

Updating takes on a life of its own



By Rosanne Kolodenko
Home Buyer's Agent, LLC

I've finally gotten around to updating my home after thinking about it for years. I've been putting it off for one reason or another; some reasons made more sense than others. I color my hair in the bathroom, so why retile the shower when the dye will stain the new grout like it did the old? Then there are finances, time, my changing tastes, etc.

It took an unexpected event to finally give me the needed shove: My boiler leaked and stained my carpet. Rather than replace the carpet, it made more sense to put tile down in that area. Then, the contractor offered me a discount if I tiled the kitchen and bathroom floors at the same time. And, of course, the new tile wouldn't look good with the old (original) countertops. And when you put in new countertops it's a good time to replace the old sinks and faucets. And while I'm replacing the bathroom floor, it's the best time to replace the old toilet and vanity. You get the idea – it takes on a life of its own and spirals out of control.

I'm a Realtor so house-related projects should be easy for me, right? Not necessarily.

The salespeople at the home stores I frequented began to recognize me (and avoid me?) when I repeatedly went in to look at options, compare prices and ask for advice. I'm a perfectionist, which is great for my clients, who appreciate and benefit from my attention to detail, but that same attention to detail adds time and stress when remodeling, as I try to decide on just the right color for my countertops, the best tile combination for the floors and shower, and which sinks and faucets to choose.

I lived with the mess for what seemed like an eternity. Tile, a toilet, sinks, faucets and cabinets filled up all the empty spaces in my home. Unexpected things kept coming up to prolong the completion date and increase the cost.

After disconnecting the plumbing and tearing out the countertops, the installers couldn't put the new countertops in the kitchen until I had a carpenter adjust the height of one surface. I lived for a week with no plumbing or countertops in my kitchen.

Now that all of the work is complete, the old kitchen cabinets stand out. I'll have to live with them for a while; it will take time before I'm willing to go through any more upheaval.

Most of the work was done in the bathroom. According to Remodeling Magazine's Cost vs. Value Report, bathroom remodels provide the highest return on investment, followed by kitchens. My neighbor asked, "Why remodel the bathroom when you spend the least amount of time in there?" That's a valid question, but research shows that people like remodeled bathrooms.

When the economy took a plunge after 9/11, many people chose to remodel their existing homes to better fit their changing lifestyles, instead of selling them and purchasing new ones. My advice for those looking at this option is to research the costs and timeframes, and then add additional money and time for the unexpected. Remodeling is not for the faint of heart.

People ask me if I'm planning to sell my house, since I've updated it. My answer is, "If you're going to spend the money to make it more desirable when you move, why not do it sooner and enjoy the fruits of your labor yourself?"

Some of you may remember a past article I wrote where I questioned if I should do the purple bathroom I desired. With the encouragement of a friend, although subtle, there is now a presence of purple in my bathroom. Will it hurt my resale value? There's a fine balance between making it the way you like it and also having it be desirable to potential future owners. I think it should be all right. It is Boulder, after all.

Rosanne Kolodenko is a Realtor and the Broker/Owner of her local, independent real estate company. She is an Exclusive Buyer Agent, and her company is an Exclusive Buyer Office, representing only homebuyers and working as their advocate. Rosanne is an officer of the Colorado Exclusive Buyer Agents Association. She serves Boulder County and the surrounding area. You can contact her at 303.447.1112 or Rosanne@BoulderBuyerAgent.com, or visit www.BoulderBuyerAgent.com.