

**Remodeling your home in even the best of climates can be a daunting process – and in Truckee’s snow country it can be especially difficult!**

**Deciding who needs to be involved is critical** – You must decide early on just who you need to talk to!

Can you use architects, designers, and contractors from the Bay Area who are knowledgeable about home design and construction in their Mediterranean climate?

Or should you use local professionals and crafts people who understand engineering and construction standards required in our mountain environment – those who know how to work with local building departments, homeowners associations, trades and suppliers?

**Your architect and engineer will need to know about important factors** such as the homes orientation to best manage the warmth of the sun for interior comfort, and to reduce ice build-up on the drive and entryways. They need to design roof lines that prevent snow shedding on drives, decks, and entries - and roofs that prevent ice glaciations in the valleys and ice dams on the edges. You need a professional engineer to review plans for structural integrity to ensure the addition is designed to accommodate the estimated snow load for your area of Truckee. And to identify and plan for other factors such as lot drainage, the degree of driveway slope, and tree removal.

**You’ll need to know what public agencies need to approve your plans**, what do they require and how do you best work with them? If you are building an addition then what upgrades to code do you have to do to your existing home? What tests must be conducted and who does that? Do you have a homeowners association? If so, what are their standards and must they approve the plans?

**And can costs be recovered?** *Remodeling Online*, the web page of *Remodeling Magazine* charts payback returns for major projects from data aggregated by *HomeTech Information Systems*, a remodeling estimating software company that collects current cost information on a quarterly basis from a nationwide base of home remodeling contractors.

According to their report the projects with the highest mid-range return over four years (2002-2005) are ones involving major remodel of bathrooms (102.2%), siding replacement (95.5%), kitchens (91%), and window replacement (89.6%). These are nation-wide averages – individual projects in the Truckee area will cost more due to our mountain environment that requires higher construction standards than cities in milder climates!

**Plan for what you want to do!** Look for ideas in the homes of your friends and neighbors, tour open houses, visit design centers and building shows, and talk to professionals to see what is in-and-out of style.

And remember, the most expensive items you see may not be the best to buy.

**An excellent resource is the Truckee Home & Building Show at the Truckee High School on Memorial Day weekend, May 25, 26,27<sup>th</sup>, and the concurrent Regional Green Building Symposium.** These events are sponsored by the Sierra Pacific Power Company and the Truckee Donner Public Utility District. Schedules and events may be seen at [www.truckeehomeshow.com](http://www.truckeehomeshow.com).

**Try to determine whether a certain style will stand the test of time** or merely be a passing fad. Homeowners in the 70's thought avocado appliances and gold carpet was just the thing – thankfully that didn't last long!

Granite counter tops in kitchens are much in demand now - but if you read a *Kitchen Trends* design magazine you will see a lot of metal and concrete used – ask yourself if these materials will replace granite, especially in your outdoor oriented Tahoe home? Recent trends have seen granite and travertine replace

river rock hearths and floor tile, hardwood replace laminate flooring, and gas stoves and inserts replacing woodstoves and inserts.

**Be cautious in getting too much of yourself in the design.** This is very hard to do; we all have ideas about our “ideal” home design – but if they are too personal and don’t fit the “mountain” or “Tahoe” style that many buyers look for in a second home, then the size of your buyer pool will be significantly reduced.

A Tahoe Donner home was constructed several years ago and placed on the market. It was a beautiful, well constructed home and would probably have sold quickly had it been in Monterey overlooking the Pacific Ocean – but it was not designed for its’ mountain setting so it remained on the market for a long time.

**Is your primary purpose to enhance the homes value for a resale?** If you buy a “fixer” intending to remodel and sell it for a profit then you will want keep the costs down, especially since the price of “fixers” in the Truckee area are normally high due to demand from local contractors and Realtors® who acquire them for their own projects.

**Or do you want to enhance your living environment?** If so you will probably want to do more - and spend more - than you would to enhance its’ value for resale.

A necessity in planning your remodeling project is to identify key factors that need to be considered.

**Do you need a major remodel?** Is your family growing and space short, do you need to expand with an addition? If you need to expand then what will be involved? Is your lot large enough to accommodate expansion and still observe the set-backs required by the town? Will the design of your home accommodate an addition? How do you design the addition to fit the environment and neighborhood? Will the neighborhood support the added value?

**Or do you need a cosmetic remodel?** Is your home dated or worn, in need of carpet and paint, and perhaps cabinets and fixtures?

**And remember, any remodeling you do will ultimately affect the sale of your home.** If it is well designed for your area and implemented by competent crafts people, then you will likely receive a higher price in a shorter time; if it is not well designed or implemented you will receive a lower price and the home will take longer to sell.

**Construction standards change over time!** In the 70's it was thought that roofs should be covered with wood shingles, then in the 80's thinking changed and it would be good if the snow didn't remain on the roofs - so metal roofs became popular; then the 90's brought the realization that snow sliding off the roof piles up and often cover windows creating a cave-like interior and also destroyed deck railings and other exterior features. It was realized that snow was a good insulator and, if allowed to remain on the roof, it would help keep the interior warm. Advances in composition roofing materials made our modern roofing possible.

**There are features you can incorporate that will add to the value and enjoyment of a remodel but not add significant cost.** Think green – what can be done to add value to what you are doing without adding significant cost – and what will save energy? Things like using Low-E glass on the south and west facing windows during window replacement, installing energy efficient appliances, and instead of buying a new wood stove replace the old one with gas.

Are you going to build or replace a deck? Look at the topography of your lot; is it relatively flat so you can install a paving stone patio rather than building a

wooden deck? If so you will save a lot in future maintenance costs and, if it is in a spot where snow from the roof will slide onto that area, you won't have to worry about railings being destroyed by snow slides.

**If you want to remodel we can make it easier for you!** You need to talk to the “experts” – those who have experienced their own projects, who have good knowledge of the unique environmental challenges presented by our mountain climate and setting, an knowledge of the ability and reliability of local architects, designers, contractors and suppliers, and expert knowledge of our local real estate market.

**The Realtor® members of The North Woods Group** have all had personal experience in Truckee and Tahoe Donner with major remodeling projects, and the construction of new homes both for themselves and for clients. They have worked extensively with local contractors and suppliers and can recommend those to use and those to avoid. The North Woods Group of Realtors® will provide you with valuable assistance before and during your remodel or construction project.

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