

## 6. REMODELING YOUR NEW RESIDENCE

When purchasing a home in Santa Fe, some alterations are almost always in order. Remodeling is typically the bread and butter of our firm. In fact, renovation is more prevalent than new construction, due to Santa Fe's limited land base (we're backed up against the southern Rockies on our east side).

With a remodel, many known and unknowns must be dealt with. The top priority is obtaining as-builts. As-builts are drawings that show existing conditions, mainly room layouts and sizes. If any exterior work is to be done, exterior elevations will also be important.

Once these drawings have been done—or better yet, original plans obtained you are ready to sit down and begin the process of altering your plan to meet your needs. I always start by asking clients what they need, prioritizing this list of needs, and then establishing a budget. Typically the needs exceed the budget, so the list of priorities becomes extremely important in bringing a remodel within budget.

Once needs have been identified, we can determine if the existing house and its layout can meet these needs or if additional square footage is required. Often by looking at an existing space closely, we find that adding square footage may not be necessary.

The biggest and most common mistake made is trying to make a house something it was never designed to be. For instance, I've seen many people say they want the kitchen where the bedroom was, the living room where the kitchen was, the dining room where the bedroom was, and so on. This approach attempts to make the house and its layout something it probably shouldn't and can't be, and it will cost the owner many thousand of dollars.

Working within the existing house's parameters will save the new owner thousands of dollars and probably relieve the potential for unforeseen problems that could cost even more money. If additional square footage is required, look closely at how the new addition will fit into the fabric of the existing house and its layout.

A recent remodel my company was involved in solved the problem of a client with five children and only a three-bedroom house. We converted the oversized garage (which was insulated and finished) into four new bedrooms and a play area. The existing garage slab was luckily already recessed, so all we had to do to heat the space was put in new radiant heat and pour a four-inch concrete topping on them. This was a lot cheaper per square foot than a new five-room addition would have been.

The key to a successful remodel is doing your homework with your architect, understanding your needs and working within the framework of the existing house. By doing these three things you've gone a long way to ensuring a successful remodeling project that remains within budget.