



The girls' rooms upstairs were freshened up, and the downstairs bedroom is an exercise room that also accommodates their son with a murphy bed when he's in town.

"It's important to have the whole team together right from the beginning. The staging is different for a remodel. You need product more quickly than when you're building a new house. You have to make sure product arrives on time when the contractors are ready to work.

"The whole experience of having something new should be pleasant. You want to walk into a peaceful place when you come home."

### ITCHING FOR A FIRST FLOOR REMODEL

When Jon and Myrna moved into their Christopher home over five years ago, they





Christopher Homes Remodeling Division freshened up this kitchen by redoing the countertops, backsplash, flooring and appliances.



weren't sure how long they were going to stay. They began to look at other housing options, but always came back to their own. However, they did get ideas by looking at new properties, and that led to the itch to remodel.

"We started out by wanting to do something with our master bathroom most of all," said Jon. "We received a brochure from Christopher Homes about their remodeling division, and we thought that was a great option for us. After all, we were planning to gut the entire first floor and since Christopher built it originally, they had all the blueprints. It just made sense.

"The kitchen was freshened up," continued Jon. "We kept the cabinets but redid the countertops, backsplash, flooring and appliances. The laundry room went to a stack system and we added hanging space for the first time. We also added custom cabinets

in the master bath and laundry. In the powder room, we replaced the fixtures, added a marble countertop and a vessel sink. We laid bamboo flooring throughout. We painted everything as well."

"We gave them a deadline because we were expecting company, and they rose to the challenge," said Myrna. "The whole process took about six weeks."

"We completely changed the layout of the master bath, and we needed someone with imagination to make sense of what we wanted," said Jon. "We removed the bathtub that we never use, made the shower larger and added a closet so we now have more storage. They created three different designs for us, and we chose the one we liked best.

"Our advice to someone who is going to do a remodel is to find a one-stop shop. Having to do it ourselves just leaves me cold. Also, know that it's going to cost more than you anticipate. Part of it was our doing because we went for the higher end finishes, but we also ran into an issue in the bathroom as the codes had changed since the place was built, and as they did the remodel, we had to bring everything up to code. They had to tear out the concrete floor, reinstall the shower drain and reroute the pipes."

"Home prices have declined and people are hesitant to put their homes on the market so they're remodeling," said Myrna. "We don't worry too much about resale. Usually bathrooms, kitchens and floorings hold the value, plus we plan to stay here for awhile."

**FROM KITSCHY MADNESS TO MODERN GLAM**

When Amy and Pat Nolan of Texas were looking for a vacation home with a view, they stumbled upon a unit in Regency Towers. The 1878-square-foot condo would serve them well, both for their frequent Las Vegas visits, and for friends and family that would use it when they weren't here. However, it was caught in an interior design time warp from the '70s.

"The colors were overwhelming, but the project didn't scare us," said Amy. "We've done remodels before, and Pat has a very good eye for design. Our biggest concern was doing it from afar, but working with Jill Abelman made it much easier. Without her, I don't know how we could have made it through the project."

"The whole process took about a year from our first meeting," said Pat. "It was a little longer than we anticipated, but since it's



Kevin and Janice Richards invested in a new front entry as part of their recent remodel. Photo by Jim K. Decker

a high rise, we were dealing with the management association and a lot of other homeowners. We could only work during certain hours, everything had to be approved and even things like the number of dumpsters we could use was regulated.

"We also raised some ceilings, rerouted duct work, and since it was an old building we decided to just go ahead and upgrade some mechanicals," continued Pat. "Since we anticipate keeping the property for a long time, it just made sense to do these additional changes while everything was gutted. All of that took extra time and money."

"Our home in Texas is very traditional with heavy woods," said Amy. "We told Jill that we wanted our place in Las Vegas to be comfortable but different from our Texas home, so we told her to go contemporary. We opened up some walls to take advantage of the view, which is incredible. Jill came back with a great design."

The remodel included upgrading the kitchen, bathroom remodels and an increase in storage, particularly in closet space.

"We didn't stay within our budget. In fact, we exceeded it by about 35 percent. Part of that was because we selected more expensive finishes. Part was because of the general upgrades due to the age of the unit. And, part was because it was more expensive to do the work in Las Vegas than what we were used to in Texas. However, we never intended it to be a flip; we plan to keep the property for quite some time so it was well worth it.

"We are very pleased with way it turned out," continued Pat. "We didn't have anywhere to go but up. People are in awe of it. You can't replicate the view at night. There's not another view like it in Vegas." □



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