

# Staying Power

**DENNIS D. GEHMAN OF GEHMAN DESIGN REMODELING** EXPLAINS WHY UPGRADES TO AN EXISTING SPACE MAY OUTWEIGH THE BENEFITS OF MOVING TO A NEW HOME. **BY LEIGH STUART**

**W**ITH A HOUSING MARKET IN FLUX and interest rates running high, Dennis D. Gehman, Master Certified Remodeler and president of Harleysville-based Gehman Design Remodeling, says homeowners may want to consider renovation versus a whole home replacement.

"We're seeing people now who are saying they have 3, 4, even 2.5 percent interest and they don't want to give that up, which to me makes a whole lot of sense," Gehman shares. "In a way, people feel like they're stuck, but if you like the neighborhood, the schools, the distance to work, it probably does make sense to just stay put and remodel or renovate your existing house to meet your needs."

Some may to add an entirely new room, but Gehman says it's more common for folks to approach his firm for help in rethinking and reorganizing their existing spaces. While some upgrades are purely aesthetic, others are more geared toward improved functionality. Popular home improvements include expanding kitchens and repurposing formal living or dining rooms to serve as offices, music rooms, or playrooms for little ones.

"A lot of people don't know what's possible," Gehman says. "It's hard for them to envision something different because that's the way the house has always been. We can offer a new set of eyes and we know what's possible structurally."

Another aspect of moving from one home to another that many people don't think about straight away is the sheer cost involved in selling a home: Realtor commissions, taxes, attorney's fees, moving fees, etc. Also, Gehman says statistics show that most new homebuyers undertake a remodeling or renovation project within two years.

Gehman says now is a great time to con-

sult a design-build professional that can help transform an existing space into one best suited to the homeowners' lifestyle.

"Once you start looking around, you can see, 'Oh boy, everything needs attention,'" Gehman says. "Few people have the budget to do everything at once, and we certainly respect that. But, there is wisdom in someone who can look at the whole house. It's probably wise to come up with a master plan with an end goal in mind, and that can typically be phased. What you don't want to do is one major project, then three to five years from now realize you have to take apart what you spent good money on few years ago."

Renovations to the first floor, where friends, family, and neighbors gather for social occasions, are in high demand. This is not to discount exterior renovations, which account for approximately 30 percent of jobs for Gehman's firm.

"People, if they're going to stay put, want to feel good about how the outside of the house looks," he says. "It can be a big range, from needing some new paint or a front door, to new siding and windows, or adding a porch or screen room, deck, patio, or outdoor kitchen. If you want to put a front porch and sidewalk on now, and you know you don't have the budget for landscaping, plan for it. If you know you would like to have a pool or waterfall or koi pond, put it in the plans and make sure you have space allotted."

This planning phase is where a profes-

sional design-build team such as Gehman Design Remodeling can be invaluable.

"It's in our process to do an initial consultation and meet clients at their home, and then we certainly like to set up a second appointment to come here to our showroom," he says. "Once we've seen their home and have a better understanding with our 33 years in business, we can pull up pictures of other projects we've done, probably with a similar floorplan, to show how it turned out."

Spend some time online, Gehman advises, to form a clear vision for a space or whole home; he recommends sources such as Houzz, Pinterest, and NARI.org, the website for the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, which features multiple photo galleries, including winners of Contractor of the Year for the past 20 years. Sample homes of new housing developments can be sources of inspiration, too.

"It's important to know what you like," he adds. "Sometimes it also helps to show pictures of what you *don't* like." ■



Before



After



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