



The Home Designer

Bathroom Remodeling - Keep It Smart ... And Save

By Brandon Neff

Second only to kitchens, the bathroom is the most used, and the most valuable piece of real estate in your home. Many think of it as a purely utilitarian space - a necessity of life. Others, like myself, consider the bathroom a place to indulge and luxuriate.

Unfortunately, if I had a nickel for every time a client would wax poetic about a particular bathroom he or she longed for after staying at a posh hotel - all the while living with a bathroom akin to a Por-To-Let - I would be a rich man.

It seems most Americans believe a beautiful bathroom is something to be admired, but is either too expensive, or not worth the effort. Uttering the words "bath remodel" can reduce most men to tears - their respective wallets clamping shut as they imagine hemorrhaging bank accounts and endless construction. I'm here to tell you otherwise.

Depending on your tastes and expectations, rewarding yourself with an updated and beautiful bathroom can be a relatively painless and satisfying project. Have I got your attention? Whether you choose to work with a designer with a vision, or tackle it DIY style, there are a few key factors to keep in mind. Making smart choices can lead you in the right direction. Read on.

House proud. First, consider the architecture of your home. We've talked about this before - know the style of your home and work with existing architectural details. Is it cottage or contemporary? Suburban ranch or Georgian Revival? It's important to respect the lines of your home when doing any updates to ensure both continuity and to keep it from becoming the Winchester Mystery House. There was a good reason why you chose the home you're in, so look to those details when approaching your renovation.

Look for clues such as crown molding, ornate base molding, smooth or textured walls, window mullions (the dividing wood trims between smaller panes of glass within the window), original building materials such as brick and hardwoods, and metal finishes throughout the home. Honoring the architecture will guide you through the innumerable choices out there, and can inspire your design.

Truly, if you live in a California-style split level house and long for a French Rococo bathroom then I suggest you call your real estate agent and start looking for something new - forcing period architectural details into a home designed in a completely different style can be very tricky to pull off, and most often ends up looking a bit kooky.

Go toward the light. Is your bathroom a dark cave with one exposed bulb guiding you to the toilet? Is there any natural light? Is your only source of light coming from above?

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A classic pedestal sink and recessed cabinet make the most of a small bungalow bathroom. Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

