

Lifestyle

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10

trends for smart home renovations

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Give just about **any mom** the choice of a **closetful** of new clothes, a personal makeover or a chance to remodel her house, and she'll choose the home renovation every time.

Yet the upgrades and changes she wants most aren't necessarily lavish or faddish. In fact, as homeowners start to feel that it's safe to spend a little **on our** homes, we're also realizing that we want every dollar we **part** with to count.

So we're favoring fewer, higher-function, **better-built** pieces **over** excess, frills and for-show-only fashion statements.

If you're wading one toe at a time into a remodeling project, **con-**sider these 10 trends:

1. The kitchen is king

More are opting to spend the bulk of our renovation budget fixing up this hub of family activity.

New appliances **tend** to be higher-end and multifunctional: a cook-top with a built-in grill, an oven with a rotisserie attachment. Bigger appliances that can handle the loads brought on by a renewed focus on home-prepared family meals are selling: large dishwashers, double ovens, roomy refrigerators.

Catering to the kitchen could **pay off in the long run**: Remodeling magazine estimates that **even minor** improvements – **like refacing** the cabinets and replacing a **scratched-up** sink – can pay off **more** than a major remodel when you sell.

2. Function trumps frills

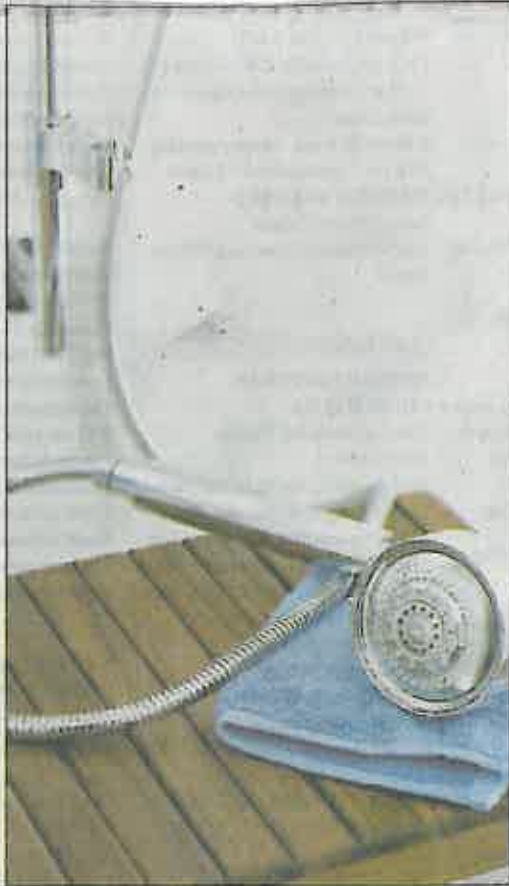
If you don't **need it**, you probably won't buy it in 2011.

Major renovations and room additions are taking a back seat to projects that need to be done, like repairing or replacing damaged roofs or restoring **stucco** and siding.

3. What's outside is 'in'

Replacing such exterior products as windows, roofs **and** siding is becoming **as important as** fixing up the kitchen.

Newer products **have impressive**



Gannett

More bathroom remodels are incorporating aging-in-place features like hand-held **spray hoses** and comfortable benches.

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thermal properties that offer immediate and long-term energy savings, upgrade a home's curb appeal and add resale value. Replacement products that are low-maintenance – like vinyl windows – are becoming more attractive.

4. Aging in place

More bathroom remodels include "comfort-height" toilets, step-in showers, stylish grab bars and wider doorways as homeowners stay in their homes longer and renovate with an eye toward their golden years.

Using universal design principles, remodeling-minded homeowners are creating first-floor bedrooms and easier-to-navigate kitchens and bathrooms.

5. Going green

Some homeowners are going all-out with recycled construction materials and super-efficient appliances.

Others are embracing "green" one step at a time by replacing light fixtures with more efficient models, switching to LED or CFL lighting, choosing tankless or solar water heaters, or trading their inefficient, single-pane windows for double-pane models. Products such as bamboo floors, made from renewable materials, are becoming favorites.

6. Durability sells

Investing in a few high-quality materials can save you from having to pay to replace them so often.

Cheap floors and countertops, and even paint, can wear out faster, show more scrapes and dings, fade or fall apart sooner than a sturdy tile or stone surface that costs more because it's made well.

7. Luxury in the loo

Because most bathrooms are so small, you can dress them up with higher-end sinks, countertops, tile and fixtures without breaking your budget.

Even a small bathroom can feel like a spa if the shower has multiple shower heads, steam attachments, seats and body sprays. Dual sinks have become a staple in the master bath, and heated floors and towel warmers are welcome splurges for homes up north.

8. Smaller homes, bigger rooms

Even if you're making do with the space you have, your rooms can grow

bigger.

Open floor plans in smaller homes mean fewer but bigger rooms. Removing a non-load-bearing interior wall can turn a small kitchen and dining room into a huge eat-in kitchen, or an unused formal dining room and nearby living room into a great room where the family can gather.

The move can add resale value to your home, as the high price of energy for heating and cooling makes adding rooms less practical.

9. You've earned a bonus

Put a little-used nook or room to good use by converting it into a "bonus" room for sewing, crafts, yoga or even storing the large lots of discounted canned food and paper products you buy at big-box retailers.

Home offices, mini theaters and "man caves" are taking over seldom-used guest rooms and unneeded formal dining rooms.

10. High-tech is sweet

When you plan your renovation, look to the inside of your walls. Your huge TV, video-game console, computers, stereo equipment, treadmill and home-security system use a lot of juice that your home's electrical wiring might not be able to handle.

Include an electricity upgrade — or at least an inspection by a licensed electrician — that will ensure your expensive equipment will operate without overloading your circuits.

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Gannett

Turn your bonus room into a "man cave" and you'll be in line with one of today's top 10 renovation trends.