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Information

MAY 2006

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Opportunities**

**Energy-Efficient  
Kitchen Remodel**

**Kitchen & Bath  
Products**

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from conventional wisdom

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Andy Poticha, Co-Owner  
Design Construction Concepts



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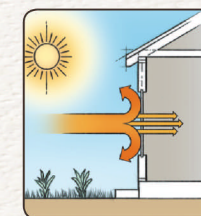


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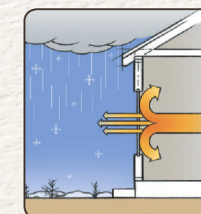


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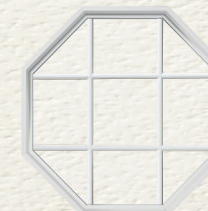
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**MAY 2006**  
VOLUME 10 NUMBER 5

### ON THE COVER:

**Andy Poticha, co-owner of Design Construction Concepts, suggests you choose wisely when allowing customers to provide materials.**

*Photo by Marc Berlow*



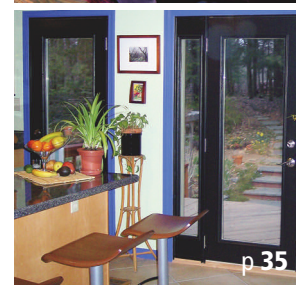
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### We Want to Know More About Your Business

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Five remodelers tell how straying from the occasional rule of remodeling can work for you. *By Alicia Garceau, Contributing Editor*

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A remodeler takes an energy-efficient approach to his own second-story addition. *By Wendy A. Jordan, Senior Contributing Editor*

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## Questions & Answers

Every once in a while, I like to respond to remodelers who have requested information on important topics so the rest of you can benefit as well. If there's a subject you'd like to know more about, just send me an e-mail or pick up the phone.



**Michael Morris**

Editor in Chief

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**Dear Mike:** I read many of the trade pubs to further my education, including *Professional Remodeler*, but there is one topic that I have not found much help on. I am having a little trouble understanding the murky waters of liability insurance. Do you know of any literature, classes or experts that I could use to better understand what coverage I need for my business? Any guidance you could provide would be greatly appreciated.

*Todd Drury, TR Building & Remodeling, Redding, CT*

**Dear Todd:** Check out "What to do About Rising Insurance Rates" (January 2003 or [www.HousingZone.com/proremodeler/article/CA462201.html?text=liability+insurance](http://www.HousingZone.com/proremodeler/article/CA462201.html?text=liability+insurance)). The NAHB also has a wealth of information on its web site ([www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org)).

**Dear Mike:** Sometime in the recent past I read an article with average markups and gross profits for remodeling contractors. Did you folks do anything along these lines?

*Steve Jacobson, Turn of the Century Construction*

**Dear Steve:** The article you are referring to is titled "Numbers Game" (February 2006 or [www.HousingZone.com/article/CA6304115.html](http://www.HousingZone.com/article/CA6304115.html)).

**Dear Mike:** I have been reading *Professional Remodeler* for several years and have kept all my back issues. I would like to develop a customer satisfaction survey. Can you tell me if any back issues of your magazine have dealt with this subject? I'm looking for how-to advice: how to put together the survey, questions to ask, etc.

*Bob Flynn, Flynn Construction Inc. Chanhassen, Minn.*

**Dear Bob:** A few pointers: always ask if a client would refer you to family and friends and how many recommendations the client already has made. Survey the customer at more than one point during and after the project – feelings can change with time. Use a third party to conduct the survey if possible.

Articles include "Constant Feedback" (July 2000 or [www.HousingZone.com/topics/pr/management/pr00ga008.asp](http://www.HousingZone.com/topics/pr/management/pr00ga008.asp)), "Make the Most of Customer Surveys" (October 2001 or [www.HousingZone.com/topics/pr/management/pr01ja013.asp](http://www.HousingZone.com/topics/pr/management/pr01ja013.asp)), "A Study of Exceptional Standards" (September 2002 or [www.HousingZone.com/pr02ia017a.asp](http://www.HousingZone.com/pr02ia017a.asp)) and "The Golden Rule" (November 2005 or [www.HousingZone.com/article/CA6282143.html](http://www.HousingZone.com/article/CA6282143.html)). **PR**



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# Aging in Place Opportunities

Baby boomers are driving this growing market

**A**s America's population ages, especially the large baby boomer generation, the opportunities for remodeling projects suited to their changing needs grows. Tom Swartz asks designer Pat Nunan and remodeler Rob Baugher how to make the most of this growing market.

**Tom:** Rob, define aging in place for me.

**Rob:** Aging in place came out of the idea to get away from using the term

handicapped or special needs. From there it went into universal design, and that has merged with aging in place. We use the terms universal design and aging in place interchangeably now because it's not about aging in place for all of our clients. Typically it is an older individual and we're trying to get that home to fit all of their needs so they can stay in it. But the project we're doing right now – the young man is 16 years old – so it's about meeting his needs because of his infirmities.

**Pat:** I find it has to do with younger people in their 50s and 60s who are caring for their older parents now and they realize how hard it is to take care of them in older homes. So they're not only modifying the homes for their parents, but they are starting to make some changes in their own homes. Even if it's just small changes – maybe when they're remodeling their bathroom, they're not putting in the big shower wall, they're putting in the threshold shower. They're starting to make some changes now because they know they don't want those problems down the road when their income is limited. Right now they have the income to spend on it.

I work for private pay and I also work for the government. I work for the state of Pennsylvania and for local counties doing home modifications. There it's a very specific need, and these people are desperate to stay in their homes – they don't want to go into a nursing home. So we're just changing limited things so they can take care of their daily living. So I find it's two different worlds, and it's struggling to try to meet the needs of both of those clients.

**Tom:** So give me your typical customer.

**Pat:** My typical customer is 60 to 70

years old. This is both government and private pay. They're still working, they're still active, but they're starting to slow down and they realize they have to make some changes. They've had a stroke in the family or something like that. They're typically doing bathrooms – that's the majority of my business. I modify the bathrooms, take out the bathtub, put in a no-threshold area for a shower. I have a case study in the CAPS training manual – one of my very first clients was that typical client that needed to get into the bathroom. It was the older lady.

**Tom:** Rob, tell me your typical customer and your most asked-for changes and how you handle those.

**Rob:** It's a family decision that's being made. The children, who are in their 50s, are doing something to help their parents. In many of the projects, we are actually moving the parent in with the children, so we are finishing out living space in the house or adding on to the house. We did one last year where we added about 1,000 square feet and created an entire suite for the older parent. Typically it's more along the line of adding an extremely large bathroom or closets or revamping one end of the home, tearing out everything, creating what was two baths, a bedroom and a closet – turning that into one bedroom with big walk-in closets and a large bath area. The projects are running from \$50,000 to \$140,000. We're marketing this to those clients as changing their homes so that their parents can move in with them, protecting their equity, giving their parents privacy so they can all live together – but not throwing the money into a nursing home system.

**Tom:** Pat, you might have different views

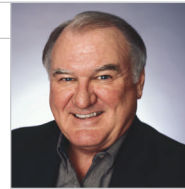


Patricia Nunan, CKD, CKBR, CAPS  
Lifestyles Design

Located in rural Perkiomenville, Pa., which has a population of about five hundred, LifeStyles Design's focus is to work with the elderly and people with disabilities – clients who make up about 50 percent of the firm's business. Pat Nunan has been in the business about 15 years – 5 years as owner of LifeStyles Design.

Photo by Ed Wheeler





**Tom Swartz**  
Contributing Editor

on that.

**Pat:** Actually I agree on one point – bringing the families together so that they don't lose their equity. That's one of the things that I see is the hardest for the families – having to sell out everything and basically give up your life to an assisted living or nursing facility. And once you're in there, you're stuck. You can't come back out again because you've given up all your equity and your finances. There's a lot of other things that are tied to this – it's not just remodeling and doing the physical changes – it's all the services that are attached to it. When you're in your 70s and 80s and still very active, you may still need services like home care or cleaning or transportation.

**Tom:** Just as a follow-up, Pat, give me your average cost for a normal, average project.

**Pat:** Doing a bathroom is my typical project from about \$30,000 to \$45,000 for a gut and replace or converting a large bedroom into a bathroom. The majority of my jobs, especially with my government projects, are working with the 5-by-7-foot bathroom, and maybe we can take a little bit of a closet. We're able to gut and redo those bathrooms for under \$20,000. That's basic with no frills. It's getting a little tough to stay under that but we're still able to find a few contractors willing to work with us to keep the price down. But once you get into the large projects, we're up into the \$45,000 price range.

**Tom:** Rob, does your sales presentation differ for aging in place or universal design versus your typical remodeling project?

**Rob:** No, it typically doesn't – it's a very consultative sale: sitting down and discussing the options that they have. We have found that aging in place and universal design actually fit the needs of

all our clients. We're putting certified aging in place techniques into our regular remodeling jobs because they make so much sense when it's done properly. You don't feel you are walking into a hospital setting – a white, sterile room where everything is chrome. You can plug in all of this knowledge and information on a regular job because it makes sense.

**Pat:** Universal design is just good design – it's not handicapped design.

**Tom:** Do you use the same presentation or do you do remodeling, Pat, outside of this?

**Pat:** I do some remodeling. I'm mostly designing and working with other remodelers and then some projects I take on myself. I don't have any employees; there's just me.

**Tom:** How important is certification for CAPS, which stands for...?

**Rob:** Certified Aging in Place Specialist. I was extremely pleased with it. I really got a lot out of the course. I was really surprised at the information that I didn't have until I attended the course. We have two or three other people from the company that are now pursuing their designation – they'll have that finished up in June. But it's something that immediately gives – for those clients who have heard about it – a deeper comfort level. It's someone who is specifically trained to meet those needs. And that has opened several doors for us. We have a lot of opportunities to speak to local colleges, design classes, churches, civic groups that we wouldn't have otherwise and to get this information across to them.

**Pat:** I think CAPS brings a little more awareness to other people's needs. When you go into the CAPS program, you learn a little more about compassion, about the people you are serving.

Their needs are a little bit different, the products you use are going to be different, how you approach the project is going to be different. It's just becoming aware of other options out there.

**Tom:** How does a remodeling contractor get CAPS certified?

**Pat:** Sign up for it. I took the training at the Remodeling Show. It's three days. People who are already certified in something don't need to take the third day, because the third day is about



**Robert Baugher, CGR, CGB, CAPS**  
Baugher Design & Remodel

Baugher Design & Remodel is located in Homewood, Ala., a suburb of Birmingham with a population of just over a million. The focus has been on design and remodeling but began aging in place projects about 15 or 20 years ago. This is Baugher's 33<sup>rd</sup> year in business. The company does \$1.5 million a year and has 10 employees.

*Photo by Marc Bonderenko/Getty Images*



ethics and business practices, and all of us have had that training already.

**Rob:** You could go to the National Association of Home Builders Web site ([www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org)). We've had many of the teachers come to the Birmingham area.

**Tom:** *I just did Working With and Marketing to Aging in Place People and Home Modifications. I thought they were two of the finest courses that NAHB has put together in their whole continuing education. It was thorough, it wasn't redundant, it had good examples. It was very statistic minded and this is a very statistical business.*

*It sounds to me like we agree that this is a market that is going to grow, not shrink. Where would you suggest that someone go to take advantage of the opportunity?*

**Rob:** One of the simplest things to do is to write up a press release and submit it to your local paper. You need to get this information out to the public. I would also contact some of the editorial staff of the real-estate section of your newspaper, or the lifestyle section or living section, and let them know what you've done. We were contacted recently by an extremely popular magazine saying that they've been flooded by people asking about this and they don't know what they're talking about. You've got magazines and newspapers, radio programs, even local television news stations that are always hungry for stories.

You have to change your perspective – instead of coming in as a beggar, you're coming in and solving their problem, bringing them this information.

As soon as you do a project, you need to get pictures of that and get that out in the media. We actually had one of our projects picked up off AP wire. They took the same pictures, rewrote the article, stuck it in their magazine for another group up in Indiana. There's a hunger for it.

**Tom:** *Pat, a contractor is coming to you and saying he wants to network with you. How does he get started?*

**Pat:** How I got started was working with my local college and making contacts with the people at the college. I was very involved with their local human resources department because they were the ones who were in contact with families. Local chambers of commerce, Rotary. I also network a lot with people in different agencies – agencies for cerebral palsy, MS, the blind. Every county has an office on aging. Those are the people who are calling for help, and they don't know where to send them. So I've been very successful marketing in a whole different arena than what Rob has been marketing to.

**Tom:** *It looks like we might have two completely different areas that we're looking at.*

**Pat:** There's a strong need for education with these agencies because they don't know either. They know about how to treat the disability or the aging, but they don't know how to physically help these people.

What I've been doing is teaching small seminars in our area on aging. We go in and give little talks at senior centers. Our Age in Place Council has been setting up classes at high schools. They have continuing education classes that are free. They will publicize for us, they'll set everything up and we'll go in as teams. I'll go in with a remodeler and somebody that handles the technology part, somebody who handles the lifts and the glides. Most people don't realize that things can be changed and it doesn't cost a fortune.

I do a lot of government work but I also get a lot of referrals from other people who have heard about me through the government. The one opportunity that has been really helpful has been working with the local county – it's called an access program, and it's funded by the state. Because of that program, I've been able to get my name out into the public and then I end up getting private pay clients

because of it.

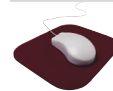
**Tom:** *We went to the local hospital to the physical therapist, but what we found was that in a lot of cases, most of these people didn't know where to go for government assistance and they didn't have any money for private pay. The physical therapists get very attached to their clients, and so we were being asked to do a lot of the small stuff pro bono. How can a remodeling contractor or a designer set this up so it's profit-centered and you can make some money at it?*

**Pat:** I do so much government work, and that's paid for by the government. I have a set fee – sometimes it's a win, sometimes it's a lose, but it sort of washes out.

**Tom:** *You're okay with the pay schedule of the government?*

**Pat:** They're not the greatest. This is not Medicare in Pennsylvania – it's a totally different program. We have a set, fair price, and it's OK. It's not the greatest but for me, there's a different kind of satisfaction out of it. I get something out of those projects that I can never get out of the biggest, fanciest remodeling project. You're filling a need for somebody who desperately needs something – not somebody who just wants something.

There are so many heartbreaking stories of people who have been taken advantage of. Central Pennsylvania is a very depressed area, and these people have had contractors come in there and tell them horrible things. So you just have to come in and reassure the people, "We aren't taking advantage of you, and we're trying to do the best thing for you." It's basically just common sense. These contractors have come in and done outlandish things, and we're trying to fix it. **PR**



For the rest of the discussion on aging in place opportunities and more **Best Practices**, visit [www.ProRemodeler.com/PRbestpractices](http://www.ProRemodeler.com/PRbestpractices)





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**Doug Dwyer**  
Contributing Editor

# Student of Business and Life

Seniors will graduate from high schools, technical schools or colleges this month. At this point, many people throw their mortarboards in the air and say

"I am finished studying and learning!" For those with that mentality, graduation actually is the beginning of the end. Although these people may have graduated from school, they have not graduated to the next level of growth in life or business.

How does this relate to you and your remodeling business? We experience the same stagnation when we get to the point when we think we have finally arrived and can go on autopilot. Most of the time when I have fallen into this trap, I didn't realize it until it was too late. The business suffered for lack of the influence of new knowledge, and we drifted away from some of the basics.

About five years ago, I was thinking about whether or not to attend an annual association meeting and educational event. "I have been in this business for almost 20 years," I thought to myself. "Will I hear anything new and will it be worth the time invested?" At the last minute, I decided to go.

Some of what was presented was new and exciting, while other sessions were covering the basics. Even the basic classes reminded me of things to reinforce and gave me time to think about areas that needed improvement. If the event had stopped there, it was still well worth the trip.

The thing that really caught my attention and gave me new inspiration to go to the next level, however, was meeting a guy who had tremendous

results with his company. The sales it was achieving per location for a niche business were very impressive. It stopped me in my tracks, and I thought to myself, "Wow! If they can achieve that in their business, then in the kitchen and bath remodeling niche, we could double or triple that!"

We don't always know what we are going to learn at an event, but one thing is for sure: if you don't go, you'll never find out. The most successful people I know in business and life are continuously learning.

Besides being active in the remodel-

**The most successful people I know**  
in business and life are continuously learning.

ing industry, I am also heavily involved in the franchising industry. At the recent International Franchise Association convention, I was talking to the president and co-founder of Subway restaurants, Fred DeLuca, and I asked him why he continues to attend every year. He stated, "Simple. To see old friends and catch up on what's been going on."

It's not always pure educational sessions (although that's a huge part of it) that brings value to attendees and our businesses. Networking and finding one great contact can save years in the development of our next innovation. Making new friends to bounce ideas off of and to discuss the pros and cons with is an invaluable experience and makes

events more enjoyable. Another benefit of attending industry conferences is the chance to prospect for your next hire by asking for referrals or finding someone who wants to make a change and would be a great match for your business.

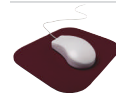
Here is a list of different ways to be a student of business and life: read magazine articles and books; listen to educational CDs; attend local, regional or national association training or other specialized training events; network. For a quantum leap in your business and life, hire a coach or consultant, or find a mentor.

Make the investment of time, energy and money in continuous learning. As leaders, when any of us stops learning and growing, so will our business. The old saying is, we are either ripe and

rooting or green and growing. The illusion is that there is a neutral spot.

As far as education is concerned, becoming a student of life and of business is the most valuable course to enroll in for ourselves, our families, our friends and our businesses. In addition to reading this magazine, what will you do this quarter to grow and learn? **PR**

*Doug Dwyer is president and chief stewarding officer of DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen by Worldwide, one of the nation's largest remodeling franchises. He can be reached at [doug.dwyer@dwyergrgroup.com](mailto:doug.dwyer@dwyergrgroup.com).*



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# Break-

Five remodelers tell how straying from the occasional rule of remodeling benefits their companies

# ing the

By Alicia Garceau  
Contributing Editor

# Rules

**As children, rules were put in place** for our safety. If, for example, you ever had a close call with a car while crossing the street, you realized why your parents warned, “Look both ways before crossing the street.” Similarly, the tenets of remodeling exist for the welfare of the industry as well as the success of an individual’s business.

A remodeler, unlike a young child dashing blindly across a street, can weigh the risks and rewards associated

with breaking the rules. Whether a remodeler adheres strictly to the industry’s tenets or picks and chooses which remodeling rules to follow is a matter of personal prerogative.

So do you follow the rules of remodeling, flout them or fall somewhere in between? The following five remodelers stick to the rules of remodeling most of the time; however, they don’t hesitate to bend the occasional tenet if doing so benefits their companies.

“I don’t think you have to be a maverick,” says Andy



Poticha, co-owner of Northbrook, Ill.-based Design Construction Concepts. “I think you have to be very cautious about what rules you chose to break, and you have to understand the consequences.”

### **Rule #1:** **Never allow clients to provide materials**

**Rule-breaking remodeler:** Andy Poticha

**Company:** Design Construction Concepts

**Location:** Northbrook, Ill.

**Years in business:** 15

**Sales volume:** Averages between \$2.5 million and \$3.5 million

It's a familiar story: a client gets a great deal on tile, a pedestal sink or a soaking tub and wants the remodeler to use it as part of a project. Then when the time comes to install the product, something goes awry. The load of tile comes up short. The sink can't be found. The tub has a scratch.



**Andy Poticha is choosy about the types of products he'll allow a customer to supply.** Photo by Marc Berlow

Poticha is no stranger to this remodeling nightmare. One time he agreed to install marble countertops provided by the client, whose child happened to be on a baseball team with the child of a marble fabricator. The fabricator promised Poticha's client a great deal on kitchen countertops and bathroom vanities. But when the countertops weren't on site the day they were supposed to be installed, the savings quickly disappeared for the client. Their absence also caused a domino effect of delays for Poticha's company.

The episode caused Design Construction Concepts to revise its policy on client-supplied materials. No longer will they allow a client to supply standard materials used during a remodeling project. So anything integral to the execution of the project – for example, recessed can lights, pipe, wire, framing materials, windows, doors, tubs, toilets and tile – comes through Design Construction Concepts. However, items that are not integral to the functionality of the project – such as wall sconces, chandeliers, towel bars, toilet paper holders and mirrors – are another story; clients supply decorative items on just about every project. It keeps them happy and gives them a feeling of control, Poticha says.

“I don't need the chandelier up so that I can do something else and something else after that. Whereas if the countertop, sink, or worse – the tile – is not there, I can't set the cabinets, I can't set the countertops, and I can't do anything after that,” Poticha says.

Though a delinquent sconce or damaged chandelier isn't likely to set off a snowball of delays, they will require extra subcontractor hours. Design Construction Concepts covers that in its contract.

“We have them be responsible for having it delivered to the site, placed in the room where it's to be installed. They have to inspect it. If they've done all that prior to installation, then we have no issue. If they haven't done any of that and we go to install it and there's a problem with it, then they are subjected to being billed for additional charges,” Poticha says. While Design Construction Concepts will warranty the labor for the installation of a decorative item, they won't cover material defects.

Of course, the policy on client-supplied decorative materials benefits the company, too.

“If this \$20,000 chandelier comes in brass and it's supposed to be nickel, I don't have to worry about it,” he says. “I don't have to worry about fighting with a factory that I don't typically deal with because these are one-of-a-kind pieces, and we don't have relationships with those vendors.”

### **Rule #2:** **Never let clients do work**

**Rule-breaking remodeler:** Dennis Gehman, CR, CLC, CKBR

**Company:** Gehman Custom Remodeling

**Location:** Harleysville, Pa.

**Years in business:** 16

**Sales volume:** \$3.1 million (2005)

What's the No. 1 rule for Gehman Custom Remodeling?

“I feel [a project] needs to be a win-win for both our



client and us,” says Dennis Gehman, company president and co-owner. With that in mind, Gehman is willing to allow a client to do some of the work – but only if it makes sense for the project and the company is able to make its margins. He estimates that clients do some of the work on about 35 percent of the company’s jobs.

On a recent kitchen renovation, the client happened to be a licensed electrician who worked for a local manufacturing plant. When he proposed that he wire his own project, Gehman agreed to the plan – with a few conditions. First, the electrician had to pull his own permit and schedule the inspection for the work. Gehman’s contract also included a clause that would have imposed a \$500-per-day penalty if the electrician failed to complete his end of the project on time.

“Often times it scares people off and we really want the liability to be on them and the work that they’re doing. It certainly has made some people say, ‘Nah. It’s not worth it. You guys take care of it.’” Gehman says. “Other people have done it and done it well.”

The electrician was one who did it well. Gehman Custom Builders gutted the kitchen and gave the electrician three days plus a weekend to complete his portion of the job. The electrician came in ahead of schedule.

### **Rule #3:** **Find your niche**

**Rule-breaking remodeler:** Bob Peterson, CGR, CAPS

**Company:** ABD

**Location:** Fort Collins, Colo.

**Years in business:** 16

**Sales volume:** \$3.2 million (2005)

“Our rule is ‘If it’s remodeling, it’s our niche.’ We specialize in kitchens, basements, additions, great rooms, exterior, windows, siding, roofing ...” says Bob Peterson, co-owner and founder of ABD. “We’re a company where 75 percent of our business is repeat business or very, very qualified referrals so we are not going to let those people get away.”

By casting a wide net, Peterson’s sales volume, which was \$3.2 million in 2005, is on-target to be \$5.5 million in 2006.

“I believe it increases volumes but can reduce margins slightly. It seems that if we give a bit in some areas, we are able to make it up in other [ways] due to the trust bending [the rules] creates,” Peterson says.

Peterson isn’t afraid to venture outside of his company’s comfort zone if it means pleasing a repeat or referral client while turning a profit.

“It means we do projects once in a while that we may

### **Some Rules Should Never be Broken**

- ▶ Put everything in writing — contracts, change orders, warranties, punchlists and so on.
- ▶ Never proceed without a signed contract and down payment.
- ▶ Pull all required permits.
- ▶ You, not the homeowner, are the general contractor.
- ▶ Payments must be received on-time.
- ▶ Track the cost of doing business and the cost of each job.

not have down to an exact science,” he says. In one case, a repeat customer called ABD to do a basement job. While Peterson’s company is well versed in finishing basements, this project called for creating the basement from the existing crawlspace – something ABD had only done once before.

Peterson was upfront with the client about his limited experience with a project of this type, but he promised the client that if they were patient with ABD, they would be as pleased with the basement as they were with the previous project ABD had completed for them.

Peterson balanced his enthusiasm with experience by hiring a subcontractor engineer who came highly recommended by colleagues and an excavating subcontractor who had several similar jobs under his belt.

Peterson acknowledges that venturing into new territory can cost him a few points on markup (although he never gives more than five percent) but he feels it’s worth it if the clients become part of the company’s referral network. It ends up paying off in the long run, he says. Peterson only bends the rules if he feels the project is exciting and visible enough that it will result in future leads – especially ones in desirable neighborhoods.

### **Rule #4:** **Don’t mix business and family**

**Rule-breaking remodeler:** Tim Sweeney

**Company:** Sweeney Construction Co.

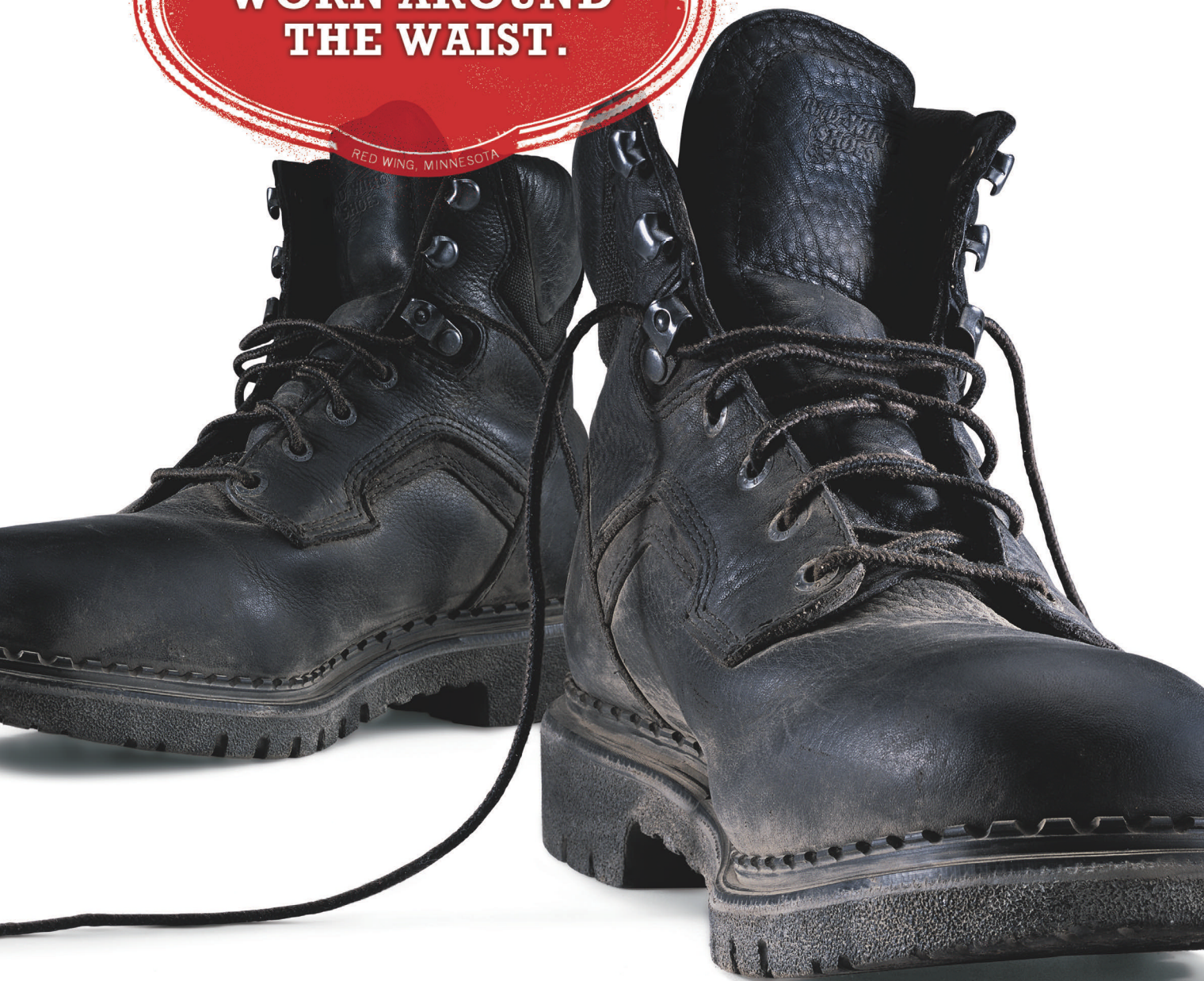
**Location:** Madison, Wis.

**Years in business:** 60

**Sales volume:** \$3.2 million (2005)

“Nepotism is alive and well in our company,” jokes Tim Sweeney, a partner of Sweeney Construction. The company roster includes his brother and sister-in-law as





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well as his wife, Linda. Linda joined the company as a partner five years ago after the animal hospital she had managed for 20 years came under new ownership. She left the practice and took a year off to figure out what she wanted to do next.

"The whole time I'm raising my hand and going 'over here,'" Sweeney says. He knew Linda had grown the animal hospital from a one-vet practice to one with multiple doctors and a national reputation with a client base to match. Sweeney thought her experience would be an asset to his remodeling company.

"I knew her talents and skills coming in," he says, "and I knew that she was going to very easily show what she could bring to the table." He proposed the idea to Linda, who expressed interest but had concerns. First, there was trepidation over the fact that both husband and wife would be drawing income from the same company. Also, the couple worried that too much togetherness might strain their marriage. They sat down and openly discussed potential pitfalls. Linda's main concern was that she wanted real responsibility – not just busywork because she was an owner's wife.

Her primary responsibility is what Sweeney calls the company's "first client touch." All new clients are filtered through Linda. She also designs projects for clients and works closely with the company estimators to help them come up with accurate numbers for each project.

"She's quite passionate about what she does," he says, calling Linda a driving force for the company. "My wife has folded nicely into our company."

## **Rule #5:** **Never start a project** **before you're ready**

**Rule-breaking Remodelers:** Jeff Jertberg and Bob Jertberg

**Company:** VanBerg Construction

**Location:** San Diego

**Years in business:** 18

**Sales volume:** \$3 million (2005)

For VanBerg Construction, a design-build firm that works collaboratively with several independent architects and interior designers, the typical time frame between an initial client consultation and the start of construction is about six months. So when an interior designer approached co-owners and cousins Jeff Jertberg and Bob Jertberg with a condo conversion and said her clients wanted to start in just six weeks, they ran in the other direction, right? Wrong.

The Jertbergs had partnered with the interior designer

in the past. A previous collaboration with her had been prominently featured on the glossy pages of a regional home and garden magazine. The article garnered plenty of buzz for the company, and VanBerg repurposed it for company marketing materials.

"It was a really sweet project," Jeff says.

This time around, the project was located in a high-end community and the homeowners wanted to convert the Tuscan-inspired interior into something more contemporary. It also needed "soft" universal features to accommodate the husband, who suffered from a neurological disorder. Thinking that this might be another plum project, the Jertbergs agreed to meet with the homeowners.

"You read your clients when you meet with them, and it just seemed that they had the potential to be picture-perfect clients," Jeff says. They agreed to take on the project.

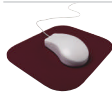
One of the strengths of VanBerg Construction – and one that it markets to potential clients – is that the company does thorough planning before breaking ground to maximize efficiency and minimize additional costs. With the accelerated start date on this project, that wasn't possible.

"The design package wasn't nearly as complete as we would like," says Bob, and that resulted in a "design-as-you-go" approach. Because of that, they made sure the clients were aware that costly change orders were likely. The original budget for the fixed-price project came in at around \$300,000. Since then, there have been two change orders for more than \$100,000. A third substantial change order is in the works.

While the Jertbergs were flexible on start date, they had to reset the clients' expectations about project completion. The company's completion date was a couple of months farther out than the clients originally wanted, and the change orders have added to the project's timeline, but the homeowners' only concern was to occupy the condo as soon as possible.

"We let them know upfront that we're not going to tell them what they wanted to hear because obviously that sets us up for failure and sets them up for disappointment," Jeff says.

In the end, the project will add somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1 million to the company's coffers. In addition to turning a profit on the job, VanBerg Construction will have another magazine-worthy project to add to its portfolio. **PR**



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# Growing Up Green

A remodeler takes an energy-efficient approach to his own second-story addition

By Wendy A. Jordan  
Senior Contributing Editor

**Back in 2000**, clients of Classic Homeworks, the Denver residential remodeling company Rick Pratt founded, were not too excited about green remodeling. Yet he had always considered himself an environmentalist and wanted to introduce energy-saving, environmentally friendly designs and products to his business.

So he did a green remodel on his own house, a 1912 bungalow in an old, in-town neighborhood. Pratt purchased the single-story home in 1991, intending to fix it up and sell it. After modernizing the 900-square-foot basement and 1,170-square-foot first floor, then adding a



**A small house on a tight lot, the bungalow was a perfect candidate for a second-floor addition. The trim, roof pitch, harmonizing colors and a chimney extension made from matching bricks complement the architecture of the 1912 house.** After photo by Fotoimagery.com



garage, Pratt designed a pop-top addition with a master suite, laundry room and two bedrooms for his teenage children. The 1,050-square-foot second floor would make room for a family room and spacious office on the main floor where bedrooms had been.

"We finally had a house my wife really loves," Pratt says. "She was not going anywhere."

Pratt seized the opportunity to build the addition with green products and systems he'd rarely been able to try. The end result: 90 percent more aboveground square footage (50 percent more total square footage), with no increase in electricity usage and only a 28 percent rise in the heating bill.

### Green product options

As he designed the pop-top, Pratt considered energy savings, environmental conservation and health. For energy efficiency, Pratt selected a 90 percent efficient sealed combustion furnace; double-pane, argon-filled low-E windows that reduce solar heat gain; and a washing machine that uses three or four times less water than conventional models — it has a high rpm spin cycle that gets so much water out that the dryer doesn't have to run long. All of the new lighting uses compact fluorescent bulbs, which provided one of the project's biggest net energy gains.

Other product picks saved water: The after-market showerheads use less water than typical fixtures and the bathroom switch activates the hot water recirculation pump when someone wants to take a shower.

He chose the fiber-cement, stucco-look siding panels for their long lifespan. They look great, he says, and hold paint and finishes "far better than natural wood products." Some products, such as the solvent-free construction glue and the low-phenol formaldehyde OSB panels used on the exterior sheathing and part of the sub-floor, are environmentally friendly because they don't off-gas as much as standard materials.

Pratt selected other products because they save resources by using recycled materials. Take the roofing made from old tires. "You can see the texture on the underside and patches from flats on some," he says. Also noteworthy: the cellulose insulation made of recycled newspaper, and the drywall, composed of gypsum created from power plant waste material. Pratt conserved resources himself by putting the home's old roof rafters to work as nonstructural ceiling framing.

He also took all lumber scraps, copper pipe cuttings

## THE FINANCIALS

**P**op-tops are popular in Denver, where homeowners want to add space without sacrificing their yards.

In 2000, housing values in Pratt's neighborhood could support a \$210,000-plus addition, which is what Pratt would have charged a client. (Today housing values would support a \$250,000 addition.) Classic Homeworks uses 35 percent as a standard gross profit target.

That said, because this was an "inside job" — Rick Pratt's own house remodeled almost entirely by his company's own crew — Pratt chose to focus on learning about building green rather than on building profit.

For example, he had the framing done by Classic Homeworks crews instead of a subcontractor so that they could become proficient in the new methods.

"It was more complex than we had expected and took much more time," Pratt admits. "We would not have been able to charge clients for the labor overruns."

As with many clients who opt for a "green" remodel, price was not a top priority for Pratt in choosing products. Instead, he looked at conservation, health, home performance and life-cycle cost. As long as he was installing low-E windows in the new second floor, he replaced the first floor windows with energy-efficient units. This was an unplanned investment of about \$10,000, but a smart one from an energy-efficiency and comfort standpoint. The tire roof cost more than other

recycled rubber roofing products Pratt priced out, but he preferred it. The wool carpeting? "We paid easily twice as much for that carpet" compared to synthetic carpet, Pratt says, but it's all-natural, it "cleans magically," and "it should last many times longer" than other carpeting. "If I had sold these [upgrades] to a client, they would have paid for them with full markup."

### Budget History

|                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Estimate:                          | <b>\$210,000*</b> |
| Estimated cost to produce:         | <b>\$135,000</b>  |
| Add-ons and overruns:              | <b>\$25,000</b>   |
| Final price of job:                | <b>\$240,000*</b> |
| Actual cost to produce:            | <b>\$160,000</b>  |
| Gross profit:                      | <b>\$80,000*</b>  |
| Estimated gross profit percentage: | <b>35%*</b>       |
| Actual gross profit percentage:    | <b>33.3%*</b>     |

*\*If this project were billed to a client  
All figures represent 2000 prices.*

and cardboard boxes from the construction site to a recycling center.

### Progressive framing and energy efficiency

Typical of older houses in town, Pratt's bungalow had double masonry exterior walls without a speck of insulation between them, says energy retrofit specialist Dennis

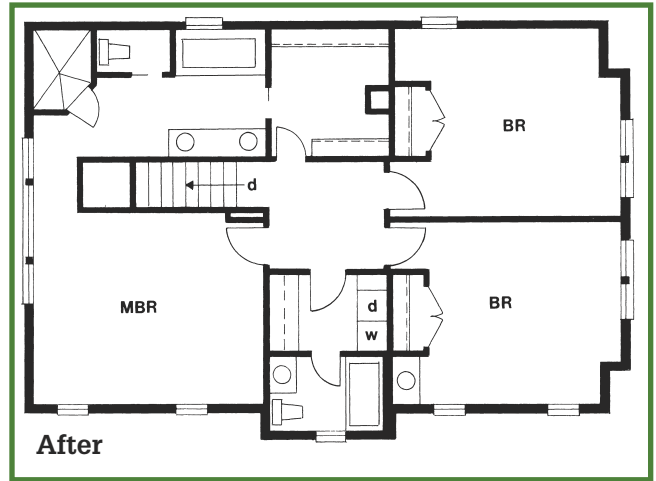




In the master bedroom, low-E windows with accordion blinds allow light and views but cut glare and heat gain. A glass-block wall at the head of the stairs, behind the bedroom's partial wall, draws in natural light, illuminating the stairwell. Photo by Fotoimagery.com

Brachfeld. Even some newer houses in the area aren't insulated, says Brachfeld, a certified home energy rater whose Denver company, About Saving Heat Co. ([www.aboutsavingheat.com](http://www.aboutsavingheat.com)), participated as insulation contractor and consultant in this remodel. Wall insulation did not become a Colorado code requirement until 1979.

For that reason, Pratt needed a plan to segregate and control energy use in the pop-top. Rather than open the



existing building, he built the second floor on top of the existing first-floor ceiling. He left the furnace in the basement to heat the existing home, then added a new energy-efficient one in the attic to use exclusively for the addition. He created a tight envelope around the pop-top to prevent air leaks, gluing the wall plates to the sub-floor and caulking and sealing all lumber connections.

An overly tight house can seal in toxins, but Pratt didn't need to worry about that. "Half of my above-grade house is old," he points out, "so there still is plenty of ventilation, and the bathroom fans still allow ventilation."

The biggest challenge of the job, says production manager Jim Wilkinson (then a lead carpenter), was the framing. "This was the first house I'd framed with TJIs for rafters," Wilkinson says. Pratt specified the I-joists because they are resource-conserving, straight and lightweight. But because each joist rafter was not a solid wood", explains Wilkinson, "We had to put plywood on each side of the ends before we could install them into the hangers."

A carpenter since 1981, Wilkinson also faced a learning curve with optimum value engineering (OVE), which calls for framing with 2x6s 24 inches on center, with open corner framing, ladder blocks for interior wall connections, and open headers. OVE uses fewer studs and more open wall connections, which seemed to go against common sense.

"The natural mindset of most carpenters is that bigger is better," Wilkinson says.

Now Wilkinson's a convert to the OVE framing system. "It saves trees and creates more insulation space," he says. "We do this on every project now."

#### Heating and cooling package

Pratt and Brachfeld put their heads together to design an

## SNAPSHOT



**Rick Pratt**, founder and former owner of Classic Homeworks

**Location:** Denver

**Type of company:** Full-service design-build remodeling

**Staff model:** 4 office, 4 field

**Years in business:** 20

**Sales history:**

|      |             |
|------|-------------|
| 2002 | \$1,300,000 |
|------|-------------|

|      |             |
|------|-------------|
| 2003 | \$1,550,000 |
|------|-------------|

|      |             |
|------|-------------|
| 2004 | \$1,550,000 |
|------|-------------|

|      |             |
|------|-------------|
| 2005 | \$1,350,000 |
|------|-------------|

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| 2006 (projected) | \$1,600,000 |
|------------------|-------------|

**Annual jobs:** 15 to 20

**Workweek:** 45 hours

**Software:** BIS Professional, Chief Architect, Microsoft Office, Microsoft Streets & Trips, ACT!

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insulation plan that covered all bases. Typically pop-top plumbing is run in the 18-inch cavity between the first-floor ceiling and the second floor. In Denver's cold climate, Brachfeld says, "Poorly built pop-tops can sometimes see pipes freeze." To prevent problems in the Pratt house, he blew a 24-inch-wide ring of insulation around the perimeter of that cavity, helping to define and seal the second-floor envelope. His company also filled the addition walls and roof with densely packed cellulose insulation.

The attic has minimum R-40 insulation and good roof and soffit vents. The furnace occupies a small, fully insulated room in the attic, so no heat is wasted. All heating ducts are insulated with a minimum R-15 blanket insulation and then covered with cellulose. On Brachfeld's advice, Pratt runs the furnace fan continually.

"A furnace wastes the most heat when it is cycling on and off," Brachfeld says. "If the fan is running, you deliver more of the heat you pay for."

The house is not air-conditioned, yet remains comfortable even in the summer. "The warmest it gets inside is 78 percent of the outside temperature," Pratt says. "Most pop-tops are 90 degrees if it's 100 degrees outside." A whole-house attic fan runs all night during the summer, while open windows draw cool air into the bedrooms and expel hot attic air. Each bedroom has a ceiling fan with curved, propeller-like blades that push 50 percent more air than other ceiling fans, says Pratt.

### Weighing the results

Though the house practically doubled in size, Pratt's electrical usage did not increase at all. He attributes most of that achievement to the lighting, because the savings from the extra-efficient washer and dryer were probably offset by the installation of the whole-house fan.

Post-remodel, Pratt's heating bills rose only 28 percent on average despite the home's increased size. He was delighted.

After 6 years living in the remodeled

home, Pratt wanted to test its performance. He brought Brachfeld in to conduct a blower door test to measure air leakage in early 2006.

"It was very eye-opening," says Pratt. "There were some leaks in the heating system; we should have installed fully ducted return air rather than using the framing bays as ducts."

Most air leaks, however, were occurring on the main floor, at the front door, around the fireplace, around some windows, at an old rear addition and in the exterior masonry walls where there are cracks.

In retrospect, Brachfeld and Pratt realized they should have paid more attention to the existing structure instead of focusing all their efforts on the additions.

"I have a lot of caulking to do on the exterior and interior of the [original] house," Pratt says.

In hindsight, Pratt notes a few other lessons learned. If he had to do it again, he says, he wouldn't bother salvaging the old rafters: "It took too much time and energy to prep them for use." He'd choose a different recycled rubber roofing – although the hail-proof rubber material earned Pratt a \$450 annual discount on his homeowner's insurance, this particular product is fading – "failing cosmetically" – and the manufacturer is no longer in business.

He'd also test the whole house at the outset. "Everybody should test every house they work on," he says. "They will learn a lot from this process." **PR**

### PRODUCTS LIST

**Cabinetry:** Merillat. **Ceiling fan:** Hampton Bay. **Ceramic tile:** Dal-Tile. **Construction glue:** Franklin Titebond. **Deck:** Weyerhaeuser ChoiceDek. **Faucets:** Delta. **Furnace:** Rheem. **Housewrap:** Dupont Tyvek. **I-joists, roof framing:** Louisiana-Pacific. **Plumbing fixtures:** Kohler. **Siding:** James Hardie Hardipanel stucco. **Windows:** Weather Shield Custom Shield. **Washer, dryer:** Asko.



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master suite

## Let the Sunshine In

A master suite radiates by capitalizing on roof lines that seem to reach for the clouds

**I**magine finding a breathtaking parcel of lakeshore property a mere 80 feet from Minnesota's Lake William, cousin to the greater Lake Minnetonka – and the area of the home closest to the lake is the garage. Brian Jones, owner of Jones Design Build, planned to turn the tiny rambler into a home for his own family.

Jones, who has a master's degree in architecture, envisioned a contemporary house with a cottage or cabin feel that took advantage of the lake views. The remodel converted the existing 900-square-foot, three-bedroom struc-

**Remodeler and architect:** Jones Design Build, Shorewood, Minn.

**Project location:** Shorewood, Minn.

**Age of home:** Approx. 25 years old

**Scope of work:** Create a loft-like, 650-square-foot master suite with plenty of light in an update of a 1950s lakeshore rambler

ture into a 3,000-square-foot, four-bedroom home with a vaulted great room and lakeside screened porch and deck. A three-story addition made room for a walk-out basement playroom, first-floor children's rooms and a master suite – bedroom, balcony, bathroom

A wall of built-ins houses the television, bookshelf, dresser drawers and a fireplace. Dividing the space with a low center wall provides privacy while retaining the loft feel. The window above the bedroom door allows light from a window on the opposite side of the home to enter the master suite.

and walk-in closets – on the top floor.

The focal point of the master suite is what Jones calls the window wall, which celebrates the beauty, imagination and range of variety within core, basic shapes.

"It's the first thing you see when you



come in,” Jones says. “The circle draws your eyes upward, and the contrast of how the other panes are laid gives the wall its own presence. It brings in great fall colors, and in the winter it opens up and lets you see the lake.”

To create consistency with the rest of the home, Jones carried the same woods into the master suite. Instead of mahogany with maple highlights, he used the reverse template to make the space light and airy.

The mahogany accents – window and door trim, cabinetry moldings, the ceiling fan, a cross band in the floor inlay – anchor the sun-strewn space and give it sophistication and personality. Each square of the floor inlay echoes the directional variation of each of the window wall’s smaller squares.

The master bathroom features his-



**Italian ceramic tile gives the look of stone at a lower price. Using pocket doors to separate the toilet area and the closets saves floor space. The built-in above the linen closet houses a television that Jones uses for quick weather updates in the morning.**

and-her sinks, a whirlpool tub and a walk-in shower accented with a band of glass tile that was also used to create a tile pattern against the shower’s back wall. The walk-in closets are accessible from both the bathroom and bedroom. The cost of the entire space is between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

Clean, crisp and coaxing, the subtlety of the suite’s style shows that using quality, high-grade materials can make a simple space stand out. The finished product is a voluminous yet clearly defined space that doesn’t feel overwhelming or impersonal. **PR**

– Meghan Haynes

## PRODUCTS LIST

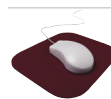
**Bathroom fixtures:** Grohe, Kohler, Toto. **Ceramic tile:** Casa Dolce Casa. **Exterior doors:** Marvin. **Interior doors:** Woodharbor. **Paint:** Benjamin Moore. **Lavatories:** Kohler. **Windows:** Marvin.



## Hiding Posts and Beams

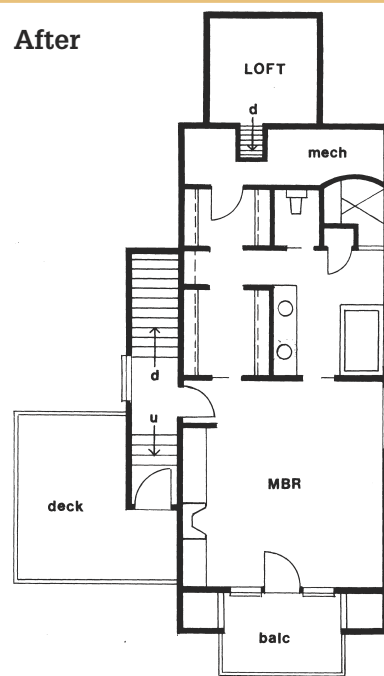
Inspired by a previous project with a vaulted ceiling, Brian Jones of Jones Design Build knew using one in his own home would allow more sunlight inside and capitalize on the lakefront views. The long spans of the roof rafters, however, required a support post to be exactly where Jones wanted a circular window.

To provide the needed support, Jones built a header above the round window and split the post from there, running the split post through post pockets that were fitted on the adjacent windows at the manufacturer. Because the jambs of the adjacent window wrap around the support post, Jones knew he’d have to space those windows closer to the circular window than he normally would. He was able to accommodate both the post and the window framing in a 3- to 4-inch space.



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# A Taste of Energy Efficiency

## Spice up kitchen profits with five key ingredients

By Glen Salas  
PATH Partners

**L**ate last year, my wife and I contracted with a full-service home improvement company to redo the small, dark kitchen in our 1950s-era Maryland rambler. Having worked as a designer and consultant in residential and commercial energy efficiency for many years, efficiency was a priority.

The 130-square-foot kitchen still had its original exterior door and single-glazed, aluminum frame window. We planned to expand the kitchen by removing the wall separating it from a 120-square-foot bedroom, building an island and converting the bedroom closet into a small pantry.

Three months later, when the last cabinet door was adjusted, I realized remodelers who build to code-prescribed efficiency standards are missing golden opportunities – and leaving money on the (kitchen) table.

### The five ingredients

Probably more than any other room, kitchens have evolved dramatically over recent decades. Beyond accommodating contemporary trends and tastes, kitchen remodeling also looks to available technologies to help combat rising energy and water costs.

Here are the five ingredients of an energy- and water-efficient kitchen, no matter its layout, size or amenities. They are all easy to find and install.

#### 1. Add insulation

Because we were replacing all the cabinets and counters along the outside wall, the remodeler recommended replacing the drywall rather than patch-



**Energy Star doors replaced a single-glazed window and wood door for a vast improvement in daylighting, energy efficiency and ambiance.**

ing and repairing it after demolishing the cabinets. Code did not require us to upgrade the insulation, but I knew that as long as the studs were exposed we should re-insulate, both for comfort and to reduce heating costs.

After tearing out the existing, poorly installed R-3 batts, the contractors filled the 2x4 stud cavities with R-13 fiberglass batt insulation. As in most 1950s homes, the original insulation had been installed with gaps and compressed portions, and the vapor barrier was not flush with the wallboard. With this single step, our outside wall was now better insulated by a factor of four.

#### 2. Install more efficient lighting

Our goals for lighting were to improve the overall lighting level and quality,



install high-efficiency lighting and increase natural daylighting. We met all three with stock products.

For general lighting, we installed a high-efficiency Energy Star-qualified ceiling fan and light. We took care of task lighting with three different fixtures. We used directional three-fixture track lighting to light the main counter and provide warm, atmospheric lighting. With directional four-fixture dimmable track lighting, we lit the new island space. Finally, we lit the sink with a T-5 fluorescent tube mounted under



the cabinet. The T-5 provides excellent light and uses less electricity than standard T-12 fluorescent tubes and even less than the newer T-8s. Though T-5s are often avoided because the light tube causes glare, in its out-of-sight location, it directs ample light toward the work area without the glare.

We increased general overhead lighting efficiency fourfold while maintaining the same lighting level by replacing the incandescent bulbs in the central ceiling fixture with Energy Star-qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs. The new CFLs provide much more natural-looking lighting than the CFLs of just a few years ago, and they last five to 10 times longer than conventional incandescent bulbs.

### 3. Bring the outdoors in

Increasing the daylighting meant increasing the window area. Besides replacing the existing window with an Energy Star-qualified unit, we swapped out the original solid wood door with a low-E, solid glass door. In the former bedroom, we replaced the existing single-glazed, aluminum window with a low-E, solid-glass French double door with sidelights on both sides.

Although these energy-efficient doors cost 10 to 20 percent more than standard doors, we controlled the price by sizing the new door to fit it into the same wall space as the old window. That way, we could use the original header and avoid the cost of structural work.

The total glazed area in the converted bedroom and kitchen increased from 29 to 75 square feet.

### 4. Use Energy Star appliances

Our original kitchen didn't have room for a dishwasher, so we installed a new Energy Star-qualified model, which uses less water and energy than hand washing, according to research from Ohio State University and the Univer-



**Removing the dividing wall opened up the room. Better insulation and high-performance windows and doors allowed most of the baseboard heating to be eliminated.**

sity of Bonn. We kept our 5-year-old Energy Star-qualified refrigerator because it still works well. When we bought it to replace our 15-year-old model, our electrical bill dropped almost \$10 a month. Standards are more stringent now, so a new Energy Star model would save another few dollars per year, but this one was good enough for a few more years.

Energy Star does not qualify microwaves, but we bought one of the more efficient over-the-stove models with a vent fan, which we vented outdoors. This was a space- and money-saving alternative to buying a microwave and a separate ventilation hood. An Energy Star hood would save a few dollars a year in electrical costs and probably be a little quieter, but it would have cost almost \$100 more and would have taken away cabinet space.

The only problem with choosing a microwave unit that doubles as a vent fan is that it is difficult finding published noise levels. I recommend having clients listen to the fans in a store before purchasing a microwave. Remember to vent the fan outdoors. It does no good to return humid, smoky air to the kitchen.

### 5. Install intelligent heating

Here is where the importance of some simple Manual J calculations became clear.

Tearing out an interior wall to expand the kitchen and most of an outside wall to install the French doors required removing that portion of the baseboard heating. We didn't have much wall space left on which to relocate the baseboard heat.

Manual J calculations based on the new and improved kitchen showed that we could replace the original 17 lineal feet of baseboard heating with about 6 lineal feet and still have adequate heating. A remaining kitchen wall had plenty of space for that.

We also made our domestic hot water system a little more efficient by adding a small tankless water heater under the new kitchen sink. Our existing hot water heater is very close to all the other plumbing fixtures – in the basement almost directly below both bathrooms – but about as far as it can get from the kitchen sink. Any time we wanted hot water in the kitchen we turned on the tap and waited ... and waited. With this local tankless heater, hooked up to a separate fixture, we get



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hot water immediately – saving water, time and energy – and we can brew a cup of tea without having to heat a pot on the stove. It's a great addition.

### Everyone wins

Now our once dark, cramped kitchen is open and well-lit. Our electricity bill is down slightly, even though we added a dishwasher, a microwave, a tankless hot water heater, two light fixtures and a ceiling fan with a light. Our fuel oil use is down despite the greatly increased window area.

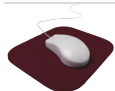
We do not measure our well-water consumption, but it's probably reduced because of the dishwasher and the instant hot water heater.

The remodeler saw his sales increase, thanks to the additional cost of the energy-saving products. And we were so thrilled with the results that we asked him to come back to do more work in other parts of the house.

Did we convert our remodeler? Probably not. The team was fine with all our efficiency suggestions and we had a great relationship, but having been in business for 75 years, they're pretty much set in their ways.

All the more opportunity for you to blaze a new trail. **PR**

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# Doing the Right Thing

## Homes for Our Troops remodels for veterans

By Kimberly Sweet  
Editor

**M**any remodelers and builders donate time, money and materials to housing-oriented charities such as Habitat for Humanity. That's exactly what John Gonsalves planned to do after watching a news report about an American soldier who lost both of his legs in a rocket-propelled grenade attack on a convoy in Iraq.

"It got me thinking about what happened from there," he says.

Assuming there was some kind of organization that modified homes for injured servicemen and servicewomen, he wanted to donate two weeks of time to it. Then he realized no such organization existed.

At that point, Gonsalves made a leap that few ever do: he quit his job to devote himself to doing the right thing. "As soon as I made the decision to do this," he says, "I knew it was going to take my life over."

Two years later, Homes for Our Troops ([www.homesforourtroops.org](http://www.homesforourtroops.org)), the nonprofit organization he founded, has built or remodeled homes for eight veterans of the war in Iraq and has plans for another 11 in the works. Most of the first year was spent raising funds and establishing Homes for Our Troops as a nonprofit corporation.

"I think it was easier to learn how to structure a nonprofit than to start up a nonprofit and have no idea about the



**John Gonsalves**

*Photography by Dave Bradley*





## John Gonsalves, 39

**Organization:** Homes for Our Troops

**Personal background:** A contractor since 1984. Ran his own, primarily residential, general contracting firm. Became construction superintendent for commercial contractor. No military background. Married with a 6-year-old son.

**Employees:** Four office staff and countless volunteers.

**Typical job:** Renovate house to make it handicapped accessible (ramps, bathroom, kitchen) or build new accessible home.

**Market:** Anywhere in the United States.

**Projects:** Eight homes completed to date, with 11 slated for 2006.

**Strategy:** Uses media appearances and high-profile partnerships to increase awareness and raise more money.

**Organization goals:** To provide homes for at least 50 percent of the severely injured veterans who qualify for specially adapted housing grants from the VA.

**Personal goals:** To have Homes for Our Troops outlast him.

## As soon as I made the commitment to do this, I knew it was going to take over my life.

building process," he says. As a construction superintendent for a commercial contractor, he knew how to coordinate big jobs and how to build in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Plus, during his days as a general contractor, he'd done a few handicapped-accessible homes. Two law firms, Holland & Knight and Mintz Levin, worked pro bono to help set up the business side.

Choosing which soldiers to help gets harder all the time, Gonsalves says. "We try to look at who's most severely injured and the family situation and prioritize as best we can," he adds. "The biggest roadblock is raising the money. If we had unlimited funds, we'd help everyone."

To narrow down the applicants, Homes for Our Troops uses the same criteria that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs uses to determine who qualifies for a \$50,000 specially adapted housing grant or a \$10,000 special housing adaptations grant. Most individuals have lost two or more limbs or the use of two or more limbs, or are blind in both eyes. The grant money doesn't go far in modifying or building a home to meet their needs.

"Around here, \$50,000 is a down payment for a house lot," Gonsalves says. "We coordinate our efforts with the VA to allow the veteran to apply for the grant, and we step in and bring the process to the local community."

The organization's first house went to Sgt. Peter Damon of the Massachusetts National Guard. Damon, his wife and two children received the keys to the house this past October. The VA gave Damon, an aircraft mechanic whose hands and forearms were lost when a Blackhawk helicopter tire exploded, \$10,000 to put

toward the home.

Rather than selling projects to clients, Gonsalves now has to sell his projects to the contractors, suppliers and manufacturers upon whose donated labor and materials Homes for Our Troops depends. The process, says Gonsalves, starts with sending press releases to newspapers and television stations near each soldier's hometown. Once word gets out and a few contractors or suppliers contact Homes for Our Troops, he asks them to start networking with their colleagues, customers and staff for other volunteers.

Fifty-nine companies donated labor or materials to Damon's house alone, notes Gonsalves. "My hats are really off to the people in the construction industry," he says. "I didn't realize until they did this how generous they are. They come onto our jobs after working all day, and then work all night. A talented construction person, their time is very valuable when you start putting a price on it."

Though two of the Homes for Our Troops projects have been done in conjunction with "Extreme Home Makeover," which remodels or builds a home in a week, Gonsalves' group usually works at a more normal pace. "The house we did in Massachusetts took us about six months," he says. "When you've got people donating time and materials, I think that timeline is pretty good."

The houses aren't over-the-top, though they tend to have nice finishes such as granite counters. It all depends on what's donated. **PR**

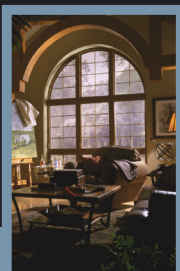


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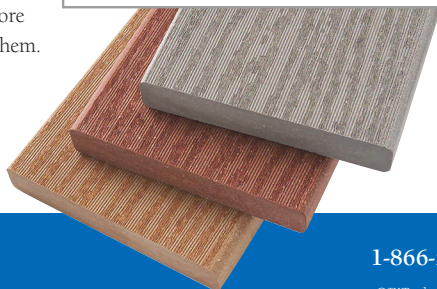
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# Low-Maintenance Lifestyle Drives Decking Market

By Meghan Haynes

Variation in climate and conditions, lot size and zoning restrictions make it difficult to normalize decking trends; however, whether a deck is 350 square feet or 1,500, there is one driving force in all markets, and that's maintenance.

Maintenance is the one common factor in decking projects for two key reasons:

1. The busy, multifaceted lifestyle of today's homeowner necessitates a virtually maintenance free deck. "The trend in society is less maintenance. There are so many things to do with your time, so for customers, it's like, why spend time on your deck when you could be doing something else?" says Pat Nicholson, CR, CEO of Deckmasters Technologies, which is based in Upper St. Clair, Penn., but has additional franchises throughout the state and in Ohio, doing close to 800 decks annually.

2. With the emergence of the trend toward all-season, year-round usability, clients need versatile materials and applications that can successfully withstand multiple conditions.

A universal objective of good deck design is to balance the ability to accommodate larger groups of people



The emergence of low-maintenance decking materials has meant a spike in outdoor living projects in colder, wetter climates. Photo courtesy of Archadeck.

while still being intimate and private enough to woo the homeowner outside even when there's no party. "The goal is to create a nine-month family room where you have both cooking, eating, entertaining, games, etc., but also have it so people just spend their weekend or evenings in the backyard," Nicholson says.

## A Deck of a Different Color

Material choices obviously vary by region, availability and price, but with composite decking gaining market share (up to 20 percent a year over the last 3-4 years in some markets), the wood deck of yesteryear is not the only option for today's customers. Paul Vosen, CR, president of Degenhardt

"The trend in society is less maintenance. There are so many things to do with your time, so for customers, it's like, why spend time on your deck when you could be doing something else?"

— Pat Nicholson, Deckmasters Technologies Inc.



## TRENDS



Adding visual interest to a deck is as simple as creating angled stairs or running decking horizontally. Photo courtesy of Deckmasters.

Home Improvement in Madison, Wis., and Bob Barker, owner of Archadeck of South Puget Sound, in Gig Harbor, Wash., both confirm composites' increasing popularity, saying the material is used in the majority of their projects (each company does approximately 20 projects annually). "The only time we're pricing out wood is when people just want a comparison price," Vosen says. "They know the composites are much more expensive, but the main reason they're even redoing their deck in the first place is because they're tired of wood, so I can't remember the last

time we did a wood deck. And the nice things about composites are that the colors still weather the way that wood would, and using a wood grain composite can keep the look authentic."

In a rainy climate like Washington, customers often opt for the low-maintenance composites because they are thought to better withstand the elements. Barker says the variety in composite color is also a big part of the attraction for his clients, and it's usually their most difficult choice. Using composites also makes it easier to create a bold, innovative two-tone deck in a

wide range of colors. While Barker says two-tone decks are not common in his market and are often cost prohibitive, his company has done some of them. "My customers love the idea of not having to refinish a wood deck and just being able to wash the composite off; it's a great benefit to people who just don't have the time," he says.

A greater variety of options isn't limited to composites, though; as new, "exotic" wood species become more readily available, they make viable choices, too. Dave Tibbetts, owner of Atlanta Decking & Fence Co. of Cumming, Ga., says around 80 percent of his company's approximately 500 annual projects are done in wood, mostly using the southern yellow pine that is readily available in his market. Tibbetts has also incorporated Brazilian Ipe wood and old-growth Siberian larch, noting their respective resistance to water and strength.

### Decking That's Inside-Out

Kitchens are often viewed as the "status" project of choice, a chance for people to really show off to friends, family and neighbors; however, decks have an even greater potential to make a statement because they're outside and readily visible, automatically available for the "how does my deck compare to so-and-so's" scrutiny and jockeying that

## Design Do's and Don'ts

To keep the decking space unencumbered, straightforward and adaptable:

- Keep decks to one level. Though it's tempting to think of multi-level decks as more sophisticated and clever, one-levels often best serve the client in terms of function and cost; unless the deck is quite sizeable, anything more than two levels becomes confusing and affects flow rather than appearing as a sharp and clever design.
- Use built-ins smartly and sparingly. While they tend to be popular for some customers — Barker says many of his customers like built-in benches and planters because of the

functionality and simplicity they bring — too many built-ins can look contrived and limit the homeowner's placement of furniture and accessories.

- Reserve design statements for the augmenting structures, such as the railings, steps and balusters. Using a copper, aluminum or steel-framed cable rail systems or even glass produces a slick, inexpensive look that avoids the feel of what Tibbetts calls an "adult playpen." Trellises, decorative pickets and tree workarounds also help to individualize a space, and incorporating floor inlays, or waterfalls and fountains large or small, can also give a deck personality. ■



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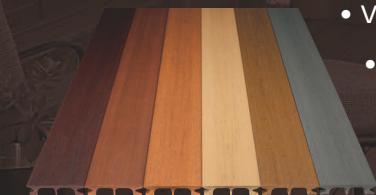
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## TRENDS



Customizing a decking project by adding specialized spaces gives the customer perceived added value. Photo courtesy of Deckmasters.

sometimes fuel remodeling projects. “You want to have a deck that’s nicer or bigger than your neighbors; It’s outside and everyone can see it, so customers really want to floss,” Nicholson says.

In this vein, it’s imperative that the same considerations given to the interior be adapted for a deck to successfully create the “9-month family room.” “What I really try for, and what works for most people, is if you can give them a graceful transition from the deck to the house, where you never feel like you automatically hit a staircase and you cheat the height of the deck downward,” Tibbetts says. “I like to concentrate on widening the steps and impacting or creating views – figure out where

ugly views are and buffer those, but also find the pretty views and focus around them. With a decking project, you are trying to give customers solutions they didn’t even know they needed.”

Creating enclaves, such as pergolas, gazebos and nurseries, and incorporating focal point and signature structures like swings, firepots and fireplaces, also brings an inside-out feel to a deck. “Roofs, screenings, columns and glass enclosures all help to create specialized/ designed spaces within a deck,” Nicholson says. “The idea is to do the deck “stage-built,” leaving room and options to add or adapt later on.”

Lighting – elaborate in number and programming schemes or simple inset

structures – is also a way to make an inside-out presence in a decking area; for example, Barker incorporates lighting in the floor and posts to create a mood befitting evening cocktails. Additionally, giving a deck multipurpose functionality by building an adjacent carport or storage barn or allowing for storage underneath a raised deck gives it relevance and practicality even in the off-season.

### All Decked-Out?

Unlike many other types of remodeling projects, which are driven by the technology and desire for the bells and whistles created by various shelter and appliance industries, decks shine when they are approached simplistically, with primary consideration for spatial relationships rather than features and functions. “A small deck doesn’t have to be a crummy box,” says Tibbetts. “It can be very cut up and interesting, with angles and such.”

“Without a doubt, angles are the key to everything – octagons, clipped corners, diagonal flooring,” Nicholson says. “For example, you make three octagons versus one big square.”

Another trend that’s consistent across markets is that customers are opting to enlarge their decks during the remodeling process, making them 20 to 40 percent larger than the existing footprint. Even though most customers already have the space, it’s also important to identify less obvious areas such as hillsides or portions of a driveway that can be converted into deck space, says Nicholson.

Maybe, then, the best test of a successful decking project is size over substance – though hot tubs and elaborate entertainment systems are great if the customer has the space and budget. At the end of the day, however, the deck is a gathering place – and the more, the merrier.

“A deck is primarily about access, outdoor cooking and entertaining,” Vosen says. “It’s that simple.” ■





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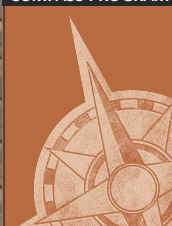
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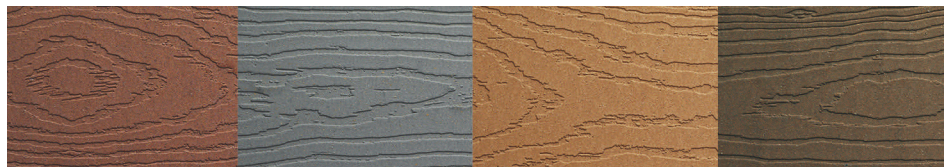
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# Timesaving Deck-Building Tips

By Marcia Jedd

**T**he stay-at-home trend coupled with the home-improvement boom continues to bode well for contractors who specialize in deck building and outdoor living areas.

One way to operate the most profitable business possible is to implement highly efficient systems. So we asked some of the best deck-building specialists to offer their tips for top-notch project management and construction.

## Boosting On-the-Job Efficiencies

**Be process driven.** Barry Klemons, owner of Archadeck of Charlotte, N.C., the largest U.S. Archadeck franchisee, manages 23 crews and a total staff of 50. "From the lead generation to the final sweeping off of the deck we try to be as efficient as possible, putting as many trigger points as possible in



By implementing efficient, company-wide project-management processes, you'll save time and drive more profit to the bottom line. Photo courtesy of Archadeck of Charlotte

our processes to make sure people are doing their job," Klemons says.

Archadeck employs four staff members to field all the initial calls, using a system of prepared questions to guide the

information-gathering process. "They ask a lot of detailed questions so when the crew goes out to build, all the information is known and all the material is ordered in advance," Klemons says.

Job-site walk-throughs keep everyone involved in a given project on the same page. Photo courtesy of Archadeck of Charlotte



## Managing Time and Costs

**Monitor production hours.** George Drummond, president of Casa Decks in Virginia Beach, Va., advises deck builders to closely monitor production versus non-production hours among carpenters and laborers. "We expected each worker to have about 32 hours of production hours with the remaining eight hours per week in travel time, set up and take down time," he says.

**Sub out labor as necessary.** Drummond suggests contractors employ temporary or contract labor to perform jobs requiring less skill such as hauling materials or demolition to increase yields. "If we have to carry lumber a long way, we'll use a temporary contract person to move the pile," he says.



## PRODUCTION



Communicating with the customer during the process helps avoid problems later. Photo courtesy of Archadeck of Charlotte

## Communication & Management Strategies

### Perform job site walk-throughs.

From carpenters to administrative staff to sales managers, Casa Decks maintains open lines of communication among all those involved on a project. "Everybody on the team and the job site knows what they're doing," Drummond says. "When we arrive, we take a few minutes to walk the site and talk our way through it. Having a copy of the CAD drawing or building plan helps so everybody knows what you are trying to accomplish."

**Set goals.** Casa Deck team members at each job site openly communicate daily goals. "Take three minutes each morning to relay what the team will be doing and suggest benchmarks such as by noon having posts installed," Drummond says.

**Create lines of reporting.** Sales managers at Archadeck of Charlotte coordinate regularly with operations, and sales managers are ultimately responsible for overseeing each project. "The sales person is responsible to watch the entire job from start to finish." Kl-

emons says. "He talks to the carpenter to discuss everything and oversees the start of production, performing checks along the way." One outgrowth of the firm lines of communication is better accuracy in estimating construction time. "What annoys the homeowner is telling them the job will take 10

days and you're there for a month," Klemons says.

Archadeck has firm procedures in place for review and approval of project work depending on the size and complexity of each project. Small, simple projects have less involved approval processes, while larger, more complex projects require the designer and sales manager to go out to the site with involvement by a building superintendent in addition to the required municipal inspectors.

**Perform project audits.** Informal post-project assessments drive future project success. "Take time to review the job and what you did right and what could have been done better and use that information to improve the next time," Drummond says. "By doing so, employees or independent contractors will buy in that it's a team process and they can take ownership of their work."

## Better Building Procedures

**Install temporary supports.** For elevated decks, Rick Shore, president of Rick Shore Deck Builders in Brooklyn, Mich. recommends locating temporary stanchion posts on the ground to sup-

Temporary supports were used in the construction of this elevated deck. Photo courtesy of Rick Shore





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## PRODUCTION

“Find products you have confidence in and that have good warranties.” Nicholson says. “Pressure-treated wood is still number one without a doubt, used by 60 percent or more builders in most markets, so build a relationship with wood distributors. Likewise, develop relationships with one or two composite material distributors and several baluster firms.”

port the framing. The temporary measure helps avoid having to readjust posts later or having to keep posts perfectly plumb during the framing process.

“We start from one side of the deck framing and build across using the temporary built-in-the-air supports made out of a T-frame from two 2 x 4s nailed together and resting on a block of scrap cut from a framing member.” Shore

says. “After the deck is all built, we then square it to locate the permanent posts. You can use angle braces on top or underneath the deck to keep it all from shifting right or left and a plumb bob to properly locate the footing. Then, we dig a hole and the footing is poured. After the concrete is set, we place the post under the framing, plumbing the post and level the deck as we go.”

**Adjust joist spacing.** When using wood plastic composite materials as opposed to pressure-treated or natural wood, Shore places joists every 12 inches on center versus the conventional 16 inches. “Composites can show a little bit of sag over time, so we use joists every 12 inches. We’ve found the cost of a few extra joists is a whole lot better than having to explain away a sag in the decking,” he says.

### Materials Matter

**Use a small group of suppliers.** Franchisor Pat Nicholson, CEO of Deckmasters Technologies, Inc. of Pittsburgh, Pa. suggests sticking with your most reliable suppliers and keeping suppliers to a minimum. By partnering with select distributors and product lines, deck builders benefit because their field crews gain product familiarity and expertise. He recommends using only those manufacturers with International Code Council-approved products.

“Find products you have confidence in and that have good warranties.” Nicholson says. “Pressure-treated wood is still number one without a doubt, used by 60 percent or more builders in most markets, so build a relationship with wood distributors. Likewise, develop relationships with one or two composite material distributors and several baluster firms.”

**Stay fully equipped.** Drummond avoids down time by having a van on site with the appropriate tools and materials, pre-stocked in advance. “We keep a tool van around with everything in it for each of our two job sites,” he says. “Preplanning and set-up before you get to the job site avoids wasted time.” ■

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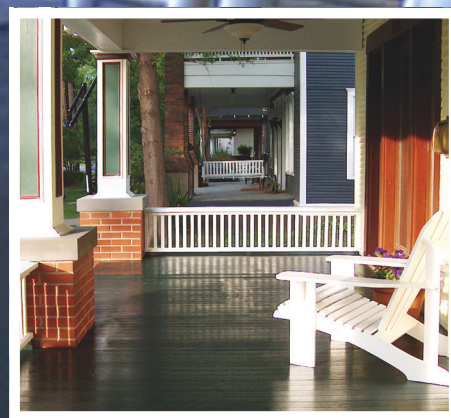
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## DECK RAILING

# Options Abound for Railings and Balusters

By Marcia Jedd

**M**aterials such as glass, wire and engineered composite products are winning over traditional wood offerings in railings and balusters. Consumers are interested in the new products with an eye toward durability and design.

Deck railings and balusters have the capability to turn a ho-hum deck into a showpiece, or discretely carry out their purpose of offering support and preventing falls while meeting building codes. "Railing materials also depend on geographical location," says Kim Katwijk, president of Olympia, Wash.-based Deck Builders Inc., pointing out the enduring popularity of white hand railings on the East Coast and the modern looks such as glass and cable found in the Pacific Northwest and California.

## Form Meets Function

When offering customers railing and baluster options, Katwijk advises deck builders to consider both the use of the deck and design of the materials. "Find out what the customer plans to do on the deck," Katwijk says. "If it doesn't need railings, don't necessarily try to sell the customer railings. Some areas require railings for decks 18 inches off



Composite balusters and railings offer design options wood doesn't. Photo courtesy of CertainTeed.

Deck railings and balusters have the capability to turn a ho-hum deck into a showpiece, or discretely carry out their purpose of offering support and preventing falls while meeting building codes.



## DECK RAILING



Glass allows for an unobstructed view. Photo courtesy of Deck Builders Inc.

the ground, while other areas are 30 inches. When you design, design for function first and then form.”

“With some 50 to 100 different railings on the market today, the learning curve can be steep, and you don’t want that every day,” advises Pat Nicholson, CR, CEO of Upper St. Clair, Pa.-based Deckmasters Technologies Inc. “That’s where only having half a dozen products you work with from the low end to the high end helps.”

George Drummond, president of Casa Decks in Virginia Beach, Va., recommends builders closely follow installation instructions. “Most manufacturers require you to install supports beneath the bottom rail every 24 inches or so. Don’t cut that corner because your rail will sag over time.” He notes that some new products have glitches. “A couple of manufacturers have had problems reported to them on installation, and as a result, some have changed their instructions to improve them.”

Drummond further advises deck builders to make sure they pre-drill when working with composite material. “You can split some of the com-

posite materials if you don’t pre-drill at the ends.”

### Composites Gain Ground

Reclaimed vinyl as well as wood and plastic composite products can translate to a higher-end deck design with less maintenance and added color options. These materials represent popular railing and baluster choices today. “We’re seeing more diversity in product choices,” says Barry Klemons, owner of Archadeck of Charlotte, N.C. “Eighteen years ago, pressure-treated

wood railings were common. Now, vinyl and composite railings are gaining popularity.”

Be prepared to quote a higher price to your clients when including vinyl and composite products, among other materials, on railings because they are more expensive than pressure-treated wood. Plastic wood composite materials render skid-free and splinter-free surfaces that don’t require painting, staining or sealing, ultimately making these products maintenance-free besides occasional cleanup. When treated with UV inhibitors and impact modifiers, these products can withstand heavy impact and take a beating from the sun or other harsh weather elements, rendering longevity.

### Cost Considerations

“Pressure-treated railing can be one-fifth of the cost or less than composite rail, which can run around \$50 to \$60 per linear foot,” Klemons says. Also adding to builders’ costs is the additional time involved in working with these materials. “There’s more pieces to these products which often come in boxes in 6- or 8- foot lengths,” Klemons says. “If a carpenter drops a piece or cuts it short, these products aren’t as forgiving. The average carpenter may not have the proficiency or even the ability to work with these products, which can slow down production.”

Plastic-wood composite materials render skid-free and splinter-free surfaces that don’t require painting, staining or sealing, ultimately making these products maintenance-free besides occasional cleanup.



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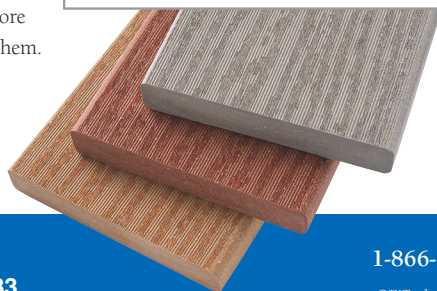
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## DECK RAILING



Tubular balusters offer low-maintenance and design variation. Photo courtesy of Casa Decks.

Drummond says consumers are usually willing to spend more on railings to get a great look accented by decorative balusters. "In the last two to three years, manufacturers have made major improvements in composite railing systems," he says. "Cost runs anywhere from \$27 to \$63 per linear foot installed in this region versus up to about \$16 per linear foot for treated wood."

### Balusters Make the Difference

Spindles or balusters can set the design tone of an entire deck. "Seek only ICC-approved products and follow spacing recommendations to the T," says Nicholson, noting local building codes also dictate the maximum gap between balusters.

Both Drummond and Klemons cite innovations in balusters such as Deckorators' Architectural Series; its Arc and Baroque styles feature balusters in a wave shape. The balusters, available in black or bronze, resemble hand-forged wrought iron but are made of powder-coated aluminum. "These railings aren't ho-hum," Klemons says.

"Tubular balusters are very popular," Nicholson adds. "They're less view-restricting, and people consider the fact they won't have to stain or seal all these tubes, which are made with aluminum with a powder-coat paint finish."

For markets with particularly scenic views, such as mountain or lake homes, tubular-shaped balusters can

help preserve the view, as do other materials. "Some people pay millions for a view and they don't want a railing system that blocks their view," Katwijk says. "So you're left with glass or cable."

Many customers prefer an open view and choose tempered or laminated glass. Glass railings are relatively new and can be integrated with wood, bronze or steel to achieve a custom look. Entire panels of 1/4-inch tempered glass, for example, impart a clean look while keeping dogs and children out of harm's way and withstanding high winds. Klemons recommends using laminate glass because plastic can turn yellow over time.

Rick Shore, president of Rick Shore Builders in Brooklyn, Mich., installs Deckorators' Scenic Glass Frontier Style balusters because he says they exceed ICC load requirements and withstand more than 350 PSI. "It might be triple the expense of other balusters, but with the glass you get 100 percent of the view," he says. With regular cleaning, glass products can provide a clear view for years. Shore recommends that his customers clean glass balusters with a surfactant cleaner such as Rainex, which allows water to run off. ■

"Tubular balusters are very popular. They're less view restricting, and people consider the fact they won't have to stain or seal all these tubes, which are made with aluminum with a powder-coat paint finish."





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## LANDSCAPING

# Private Screening

By Ann Matesi

The same way a thoughtfully chosen frame enhances a work of art, the landscaping that surrounds this spec-built luxury ranch creates a lush, secluded setting for this Wallace Neff-inspired beauty in Irvine, Calif. The home's courtyard design is intended to pay homage to the character of the traditional Southern California hacienda of the 1920s, says architect Robert Hidey.

Landscape architect Mike Dilley worked closely with both Hidey and Newport Beach, Calif.-based luxury home builder John McMonigle from the outset of the project to transform what was originally a sloped and open corner lot into a peaceful oasis for the owners of this outdoor-oriented home.

"Every room in the house is meant



(Above) Stand-alone pots and planting beds bring elements of the perimeter landscaping into the home's courtyards and soften the exterior architecture. Half pots and a mosaic-tile fountain accent the perimeter privacy wall as it forms a backdrop for the pool and spa.



(Left) The fountain in the home's central courtyard was custom designed using hand-crafted art tiles in a cobalt blue palette that defined the color scheme for the other outdoor spaces. The fountain adds welcome noise to the space, says landscape architect Mike Dilley. "People are encouraged to gather around it, sit on the edge and touch the water."



## LANDSCAPING

The mix of native and non-native plants, shrubs and trees blend well with the rural character of the home's setting and create a drought-tolerant landscape that requires minimal maintenance for the homeowner. Landscape architect Mike Dilley's landscape plan includes California oak, sycamore, camphor and strawberry trees that provide height, color and texture variation and screen the home from the street. The color palette that Dilley chose for the shrubs and flowering plans is primarily green, white and blue to complement the home's exterior. A perimeter wall provides a backdrop for the street-side plantings as well as privacy and noise reduction for the home's interior courtyards.

## Project Specs

**Style of Home:** California Ranch

**Location:** Irvine, Calif.

**Total Square Footage:** 6,838 sq. ft.

**Estimated Market Value:** \$4.5 million

**Architect:** Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif.

**Builder:** Monarch Estates, Newport Beach, Calif.

**Landscape Architect:** MDZA Landscape Architecture, Corona del Mar, Calif.

Chaparral flagstone in rustic brown tones was used for the home's entry walkway and driveway. "The color grounds the home to the site and complements the exterior," says landscape architect Mike Dilley. Drought-resistant plants and trees were selected to give the home a relaxed look without a desert feel. "The whole purpose of the landscaping was to screen the lot from the street and make the grounds appear to be very lush."





## LANDSCAPING

to draw you outside," says McMonigle. The home features nine outdoor terraces accented by fountains, fireplaces, sitting areas and a swimming pool. "The landscape design is extremely important in the way that it connects the home to the site and softens the building structure. I consider it to be the icing on the cake."

"The timeless grace and beauty evident in this 6,838-square-foot home were born from a clever solution to a challenging site," says Hidey, referring to its wedge-shape corner location. Special consideration had to be given for the setback lines that created a triangular buildable pad surrounded by two streets, a 14-foot incline from front to back, and a mandatory one-story height limit requirement set by local codes.

Hidey's solution was to design the home and roofline to step down to follow the topography's slope. "The tick-tack-toe grid of the home's exterior walls created numerous interior courtyards that chase the sun and shade at different times of the day, changing the mood as you explore from one courtyard to the next," says Hidey. "The understated, casual elegance of the landscaping promotes the natural relationship of land and house and encourages an atmosphere of relaxation."

Using multiple terraces, a wide range of native plants and a 6-foot perimeter wall that enhances privacy at the street level without affecting the view of distant mountains, Dilley's design complements the home's architecture and rural surroundings.

"As the landscape architect, I designed and selected all of the materials for the exterior spaces, including the hardscape," says Dilley. "Every major room opens directly onto either a courtyard or terrace. These actually become different outdoor 'rooms' in and of themselves. In each of these areas, I varied the pattern of the quarry tile on the floor in order to create

unique decorative 'carpets'."

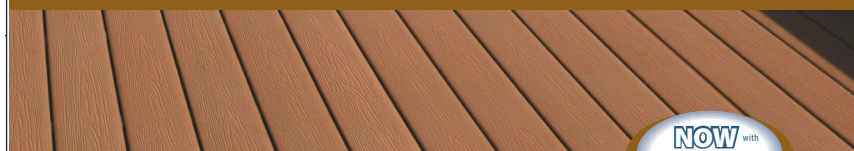
Dilley selected a variety of drought-resistant native plants and trees, including California oak, sycamore, camphor and strawberry to create a varied canopy that would alter the

pattern of natural light on the outdoor spaces throughout the day as well as seasonally. Trees incorporated into the courtyards provide a ceiling to the spaces, he says, as well as frame the architectural elements. ■



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## OUTDOOR KITCHENS

# Alfresco Attraction

By Ann Matesi

Living space dedicated to outdoor entertaining continues to be on a meteoric rise in popularity across the country, particularly in the warm-weather climates where the outdoors can be enjoyed year-round. More often than not, this outdoor living space includes an open-air kitchen complete with top-of-the-line appliances and high-end finishes designed to be both functional and beautiful.

"We include an outdoor kitchen in literally every home that we build," says Houston based custom builder Brian Thompson, whose \$2.7 million showcase home in Piney Point Village features a charming pool-oriented loggia that features its own amenity-packed grilling station and hearth-side dining area.

"Our mild climate is conducive to outdoor entertaining," says Thompson, "so this type of space is a must-have for our clients. And they are willing to spend a lot more money customizing their outdoor living areas these days than ever before. It is not at all uncommon for them to anchor the space with a high-performance grill that costs thousands of dollars. In our market, we are also doing a lot of built-in crab or shrimp boilers, custom vent hoods, and complete plumbing packages including garbage disposals and wet bars."

"We typically plan outdoor entertaining space to be at least partially under roof in order to provide protection from the hot summer sun," says Thompson. "But when you cover a space, you always have to worry about ventilation. You don't want it to become uncomfortably warm. We make every effort to position an outdoor room so that it has at least two open sides on it. This will promote natural breezes that help to cool the space."



The key element in a great outdoor kitchen is a high-performance grill.



## OUTDOOR KITCHENS

## Climate Doesn't Matter

Although a northern climate may limit its practical use to six to eight months of the year, the demand for outdoor cooking and entertaining spaces is on the rise in the northern states as well, says Charles Page, one of the Chicago area's premier architects.

"I am seeing more and more interest in outdoor kitchens all the time," says Page, who designs high-end residences for some of his market's most discriminating buyers. "I would say that nearly 100 percent of my clients want outdoor space where they can cook and entertain friends and family. For those that don't start out with it, I find that they're coming back to me to add it on later because they wish they had it."

Page uses the concept of a traditional screened-in porch to extend living space to the outdoors in the homes he designs for his upscale clients. "I include a screened porch on almost every home that I design because this is an element that is ideally suited to this area. They provide sun control, rain control, bug control and a sheltered space for an outdoor kitchen. If a client wants to be able to use the room all year round, removable window panels can be used to replace the screens and radiant heating installed in the floor will provide extra warmth on chilly days."

A Page-designed screened porch is anything but run-of-the-mill. Most feature beautifully detailed trim, volume ceilings, remotely operated gas fireplaces and custom-built masonry grill centers complete with granite countertops.

Water features such as ponds and waterfalls have replaced swimming pools as the focal point for outdoor living space in his market, says Page. "Pools were much more popular back in the '80s in this area than they are today. Homeowners who have them installed these days really want them."

In situations when a client's outdoor living space is not covered, such as for a terrace surrounding an in-ground pool, the cooking area is generally developed as an extension of the overall landscape plan, says Keith Appelhans of Wauconda, Ill.-based Apple Landscaping, which builds an average of 150 outdoor kitchens annually in Chicago's northern suburbs and southern Wisconsin. "Freestanding masonry islands that include a top-of-the-line grill, refrigerator, storage cabinets and even a sitting area or rounded peninsula at one end are very popular," says Appelhans. "We typically use granite for the countertop because it stands up well to all kinds of weather and still looks beautiful."

Appelhans says that some clients protect their high-end investment from the elements during the winter by installing a custom-built cover. "There are some appliances that are specially designed to handle the temperature extremes that we have in this area," he says, "but many times we will design the island so the appliances can be removed and stored elsewhere when not in use." ■

## New Ideas for a Hot Market

"The outdoor living area is really the focus of explosive growth for the industry today," says Carol Kaplan, media and public relations manager for the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association. For contractors who want to keep pace with the newest trends in products, materials and installation techniques for outdoor living spaces, the HPBA Web site ([www.hpba.org](http://www.hpba.org)) is a good place to check out.

The international trade association's membership includes manufacturers and their representatives, retailers, distributors, service and installation firms, and other companies and individuals with business interests in the hearth, patio and barbecue products industry. The HPBA also sponsors an annual Hearth & Home Expo where more than 500 exhibitors showcase and demonstrate the latest innovations and technology in hearth, patio and barbecue equipment and accessories. The 2007 HPBA Hearth & Home Expo is scheduled for March 14-17, 2007 in Reno, Nev. ■





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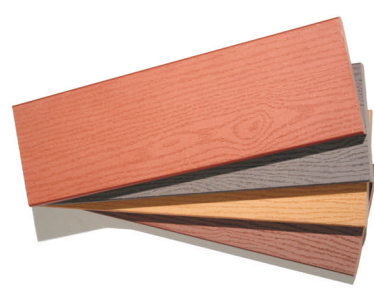
## Azek Trimboards

Walpole Woodworkers, using Azek material, has created the Freeport Collection. The collection includes pergolas, cupolas, window boxes, planter boxes, lattice panels, lantern and mail posts, gates and more. Walpole engineers and craftsmen can custom build to plans or drawings. Azek material can be milled, routed and mitered using standard woodworking tools and can even be heat formed into curves and arches.

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## Alcoa

Alcoa is introducing four new colors for its Oasis composite decking and railings: Carolina pine, New England grey, Pacific redwood and teak. The Oasis plank surfaces are reversible, with natural wood grain texture on one side and a brushed finish on the other. Crafted of high density polyethylene and reclaimed wood fiber through Alcoa's proprietary encapsulation process, which fully coats wood fibers with polymer before the planks are formed, Oasis routes, cuts and nails like real wood.

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## PRODUCTS



## CorrectDeck

CorrectDeck introduces the DCL (Dimensional Composite Lumber) Connector. Made of polypropylene, the connector has been designed to attach Correct-Deck DCL 2- by 4-inch or 2- by 6-inch railings to a 4- by 4-inch post eliminating the need to toe screw. Designed in cooperation with Deckorators Inc., it produces a consistent color match with the rails and planks. Available in mahogany, coastal grey, cedar and acacia.

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## CertainTeed

The EverNew glass baluster railing system is made of strong tempered glass  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch thick and 4-inches wide. Designed with a standard angled edge that works in both  $3\frac{1}{2}$ -inch flat and stair applications. The one-size-fits-all design can be used on vinyl, composite or wood deck surfaces and the routed rails eliminate the need to fasten and screw the balusters. Available in either clear or smoked glass.

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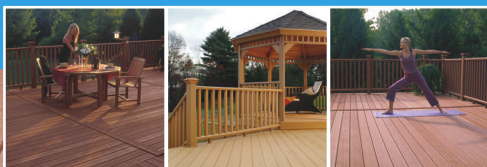


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## PRODUCTS



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The Avado collection of undermount kitchen sinks feature square and rectangular bowl designs with "zero-radius" corners. Hand-fabricated from 16-gauge stainless steel with a satin finish, the underside is fully coated to dampen sound and prevent condensation. The

collection includes single-, double- and triple-bowl designs. One model incorporates a beveled drainboard.

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### Moen

Lancelot, Moen's new undermount sink, is suitable for gourmet kitchen designs. The sinks are constructed from 16-gauge stainless steel and feature a 10-inch bowl with SoundShield, a sound-deadening undercoating. The Lancelot is available in polished satin and comes in four size configurations.

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### Brizo

Pascal, Brizo's culinary, touch control electronic faucet, can activate water flow by either tapping the faucet or using the hands-free option. While in hands-free mode, water will run continuously as long as there is something (hands or plate) in the water work space. Sensors determine when or if a part of the body touches the faucet. Water turns off by tapping or with a built-in, automatic time-out. Pascal features a pull-down spout for added convenience.

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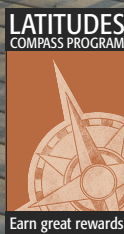
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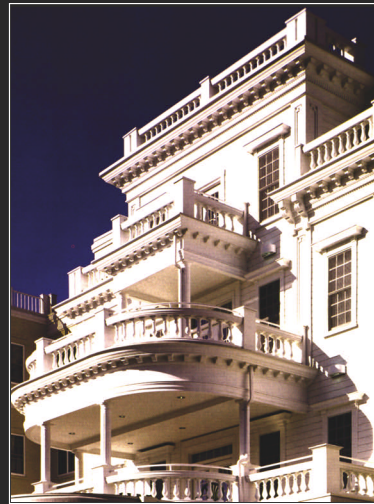
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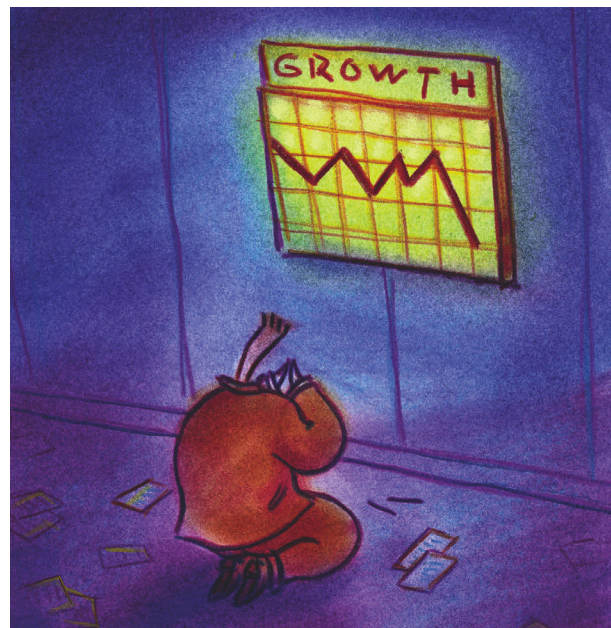
# Remodeling Expenditures Drop

Harvard releases RAI results showing slow first quarter

**H**arvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies says the estimated recent growth of homeowner remodeling spending has eased substantially but still remains near its long-term rate of 5 percent. According to the Remodeling Activity Indicator devised by Harvard's JCHS, homeowners spent an estimated 155 billion dollars on home improvements and repairs over the past four quarters, representing a 4.5 percent increase.

"Rising interest rates and a cooling housing market have started to impact spending on home improvements," said Nicolas P. Retsinas, director of the JCHS. "Delays in initiating major improvement projects are likely to moderate spending over the next year."

"Remodeling contractors



recently have reported a slight decline in hours worked by their employees, and more modest growth in their payrolls" said Kermit Baker, director of the Remodeling Futures Pro-

gram of the JCHS. "This points to remodeling following home building into a period of slower growth in the months ahead."

The next RAI release date is July 20.

## EPA Extends Lead Deadline

**T**he EPA has extended to May 25 the public comment period for its proposed Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting Program rule, which the NAHB Remodelers Council had requested in order to continue testing exposures caused by renovation activities and the effectiveness of the EPA's proposed lead-safe work-practice ruling.

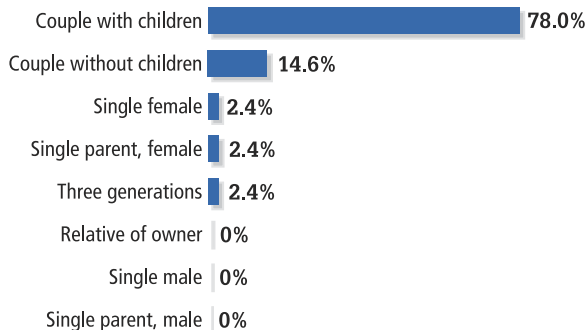
NAHB contends that the rule will not accomplish the intended goal of reducing lead paint exposure among small children because it applies only to professionals paid to make renovations and not to homeowners, who do the work themselves more than half the time.

As they are passed on to consumers, the extra costs of materials and training needed to comply with the proposed lead-safe work practices is likely to encourage more unregulated do-it-yourself renovation, according to NAHB.

"The unintended consequence of making it more difficult to hire a remodeler may leave even more children with the potential for exposure," said Remodelers Council chairman Vince Butler, CGR, CAPS.

## THE RESULTS

**How would you describe the most typical client your company serves?**



Results from April reader poll as of April 25, 2006.

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3:31 PM

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