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# Master Bath Remodels

## Building/Remodeling Industry Trends

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Despite the housing crisis, bathroom remodels are still a smart remodeling investment—especially master bathrooms—and can be a great project that your clients can use to add value to their homes.

“A bathroom is still considered a valuable investment,” says Gary Uhl, director of design for American Standard, one of the country’s oldest plumbing manufacturing companies. “People may decide that they can no longer afford to move or sell, but the notion of upgrading their house by adding an additional bathroom—a bathroom for every bedroom—is still a trend we’re seeing. And if your home doesn’t have one, a master bath is an obvious thing to add.”

Research shows that Uhl is right. Although consumers typically are spending less when it comes to remodeling, they’re still seeing sizable returns on modest bathroom investments, according to *Remodeling* magazine’s 2009 “Cost vs. Value Report,” which found that a mid-range bathroom project has an average ROI of 71 percent.

To help their customers get all 71 percent when they sell—and 100 percent enjoyment out of their master bathroom until they do—remodelers should keep the following master bath trends top of mind:

### **1. Small but sumptuous**

Because home sizes are shrinking, so are master bathrooms, according to Uhl. “After many years of bathrooms growing in size, we are seeing smaller-scale master baths,” he says.

Small doesn’t mean stale, however, as homeowners continue to crave spa-like luxury in their master bathrooms, points out John Kelsey, principal and co-founder of Wilson Kelsey Design, Inc. a Salem, Mass.-based interior design and renovation firm, who says amenities like steam showers and body spray shower heads still are popular.

To make smaller bathrooms appear both larger and more luxurious, Uhl says more homeowners are replacing bathroom cabinetry with bathroom furniture that's been specially engineered to accommodate plumbing and withstand moisture. "Furniture's usually on legs," Uhl says. "Being able to see floor space gives the illusion of greater space, helps create that spa feeling, coordinates the master bath with the master bedroom and provides great storage."

## 2. Simple and sustainable

The National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA), said in its 2010 trends forecast that for sinks, "simple undermount models will be most popular, followed by integrated sink tops, drop-in sinks, vessel sinks and pedestal sinks."

Uhl adds that with the size in master baths decreasing, homeowners are opting for simpler tubs and fixtures as well.

Putting in a freestanding soaking tub—traditional claw-foot tubs are making a major comeback, according to Uhl—instead of a corner whirlpool tub saves space and water, which is an increasingly big concern for environmentally conscious homeowners. Kelsey adds that low-flow showerheads and faucets, dual-flush toilets and infrared controls are growing in popularity to save money and water.

## 3. Convenience Counts

Because homeowners want bathrooms to be convenient as well as comfortable, more are moving the toilet into a separate water closet, according to Uhl. "Once you put a toilet in the master bathroom, it can only be used by one person when the toilet's in use," says Uhl. "If it's located in a separate water closet the space can be shared."

Convenience is also why many homeowners are integrating technology into their master bathrooms—TVs, sound systems, towel warmers and even coffee makers—according to Kelsey, who says another popular addition is a master bath dressing room. "More and more there is an expectation for the getting up-and-dressing experience—and the reverse at night—to be quite linear," he says. "This means in the morning, walk into the bathroom in your pajamas or nightgown or robe, shower, etc., move to the dressing room, dress and walk out the door ready to hit the road."

## 4. Warm, Not Cold

Perhaps the biggest development in master baths is their aesthetic, according to Uhl. "Early bathrooms were closely related to hospitals; they were all about sanitation and sterilization," he says. "Now, people are warming bathrooms up so that they feel like a more natural environment."

Although tile and natural stone still reign supreme, according to NKBA, Uhl says homeowners' desire for warmer spaces is persuading more of them to incorporate glass, metal and especially wood into their master bathrooms, where wood furniture, floors and wainscoting are becoming popular features.

Warmth is a trend Kelsey's seeing, too—literally. "Radiant floors are a given," he says. "Once you've stepped out of a hot tub onto a warm tile floor, you'll never want to go back to cold tile floors. Trust me."