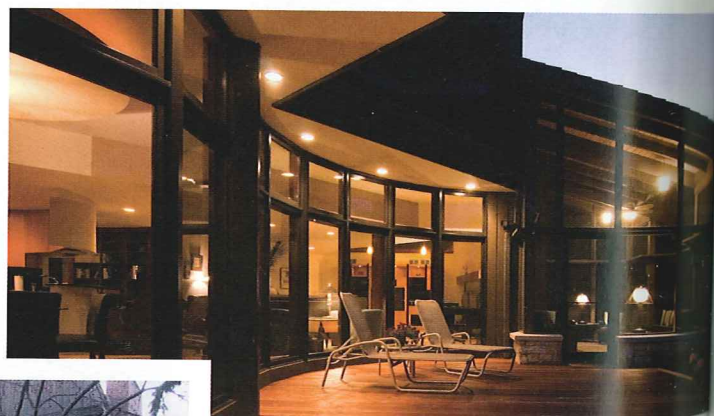


Home Makeovers

By Lisa Sloan



When it comes to fashion, most of us gladly bid farewell to the shoulder pads and big hair of the 1980s and the polyester suits and macramé bags of the 1970s. Why should our homes have to keep wearing the outdated looks of decades past?

Beyond making basic repairs and replacing materials to simply maintain your home, you can choose to upgrade the exterior in a way that makes your old house look like new construction, but



BEFORE

with a much lower price tag.

"People are driving up to their house thinking that it looks a little tired," observes Michael Klein, chief executive officer of Elevations Exteriors, an Airoom Company, with showrooms in Naperville and Lincolnwood. "They recognize that it

seems dated, but they don't know what to do with it. They don't realize that, for a little more money, you can give it a facelift instead of just replacing the worn-down materials."

BREAKING THE MOLD

The quality of materials and details often provide the means to set a home apart, says Bruce George, president of Charles Vincent George Architects in Naperville. "A lot of these addition and remodeling projects are about taking ordinary subdivision tract homes or semi-custom homes and stylizing them and giving them character," he observes. "You may have the same plan and elevation as 20 of your neighbors. Sometimes it's just details and materials that distinguish the houses. Often we don't even add a single square inch."

While there are many options, you can't turn your home into something it's not — from traditional to contemporary, for example. "You need to maintain the architectural integrity of your home," says Leslie Lee, residential designer for Normandy Builders in Hinsdale. "If you keep within the general style of the home and choose a neutral palette, things are going to come together nicely."

KEEPING UP WITH THE NEIGHBORS

Lee holds exterior seminars at Normandy and has noticed an uptick in attendance over the past year. She says that most people want indoor and outdoor surfaces that are as maintenance-free as possible and they are curious to see what's possible for their homes.

"It's a trend that's becoming more popular with homes getting older and homeowners wanting to keep up with the neighborhood as new homes are being built around them," she says.

Such was the case for some Hinsdale homeowners living on a block that includes a diverse mix of houses. The home next door was new with a very desirable façade, making their home look even more outdated, says Lee. A small porch with a sagging roof, unbroken expanses of horizontal siding, oddly placed light fixtures and a lack of trim around the windows were among the problems with the exterior. "It was not well-thought-out or appealing," recalls Lee.

Normandy built a front porch to align with the front of the house (see photo, middle right), installed a new entry door and oval shaped window, repainted the cedar siding and added stone accents, shake shingles in the gables, frieze board and trim around the windows. "It went from looking outdated to brand-new," says Lee.

DESIGNED TO SELL

In addition to improving your home for your own benefit, consider that you may also be appealing to potential homebuyers, either now or in the future.

As the saying goes, you only have one chance to make



a first impression, and that's especially true for a home. Even if you've completely remodeled the interior, some buyers won't be able to see past a dated exterior. "When you give a home's façade greater appeal, it makes the resale process easier because you're taking away something that can be perceived as a negative," says Lee.

Klein notes that the typical Elevations project ranges from \$30,000 to \$80,000 and offers a good return on investment when it comes time to move, as these properties tend to sell more quickly and at a higher price than their counterparts.

AESTHETIC UPDATES

Because many exterior updates don't require additions, they can be completed quickly. At Elevations, for example, the typical time frame is about four weeks, says Klein.

These types of projects include everything from new windows and siding to a new entry with an extended portico, new door and new steps. Changes to the roof shape and material are also popular. Common upgrades include adding stone and brick, changing the look of old brick with new stain colors, adding exterior trims and moldings around overhangs and ends of roofs, and changing the trim details around the windows. Often homeowners have already invested in remodeling the inside of the home and are eager to make the outside look just as nice.

A Hinsdale home that Charles Vincent George worked on is a case in point. The house formerly had a faux stucco exterior with Georgian details, but today it looks like a classic Mediterranean villa (see top right photo on previous page), complete with a tile roof, iron details and an arched entry. "We totally changed the character of the home," says George.

FROM THE GROUND UP

The Walker Group in Hinsdale takes a bit more involved approach to exterior revisions. Dan Frasca, principal for the company, notes that their projects usually involve preserving the basement and first-floor

structure of a home, and then building up to create something new. In order to use an existing foundation, it has to be poured concrete, which means the best candidates for this type of project are homes built after 1950.

"Reusing the foundation and first floor structure saves (homeowners) a pretty good amount of money. They pretty much get a brand-new home, except for the basement. We gut the inside and transform the exterior, adding a second floor that's all new material."

Clients typically contact The Walker Group before or shortly after buying an older home in an established neighborhood. "Usually they will tell their realtor that they want to buy something they can renovate and expand. They might take me through two or three homes they are considering so I can give them an idea of what they can do and what the budget might be to get it to the finished stage."

IMPROVED AND EXPANDED

In some cases, a homeowner may want to combine elements of exterior renovation with additions that alter the front appearance and improve the function of your house.

One example of this is a Charles Vincent George project in Naperville that gave a gray two-story Georgian an East Coast shingle-style feel (see lower right photo, page 87). The company reclad the exterior in shingle and stone and added on above the garage, creating a barn-style structure with a metal roof and dormers. A revamped entry, new windows and garage door, and decorative detailing also contributed to the dramatic change in the home's appearance.

George says that minor renovations and additions usually mean that it's less expensive to stay in a home and fix it than to move. "Being realistic about what you have and trying to maintain as much of the existing home as you can allows you to spend more on aesthetics and more space."

Taking the time to consider your options can pay great dividends, adds Klein. "Before you just replace products on the exterior, really think about how to enhance it. As long as you are going to do it, you can save money long term and increase the value of your house." ■