

## What's Tops in Kitchen Renovations?

Most people know that kitchens are hot spots for remodels. They're also one of the rooms in the house that potential buyers are most interested in if they've been modernized. There are certain kitchen trends that have emerged this past year that are popping up in many homes across the country. According to the American Institute of Architects (AIA), which regularly keeps track of housing trends through their Home Design

Trends Survey, the following are some of the most prevalent "wants" in today's kitchens:

- Larger pantry space
- High-end appliances
- Integration with family space
- Natural stone counters
- Island work areas
- Natural wood cabinets

Synthetic, solid-surface countertops that experienced a boom in years past have started to decline in popularity, with natural stone such as granite still

ranking above others. Plus, there is a greater number of square feet being devoted to kitchens to account for their popularity as the family gathering spot. And the number of separate cooking facilities throughout the home are increasing, including the additions of outdoor kitchens in many areas of the country.



## Easy Bath Re-do

By now most homeowners are aware that kitchens and bathrooms are areas of the home that potential buyers carefully scrutinize upon viewing a property. For those who are not selling, these same rooms can indicate to any visitors the level of upkeep on a home. And an outdated bathroom or kitchen can be an eyesore. For these reasons, kitchens and baths are some of the first places homeowners consider renovating.

While a bathroom can be improved by swapping out old fixtures for new, if the tub or shower is in poor condition, the efforts will be little appreciated. However, removing a tub can be a time-consuming and messy endeavor, one that has the potential to ruin floors, walls and even plumbing. Additionally, other fix-up methods such as retiling or repainting the tub and shower can be costly if performed by a professional, and may end up looking sub-par if attempted by an amateur. Plus, even the best paint job has the potential to crack or scratch over time -- leaving a homeowner with an eyesore.

A new trend that has emerged in recent years is the installation of acrylic bathtubs and shower units over existing bathroom features. There are a number of national franchises or independent contractors who are qualified in bath-refitting projects. This can be a fast and cost-effective solution for homeowners looking to revamp the bathroom with minimal effort.

These installation projects typically involve a few easy steps. A qualified individual will come and measure the existing bathroom and fixtures. The measurements are then incorporated into new custom-made tubs and showers, which the homeowner can have a hand in choosing and/or designing, depending upon services offered. When completed the new materials are installed directly over the old tub or shower, minimizing the mess and time involved in renovations. What's more, the majority of these new products are made from acrylic or plastic components, making them easier to clean than porcelain, tile or metal.



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