

## Remodeling is strong in Q-C, Midwest

**By Alma Gaul**  
QUAD-CITY TIMES

Remodeling appears to be up — or at least strong — in the Quad-City region.

Davia Gallup, a Quad-City interior designer, says that in the past two years, she's gotten more jobs to remodel and reconfigure existing homes than to outfit brand new spaces.

"I'm very busy in the remodeling end," she says. "People are staying put. They're gutting their house and reconfiguring the rooms to fit. They're not building new because they don't want to be way out."

Another reason for remodeling is to make a home more attractive for resale if a couple wants to downsize, she says.

Tim Carr, chairman of the Quad-Cities Remodelers Coun-

cil, says that from his view, "both remodeling and new construction are having good years."

Certainly new housing starts are down from the recent boom years, but because the Quad-City region wasn't overbuilt or overpriced as some areas of the country, "the crunch hasn't hit here," he says. "People who have a dream of building a new home are still pursuing that."

A report from the National Association of Home Builders says that remodeling expectations are up in the Midwest for the second quarter of this year, while sluggish in all other regions.

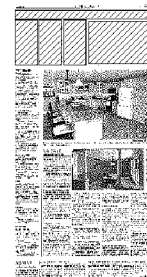
According to the association's Remodeling Market Index, or RMI, released in mid-August, market expectations nationally dropped in the second quarter,

with the Northeast falling to 32.8 (from 36.4), the South to 40.1 (from 42.2), and the West to 42.4 (from 42.9).

But the Midwest increased to 52.9 (from 44.1).

The RMI measures remodeler perceptions of market demand for current and future residential projects. A number over 50 indicates that the majority of remodelers view market conditions as improving. The national RMI has been running below 50 since the final quarter of 2005, implying shrinkage of remodeling expenditures since that time.

Eighty-four percent of surveyed remodelers also reported home builders diversifying into remodeling due to the downturn in home building, thus contributing to more saturated remodeling market conditions.



## REMODELING IDEAS

Opening up existing spaces, building additions and finishing basements are favorite remodeling projects in the Quad-City region.

Interior designer Davia Gallup says she gets lots of requests from people wanting to open up living rooms and dining rooms — “obsolete rooms,” as she calls them.

Dining room walls are knocked down to create a bigger kitchen — “I don’t know anybody who’s not redoing their kitchen,” she says — and living rooms are being turned into offices.

Bath makeovers and basement finishing also are popular, she says.

For people wanting to improve their home with the idea of boosting its resale value, following are some ideas from Bill Trimble, author of “Screw It! I’ll be My Own Contractor,” and Robert Jenson, CEO of luxury Las Vegas real estate purveyor The Jenson Group:

■ Clean up your yard and do a little landscaping.

■ Put in a new room, or remodel one. The National Association of Realtors says that a kitchen or bath

remodel can return 102 percent of your investment.

■ There is a rapidly growing demand for energy-efficient homes. Add a solar panel to help with the water heating bill, or exchange that old rusting furnace with a new unit with high efficiency rating. You could also replace your old single pane windows with thermal pane units.

■ Change patio covers and enclosures to make these areas more of an extension of the inside living space.

■ In the kitchen, install commercial grade appliances such as Viking or Wolf and granite countertops.

■ Build an “outdoor room” with wiring for lights, TV and surround sound, a fire pit/fireplace and a barbecue grill.

■ Buy a great front door.

■ Replace existing hardware with an up-to-date finish such as brushed nickel or oil-rubbed bronze.

■ Consider repainting a room or two with contemporary colors or faux finishes.