

**kelly klein H4**

Tenant drilled holes in door without asking.



**home plans H8**

Bungalow makes the most of every square foot.

**nesting H3**

Candice Olson updates an older home while keeping its charm.



# homesunday

STARTRIBUNE.COM/HOMES • SECTION H • SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2013

## REMODELING ON THE REBOUND



ARIANA LINDQUIST • Bloomberg News

An attendee examined a kitchen in an "Idea Home" at the recent Minneapolis Home & Garden Show.

- Homeowners are undertaking long-delayed projects – but proceeding with caution and often paying cash

By KIM PALMER  
kim.palmer@startribune.com

**Y**ou're not the only one itching to tackle a home-improvement project.

During the recession, many homeowners took on only must-do repairs. But now that home prices are starting to recover, there's a lot of pent-up demand to spruce up kitchens, baths and finish basements.

"The real estate market is coming back, and we benefit from that," said Jim Kuzzy, project manager for Plek-

kenpol Builders, Bloomington.

More homeowners are enhancing homes they hope to sell, or homes they just bought, he said. "Materials have changed so much. Houses built in the '80s have good floor plans but are looking dated."

Spending for remodeling is expected to climb 20 percent from September 2012 to September 2013, according to a forecast by Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

A majority of homeowners (53 percent) believe that now is a good time

to remodel, and 75 percent believe that now is a good time to buy, according to the second annual Houzz & Home survey from Houzz.com, a home design and remodeling website. The homeowners who say they will delay their projects because of the economy has dropped to 42 percent, from 52 percent last year.

Which projects are most popular? Kitchens and bathrooms remain homeowners' top priorities, according to a recent Design Trends Survey from the American Institute of Architects. But today's remodelers now want computer areas and recharging stations in their kitchens, and LED

**Remodel continues on H8 ►**

# Remodeling on the rebound

## ◀ REMODEL FROM H1

lighting in their bathrooms, the most-desired features for those spaces, the survey found.

Kuzzy also has seen an increase in people who want to remodel their homes so they can age in place. "Demographically, there are a heck of a lot of baby boomers," he noted. They're adding main-floor bathrooms and laundry rooms, zero-curb showers that could accommodate a wheelchair, and family-room additions that could easily convert to main-floor bedrooms.

While more homeowners are moving forward with remodeling, they're doing it incrementally, with an eye to the long-term big picture. Homeowners are being smart and frugal about

their projects, said Laura Orfield-Skrivseth, designer with Orfield Design and Construction, a Minneapolis remodeling firm. "In this economy, I have found a lot more people who just want to pay for plans," she said. "They're tackling a lot of the work themselves."

That may mean it'll take longer to complete their project, she said. "They're doing it after their full-time job and on weekends," and sometimes calling in a pro for help if they get stuck. "I often consult on those projects, for an hourly fee," she said.

Plekkenpol does mostly turnkey projects, according to Kuzzy, but occasionally they're called in to fix a DIY job gone wrong. "Sometimes people stall out, or we get an SOS call."

One recent survey, by Remod-

elormove.com, actually found fewer remodelers choosing the DIY option.

The California-based website has been conducting surveys of its site visitors twice a year, in spring and fall, since 2006, said founder Dan Fritschen. Before the recession 65 percent said they expected to hire a general contractor, a number that rose to 73 percent in the most recent survey. Fritschen's take is that the economy has stabilized, and people the least affected by the recession are now getting back into remodeling. "They tend to be those who are more affluent and have more equity in their homes," thus they can afford a general contractor.

"My belief is that it's not part of a long-term trend, but the demographic has shifted, as to who's remodeling," he said. As the housing market



ARIANA LINDQUIST • Bloomberg News

Elaine Dorsher checked out an artificial stone sink at the Universal Stone Inc. display at the Minneapolis Home & Garden Show.

improves, "DIYers will pop back in."

Unlike the housing boom years, when most homeowners financed their improvements with home-equity loans, Orfield-Skrivseth has seen a big rise in people paying cash.

"If they don't have the cash, they don't do the project," she said. "Banks are really strict now, and people have gotten smarter."

Kim Palmer • 612-673-4784