

Builders' show focusing on renovations

A 1909 house remodeled for a show in Florida will give builders new concepts to bring home to Long Island.

Gary Dymski
Home Work

February 5, 2007, 8:38 PM EST

For someone who's attended more than a dozen International Builders' shows, Ray Accettella admits he's a little more excited than usual.

"I can't wait to get down there," Accettella, president of Jarro Building Industries, an East Meadow construction firm, said of the trade show that runs Wednesday through Saturday in Orlando, Fla. The annual event, sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders, draws nearly 2,000 industry giants -- manufacturers, remodelers, builders and suppliers -- and more than 100,000 visitors in this Super Bowl of new-home construction.

Accettella is among about 100 members of the Long Island Builders Institute expected to attend.

The reason for Accettella's enthusiasm is that, for the first time, a remodeled home is one of the show's major projects. This type of renovation gives contractors on Long Island, where millions of dollars are spent annually on remodeling, an opportunity to see new ideas and concepts, experts say.

"Professionals who see this remodeled house can bring new stuff back to Long Island and be a step ahead of their competitors," said Bob Wieboldt, executive vice president of the institute. "They get to see products and techniques up close, even before they get into the glossy magazines."

Tours of the Renewed American Home, a 1909 two-story historic structure featuring a unique vernacular, Florida-style -- a mix of Victorian, four-square gable and Colonial revival -- begin Tuesday. The renovated home is a twist on the New American Home, a high-end -- frequently over-the-top -- new home that, since its inception in 1984, has been a major part of the trade show.

Again this year, the New American Home is designed as a collection of ideas for the industry to apply -- either in large or small doses -- in new-home construction nationwide.

"I've always been curious to see what is done in the New American Home," said Accettella, "but this Renewed Home is more about what we do at Jarro." For the last 40 years, Accettella's company has been a leading Long Island remodeling firm, updating and adding to houses from Levittown to Riverhead. Whereas the New American Home displays construction materials and techniques whose influence often takes time to trickle down to remodelers, the Renewed Home is expected to show many of the same products and concepts in a renovation.

"I think the Renewed Home is a tribute to the remodeling contractors of our industry," Wieboldt said. "The new home always has been a part of the show; now the remodeled home is just another way to see the application of new technology and new ideas."

PSG Construction Inc. of Orlando expanded the Renewed American Home from about 2,500 square feet to 5,860 square feet, including the addition of a full basement. The remodeling increases space but also uses the latest in energy-saving low-voltage technology for powering multi-zone audio, lighting controls, home-security systems and flat-panel televisions.

"Remodeling an older home is a challenge because it's about creating a more efficient structure, in terms of comfort, lighting, energy usage and space, but still keeping the character of the original design," Accettella said. Also, owners of new homes and renovated homes often have similar demands: advanced technology, durable materials and updated design concepts. "The remodeler has to bring the home into the 21st century," he said, "but the trick is doing it while keeping the traditional feel."

Accettella also said residential renovation -- especially adding space -- while trying to maintain the integrity of an older neighborhood is the mark of an accomplished remodeler. Apparently, the Renewed Home and the New American Home can fit in the same established neighborhood. Each is situated in the Lake Eola Heights Historic District, a prized location near downtown Orlando.

Dotted with houses from the craftsman, Mediterranean revival and Colonial revival styles, the Lake Eola Heights area was developed between 1905 and 1925. Many of the homes on its tree-lined streets have been renovated over the years. The New American Home is designed to add a contemporary flair to the neighborhood; the Renewed Home is expected to show successful updating of an older home.

"I'm anxious," Accettella said. "The project also emphasizes 'green-building' practices, and our company is soon to be certified as a green builder."

Copyright 2007 Newsday Inc.