

Remodeling a Bathroom? Have it Your Way!

As published in *The Local Women's Guide*, Spring 2008 Issue 4

I'm sure you would agree that the bathroom is the single most important room in a home.

The smallest room, the bathroom is often where we start our day and end our evening. Its main responsibility has historically been function, and certainly that continues to play a big part. Imagine your home without a bathroom! Gone are the days of outhouses and wash basins, thank goodness, and I'm sure we've all heard stories from our parents and elders about the days of outdoor plumbing!

But bathrooms today have evolved from rooms of function to rooms of retreat. This one small space has the power to set the mood for a busy day ahead or provide the opportunity for relaxation and a good night's sleep. Whether you fancy a spa-like master bathroom or are planning to incorporate a laundry room/half-bath on the first floor, a carefully thought-out bath design is essential. With the broad palette of materials, products and design ideas available today, remodeling a bathroom can be quite overwhelming.

So where do you start? Well, first you will need to ask yourself these questions:

- What are my objectives? What are my likes and habits? What are the basic requirements and expectations? Am I remodeling this room because it is outdated, too small, poorly designed, or unsafe? Am I hoping to increase my home's resale value? (Note: According to *Remodeling Online*, a remodeled bathroom will recoup approximately 75% of the investment at the time of sale.)
- Who will be using this bathroom? Is this for the master suite – or for the entire family to use? Is this a kids-only bathroom or the half-bath off the kitchen that also serves as the laundry room? Function and usage will determine product use and floor plan in the design process.
- What is my budget and timeline? The array of products and prices from flooring to fixtures varies greatly. Know what you are willing to spend. Bathrooms tend to take 6-10 weeks to complete as you need to consider scheduling of construction, plumbing and electrical work, and ordering of materials such as cabinetry, flooring, tile, mirrors, shower doors, etc. And let's not forget the license and inspection process. Give yourself plenty of time and prepare yourself emotionally for the stress of remodeling. There is sawdust, noise, possible reliance on the use of one bathroom versus two, and contractors in and out of your home. The process may be an inconvenience, but a well-planned bathroom will meet all of your objectives and will in turn change an ordinary space into extraordinary.
- What are my "must haves" and what can I live without? Is storage a key element I need to consider in my design? Am I looking to incorporate double sinks, that

large soaking tub, a shower with multiple shower heads and jets, the warming towel bar, custom cabinetry, or granite countertops? The list goes on. Be specific about what your top priorities are and remember that no matter how carefully you have planned and budgeted your project, the odds are good that something unforeseen will occur. Don't get discouraged – it happens.

- Will I be coordinating or completing the work myself or hiring a contractor or designer to get the job done? Let's face it. Bathrooms and kitchens are the most difficult and time-consuming rooms to remodel. They require a great deal of skill and planning. Although designers don't make the structural changes themselves, they create the style, work with layout, color, pattern, furnishings, fixtures, and integrate the room into the overall look of the home. They listen to the client's needs and wants and develop a plan that coincides with their lifestyle. Because they have resources such as contractors, electricians, plumbers, painters, etc., designers are often able to coordinate the entire project and see it to completion.

If you are planning a bathroom remodel, remember that it is essential you become an active participant in the design process. Create a "Design Notebook" that includes before photos, ideas, likes and dislikes, color choices, products that you would like to know more about, magazine clippings and sketches. Think about function, storage, usage, reason for remodel, and any challenges, special requirements or restrictions that you may need to consider. And most important, consider your options, take one step at a time, and have fun! Your new bathroom is bound to be spectacular!

Heidi Caron-Guay is an Interior Decorator and Certified Real Estate Stager. She is the owner of Dragonfly Interiors, located in Rehoboth, MA. For more information on decorating your home visit her website at www.dragonflyinteriors.net.

Copyright 2008 Dragonfly Interiors. Any reproduction or use in the whole or part without written permission from the author is strictly prohibited.