

BIG CHANGES FINE DETAILS

HOMEOWNERS ARE
CHOOSING FUN,
MODERN UPGRADES
MEANT TO LAST.

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HOMEOWNERS ARE FORGOING FORMAL, DEFINED SPACES IN FAVOR OF MORE OPEN, INFORMAL SPACES IDEAL FOR SOCIALIZING.

As consumers grow increasingly optimistic about the economy, remodeling professionals say they're being hired to tackle large, whole-house projects that were postponed in previous years.

According to recent research by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI)—with a nationwide network including San Diego-based contractors, design-build firms, manufacturers, suppliers, subcontractors, and lenders—some 67 percent of polled remodelers say they're seeing growth in their businesses through 2015.

NARI spokeswoman Susan Swartz believes homeowners are making dramatic changes to live in their homes long-term, by investing in major renovations that make their homes more livable and adaptable for generations of their families.

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**NATURAL
MATERIALS
BLEND WITH
HIGH-END
FINISHES TO
CREATE SPA-LIKE
BATHROOMS.**



Nicole Donnelly, owner of Miramar Kitchen & Bath and immediate past president of the San Diego NARI chapter, thinks homeowners are trying to get the most value from their homes with remodels that modernize. "People want the 'great room,' a kitchen/living/dining room concept that makes it the center of the home," explains Donnelly. "Because we live in San Diego, and a lot of the homes were built in the '60s, '70s, and '80s, they want to take these older houses and really open them up."

According to Donnelly, even if homeowners would rather list it than love it, a quick facelift to an outdated home can sometimes garner a higher asking price. Homeowners are also looking for upgrades that hold up well and require low maintenance. Porcelain tiles that look like wood are gaining popularity, as are cabinetry in shades of gray.

Todd Jackson, president and CEO of Jackson Design and Remodeling, is likewise seeing a trend toward



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cabinetry in cool whites and iterations of gray, something he thought was a relic of the past. "I swore 10 years ago I'd never hang another white cabinet, and last year it was probably 35 percent of our cabinet orders," he remarks.

As homeowners become more design-savvy, they're asking for custom features that can't be bought off the shelf, says Jackson. Contemporary and transitional designs are popular, and glass tiles continue to appeal. Ideally, homeowners want the look of high-end finishes without the expense.

While Earth-friendly features are often sought by homeowners, Jackson has long-predicted a remodeling trend toward aging-in-place amenities, such as wider doors, accessible showers, and single-level expansions.

Pirch, a San Diego-based retailer of high-end fixtures and appliances for the bath, kitchen, and outdoors (with seven showrooms, including one at Westfield UTC), is seeing a trend toward social cooking elements both inside the home and out. Flattop grills, like the Evo circular cooktop, are being sought, as are hearth ovens and steam-cooking appliances, according to Pirch marketing director Maria Meeuwisse.

"Especially in San Diego, the outdoor kitchen is growing beyond the fireplace and bar to full-blown outdoor kitchens and grills," explains Meeuwisse. "People want their appliances built into their islands, and they





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want that prep space so they can stand around with their friends or family and roll out pizza dough or prep desserts.”

Meeuwisse also points out that cabinetry, countertops, and backsplashes are staying subtle, while homeowners are getting adventurous with brightly hued appliances of red, orange, yellow, and modern sheens of black.

She says that technological upgrades are popular, too, particularly as homeowners seek ways to control the steam in their shower, listen to digital music, or remotely brew a latte with the touch of a smartphone or tablet PC.

The trend toward tucked-away appliances even extends to coffeemakers, as is the case with gadgets like the TopBrewer. It’s designed to be built into a tabletop or countertop with only the stainless steel tap protruding and can be controlled wirelessly. “You can be in the shower and think, in 10 minutes I’m going to want my latte,” says Meeuwisse.

Donnelly of Miramar Kitchen & Bath cautions that homeowners should choose upgrades that make sense for their home investment. If they intend to stay in their home, it can make sense to remodel to their specific taste. If they think they might sell in the near future, they might want to choose more neutral finishes.

“It can be challenging for us,” she says. “Sometimes the finishes that customers want are going to cost more than the money they’ll get back.”

Some homebuyers want turnkey properties, and others want something they can put their own design mark on. “It really depends on whom you think you might be selling to,” says Donnelly.

**TODAY’S
REMODELS
SEEK TO
BETTER
CONNECT
INDOOR
AND
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SPACES.**