



Homes & Estates

HOME
IMPROVEMENTS

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A photograph of a grand, ornate living room. The room features a high ceiling with dark wood beams and a large, multi-tiered chandelier. A plush, patterned sofa with red and gold cushions sits in the center. In front of it is a large, ornate coffee table with a glass top, holding a small potted plant and a decorative object. To the left, a large, white, classical-style urn holds a tall arrangement of greenery and flowers. In the background, a large arched doorway with diamond-patterned glass leads to another room. To the right, a curved staircase with a black wrought-iron railing is visible. The overall atmosphere is one of classic elegance and luxury.

ROCKIN' RENOVATIONS

Photo courtesy of © Everett & Soudie



After

Photos courtesy of Lucia, Kassik & Monday

Many homeowners opt to remodel in order to get more open space in their homes.

By CINDY BARTH | Managing Editor

Remodeling has hit its stride in Central Florida.

And it's showing no signs of slowing down anytime soon.

Locally, the remodeling craze can be attributed to a number of factors, including the desire by homeowners to stay put because they like their current location, the atmosphere of their neighborhood or the size of their current lot. Remodeling then becomes a way to get that extra space or convert an unused room into something more useful.

But the surge in remodeling isn't limited to Central Florida. Throughout

the South, the number of homeowners who chose to remodel their homes grew 62 percent this year, according to the National Association of Home Builders.

Part of that can be attributed to the now-climbing interest rates and moving costs that make it more appealing to homeowners to stay put and renovate rather than vacate.

"I'm definitely seeing it," says Stephen Gidus, co-owner of Winter Park-based PSG Construction, which builds and remodels custom homes. "Some people want to stay in the general core of the city they work in, while others



Before

like traditional neighborhoods with grown trees. Then some really want the bigger lots. Whatever the reason, remodeling becomes a viable option."

A NEW LOOK

Remodeling certainly was a viable option for Winter Park homeowner Jeanne Atkinson.

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Before



After



Before



After

Photos courtesy of Lucia, Kassik & Monday

Front-of-the-house facelifts can give homes a whole new look.

REMODELING

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Three years ago when Atkinson bought her home, she knew it needed an updated look. The 9,000-square-foot, 79-year-old home, located on Interlachen Avenue and formerly owned by the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida, needed a face lift "to modernize it, while still keeping most of the existing structure," says Atkinson.

So Atkinson turned to Lucia, Kassik & Monday Inc. to oversee the remodeling project, which includes a kitchen and sun porch area expansion, renovation of the family room to create more space, a pool deck expansion, the

addition of an outside fireplace and a bathroom makeover. The \$400,000-plus remodel, which will add 1,500 square feet to the house, is expected to take six to eight months.

"I love the house and the area," says Atkinson, "but I just felt it was time to give the home a new look. For years, it has been known as the 'church house,' but once it's remodeled, it can build a whole new identity."

Atkinson certainly is not alone in her quest to give her home a new look, says Karen Kassik, managing partner with Lucia, Kassik & Monday. Kassik says

nearly 95 percent of her company's clientele are homeowners looking for ways to enhance their homes.

The most popular remodel right now, Kassik says, is raised ceilings. "The idea is to take that center core space and expand its look," Kassik says. "Raised ceilings make homes feel larger than they are."

Other popular remodels include expanding family rooms and kitchen space, reworking master bedrooms and converting unused space into something more useful.

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Photos courtesy of Lucia, Kassik & Monday

New windows give older homes a more modern look.

After

REMODELING

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For homeowners such as Atkinson, the decision to remodel was an easy one. After all, she says, "if you're going to live on a lake, you might as well be able to enjoy it and be outside as much as possible."



Before



After

WHAT'S HOT

So with all the frenzy over remodeling, what are the most popular requests being made by homeowners?

Gidus says he finds that most home remodels come down to three areas: whole house renovation, additions and interior renovations within the existing structure.

The whole house renovation includes an exterior face lift and the remodel

of the interior from top to bottom. This type of renovation typically requires the homeowner to move out until the renovation is completed.

Additions include a makeover and enlargement of the master bedroom or creation of a guest suite or entertainment room. "Most of the time, this is a case where the family really loves their house, but now doesn't need room for

what the space was originally designed for," Gidus says. "So, in this case, the homeowner rethinks what he or she would like to use the space for, perhaps a larger family room or a study center."

In the third popular remodel choice — interior renovations within the existing structure — the idea is to make the inside of the house more livable, Gidus says. This type of remodel might include a kitchen or bathroom makeover, he says.

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Remodel your CLOSETS



By CINDY BARTH | Managing Editor

So you've decided to remodel your home and have settled on those areas of the house that you want to give a new look to.

That's good, says Ben Kiran, president of Get Organized, A Neat Way of Life — but make sure you don't forget your closets.

Today's palatial bedrooms have increased in size by about a third, in fact, mostly to accommodate large closets and, in some cases, two dressing areas so dual-schedule couples can dress for work separately. Some of these closets have \$10,000 or more of cabinetry and organizing equipment.

Kiran, whose company manufactures, installs and designs closets, says business is booming right now, as people continue to reinvest in their high-end

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Photo courtesy of Lucia, Kassak & Monday

With nice year-round weather, homeowners often opt to add spaces that have easy access to the outdoors.

REMODELING

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The overall thrust of these types of remodels are driven by families who don't view their home as a pass-through to something bigger and better, says Victor Farina, president of Farina & Sons, a family-owned company that does about 10 remodels a year in Central Florida. "They want to stay," he says. "So they decide what they need to redo in order to make the house something they can be happy with for a long time."

Both Gidus and Farina say they expect the remodeling craze to be around for a long time to come. After all, they point out, many homeowners are taking advantage of the still-lower-than-usual interest rates to refinance their homes and extract equity to pay for a large-scale remodeling project.

That trend shows no signs of letting up anytime soon, says Gidus: "We are seeing more work in that area of business than ever."

That level of activity is music to Farina's ears. "I'm expecting to stay busy for a long, long time," says the builder.



CLOSETS

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homes and add those types of amenities most important to their lifestyle. Closets seem to be one of those amenities on a lot of people's minds.

"I mean, have you really ever met anyone who believes they have enough closet space?" Kiran asks with a laugh.

Get Organized works with homeowners to "design their perfect closet space," Kiran says.

But don't expect that space to come cheap: Kiran says some high-end closets can run \$20,000 or more, depending on what you want it to include.

For instance, he says, most high-end closets today include natural wood versus pre-fabricated particle board. Add to that an increase in size from 8-by-10 to 70 linear feet, "and you can see how that price can go up about as high as you want to spend."

Kiran says one popular type of closet is the two-story kind, complete with ornate fixtures similar to cabinetry, crown moldings, fancy lighting and a staircase to go from one floor to the other.

Some closets even have a washer and dryer in them, Kiran says.

"The idea we factor in for most people is how they can use the space to make their lives more comfortable," says Kiran. "So, if your lifestyle is busy and you need to be as efficient as possible, having a washer and dryer right there in the closet just might be the ticket for you."

So whether your luxury closet includes shelving, stacks of drawers, wood grain or two stories, it all comes down to what works best for your family, Kiran says.

"Get the closet you really want," he says. "But remember that it might not be as cheap to design it as you think. So use your dollars carefully."