



BANGON 12.19.09 - Home Resolutions

After the presents and the family gatherings, the holidays are a perfect time for discussions about home conveniences and making your home fit the needs of your family and lifestyle. Think of it as setting New Years Resolutions for Better Living.

Whether you would prefer a new home or to renovate your current home, the options can be dizzying unless you take an organized approach. To help narrow your choice down to what's right for you, take the time to answer the following questions and review how various designs would work for you and your family.

Layout and Function - Think about your daily routines and what's important to you.

- Does everyone rush out the door in the morning at the same time?
- Where will the children play, study and watch TV while you are preparing meals?
- Do you require a private space for work or relaxing, away from everyone else?

Traffic Patterns - Movement in, out and inside your home is an important aspect of design.

- How easy is it to get grocery bags from the outside to the kitchen?
- Is it easy to let the dog into the backyard?
- Can kids take off their outside clothes without trekking mud into the house?
- Do some areas serve as "corridors" to other areas, thereby limiting privacy and furniture placement?
- Can everyone get around the whole house safely and easily?

Space - Spaciousness doesn't necessarily mean larger. Smaller well-designed homes can have all the details and amenities you could want. High ceilings of 9, 10 or even 11 feet, sloped or cathedral ceilings and two-storey rooms add to the sense of spaciousness. This also allows for larger windows that extend your home visually and bring in more natural light.

Open Concept - One of the enduring and popular design trends in homes is the move away from formal and separate rooms on the main floor. Eating, kitchen and living areas are integrated into a single "great room." From the front entrance you can often enjoy a wide open view to the rear of the home.

The open concept brings it own challenges for homeowners.

- Where to hang pictures?
- How to add visual interest?
- How to delineate different living and working areas without closing up the space?

Bulkheads and other ceiling treatments provide visual interest and delineate spaces, while a mixture of lighting (ambient, task and accent) lets you create distinct atmospheres within the great room. Your choice of flooring can have a big impact; ceramic tile throughout the entire area, for instance, offers a different feeling than "mix and match" flooring. Columns or partial walls can help to define private areas without taking away from the overall sense of open space.

Furniture - You need to consider how your furniture will fit into the home. A foot can make a big difference when it comes to putting a table in the breakfast nook or your couch in front of the fireplace. Know the dimensions of your furniture so you can figure out quickly what you need. Also consider the placement of windows, doors, and perhaps fireplace, as well as traffic patterns.

Storage - Without adequate storage, a home can become cluttered and harder to keep tidy. Plan for closets located near the entrance door, not awkwardly down the hall, and in every room as needed. Check that you have enough space for linen, seasonal clothing, sports equipment and so on. There is a wealth of storage solutions, from prefabricated units to built-in customized systems.

Resolving to build a new home or making your home new again through renovation can breath new life into your lifestyle and family.

When you're setting your New Year's Resolutions - think of your home!