

StarTribune

Architects help you find your own inspired house

Article by: Lynn Underwood
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Even if you love your house, it's likely that it has a few dysfunctional or outdated spaces. We've asked four architects for their ideas on remodeling and ways to achieve the home you aspire to, whether that will take floor-by-floor remodeling or just a little fine-tuning.

On Tuesday night at International Market Square, architects Andrea Swan, Paul Mankins, Michaela Mahady and Bob Mack will take your questions after a panel discussion exploring design and creative remodeling approaches.

Here, they weigh in on how to make your home more livable, your rooms more flexible and any remodeling project more affordable.

Andrea Swan, Swan Architecture, Minneapolis;
swanarchitecture.com

Q: Name some of the most popular remodeling requests, aside from kitchens and bathrooms.

A: Knocking down walls to create open circulation and connections between living spaces. Abandoning formal dining and living rooms and going with one great room. Command centers for laptops and recharging electronics. Mudrooms added in older homes to store coats and backpacks. In my 1950s rambler, I turned a vestibule into a mini-mudroom.

Q: How can you stretch your remodeling dollars?

A: Come up with a long-range master plan of everything you want to do, then prioritize your projects and budget. You can save money by reconfiguring existing space rather than adding on. Shop around for tile and other materials.

Q: What are your favorite green products?

A: I like to use natural materials like limestone, clay and hardwood flooring that's from Minnesota or the Midwest. I pitch Forbo marmoleum flooring to clients. It comes in cool, vibrant colors and is great for a mudroom, laundry room or kids' room.

Q: What makes a home livable for the long term?

A: Flexibility is paramount. The formal study has evolved into an office that's integrated in the family room so parents can monitor kids. The desire for families to be closer to one another is driving the design of more flex spaces.

Q: What can an architect bring to the table?

A: An architect can ensure that the big picture is fulfilled and the project is cohesive and consistent. Architects can offer ideas on how to save money without taking away from the integrity and aesthetic of the design. To maintain their licensure, architects have to keep up with the newest technologies, innovative materials and building codes.

Q: When is a job too small to hire an architect?

A: It can be as small as helping someone choose exterior paint color and lights.



Architect Andrea Swan created contemporary open spaces to showcase the homeowner's art in this makeover of a 1980s condo in a Minneapolis high-rise.

SCOTT AMUNDSON ,



BEFORE: A 1940s Federal-style home had a hodgepodge of additions and small closed-off rooms.



"The bones of the house are from 1948," said Mankins. "But everything else is new, open and contemporary."

PAUL CROSBY ,



AFTER: Paul Mankins' addition and renovation integrated parts of the old with the new.

Paul Mankins, Substance Architecture Interiors Design, Des Moines; substancearchitecture.com

Q: Name one significant home design trend.

A: Credit Sarah Susanka, the queen of the not-so-big house, for the movement away from gi-normous homes to something that's higher-quality and tailored to personal needs.

Q: How is that changing the way we live?

A: People are realizing they only use a formal dining room three times a year and are more critical about what spaces they need. We're seeing fewer dedicated rooms and more flexible spaces that flow together.

Q: What makes a home livable for the long term?

A: We talk about "ranch-ability" with clients. Can you live in the house on one level? Will it serve you when you have mobility issues? We discuss what makes sense financially if you plan on staying for a period of years.

Q: Why should someone hire an architect?

A: Susanka has been influential on clients. They realize that you can benefit from having design tailored to your needs rather than an omni solution that's supposed to work for everybody. Architects are good at looking at the personal requirements of a family.

Q What's in the future for home design?

A Sustainability is informing a lot of the work going on in the world. And computerized 3-D modeling has opened up a whole area of exploration. Architects can dream it up, and companies can manufacture it. This mass customization is sure to impact residential design.

Michaela Mahady, SALA Architects, Stillwater; salaarc.com

Q: What's on your clients' must-have lists?

A: People are seeing the value in staying put and reworking their existing home. There's the typical kitchen and bathroom makeover, which can increase value, but we're also converting space into home offices, and empty-nesters are building a main-level master bedroom addition in order to stay in their homes longer.

Q: Name some smart ways to spend your remodeling dollars.

A: Paint is a cheap thrill. You can make a room more enjoyable by painting walls, ceilings, woodwork and furnishings. Explore creative ways to re-use existing space, such as turning a closet into a half-bath. Architects can help you envision how to open up closed-in rooms.

Q: What should you watch out for in a remodeling project?

A: Do your homework when selecting a builder. Look at their work — personality mix and past performance are crucial. Don't assume a low bid is the best value overall.

Q: What should you ask an architect before hiring him or her?

A: Does your project fit their expertise, and can you see examples? Will they personally be involved in your project? Is your budget realistic for what you want to achieve? What type of fee structure do they recommend?

Q: What's your favorite style of house to work on?

A: I enjoy older homes. They don't address current spatial needs but have an abundance of beautiful materials and intimately



Bob Mack's addition turned this historic home into a charming Dunn Bros. coffeeshop, at left.

Provided photos ,



Condo renovation by Andrea Swan, architect on the Home of the Month panel.

SCOTT AMUNDSON ,



Swan designed an addition and interior staircase for this northern Minnesota cabin.

Northway Construction ,



The Smith Douglas More house in Eden Prairie.

Provided photos ,



crafted spaces that are pleasing to be in. We have to preserve the legacy of old historic homes, but make them useful for today and give them new life.

Bob Mack, MacDonald & Mack Architects, Minneapolis;
mmarchltd.com

Q: What are some current remodeling trends?

A: There's a growing interest in being respectful to historic architecture. It's driven partly by tax credits for rehab projects, but clients also want the home to function for today's lifestyles — more contemporary lighting, built-in recycling, low-flow fixtures and energy efficiency. It can be updated to meet today's expectations, but doesn't have to look ultra-contemporary.

Q: What are some smart ways to spend your remodeling dollars?

A: If you're planning on being in the home for a while, spend it on something you really want. If you're concerned about resale, spend it on the kitchen and bathroom. We put a wood-burning fireplace in our 1897 Dutch Colonial. It didn't add value, but the kids had a place to hang their Christmas stockings.

Q: Name one way to get the most bang for your buck.

A: In an older home, rehabilitate the existing windows with new weatherstripping and storm windows. It's comparable in performance to a brand-new window and costs a lot less. Buy a highly efficient furnace and water heater, and you'll see a dramatic reduction in your heating bill.

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Smith Douglas More house addition by Bob Mack, architect on the Home of the Month panel.

'INSPIRED HOUSE'

What: A panel discussion about home design and remodeling, plus the announcement of this year's Home of the Month contest winners. The event, which features architects Andrea Swan, Bob Mack, Paul Mankins and Michaela Mahady, is sponsored by AIA Minnesota and the Star Tribune. Architects will also answer homeowners' questions.

When: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. March 26.

Where: International Market Square, Lyndale and Glenwood Aves., Mpls.

Tickets: \$25 at the door; includes light refreshments. For information, go to www.aia-mn.org.