

SPECIAL ADVERTISING FEATURE

Home *Guide*



Humble abodes

Experts talk kitchen spaces, renovations, the market, and more.

WRITTEN BY HEIDI BETHEL

When it comes to renovating home kitchens, making the home unique, and navigating the housing market, Reno-Tahoe is lucky to have many talented professionals who are able to help customers through the twists and turns. Here are some important points to keep in mind with regard to your home, according to local experts.





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It's All About the Kitchen

Meals. Conversation. Homework. Crafts. The kitchen is the hub of the house and often is the place where family and friends congregate, with or without food. With that in mind, it's important to make the kitchen functional for you.

"The kitchen really is the heart of the home," explains Betsy Caron, Realtor with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Drysdale Properties in Sparks. "It's the space where everyone feels comfortable. It's an easy place to gather and talk and just be a unit."

Caron recommends homeowners really look at how they use a kitchen when considering a move or renovating. Donna O'Connell, Reno division president of Toll Brothers, agrees, noting the importance of a smart space.

"A well-designed kitchen will elevate your cooking experience to a new level," O'Connell says. "We see customers who want a large island and ample counter space, plenty of storage, and all the amenities available where and when they need them. Another biggie is state-of-the-art appliances and convection ovens with temperature control. You want to focus on how to save time and cook food evenly while feeling like a professional chef in your own home."



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When considering a kitchen remodel, Steve Gunderson, project manager with Curtis Bros. Construction Inc. in Reno, encourages talking to your designer about what you enjoy cooking and how many people typically hang around the space. Having worked with several clients with specific cooking needs, Gunderson emphasizes customization is key when it comes to the kitchen.

“One family has a ravioli board that fits over their whole island to give one big working surface,” he says as an example. “If someone likes to bake a lot, let your designer know so he or she can add appropriate storage and prepping areas. The options are endless for making the kitchen your own.”

For those who tend to keep the cook company during meal preparation, comfortable seating can make all the difference. Charlotte Michaels, founder and manager of Transcend Interiors in Reno, explains, “It’s important to have a well-balanced great room and kitchen space, so when your spouse or children cook for you, you can sit back and enjoy a glass of wine. Cozy seats and large counters can be inviting and productive for the family and company. Talking with an interior designer is a great place to start.”



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Soak It Up

Updates to other areas of the home also can make a difference in the aesthetic and the market value. Jeff Mecca, showroom manager for Western Nevada Supply in Sparks, finds there is a lot of interest in bathroom updates — especially when it comes to the bathtub.

“What we’re seeing is freestanding tubs have gone even beyond a trend,” he explains. “They open up the space and are easier to get in and out of.”

Mecca says freestanding bathtubs come in acrylic, man-made solid surface (in matte or gloss finish), copper, or stone. Some manufacturers offer air systems for massage features along with aromatherapy and chromatherapy (color therapy).

Artful Approach

To help create visual appeal, head to Art Source Gallery, where gallerist Christel Citko helps customers find the perfect pieces for their homes.

“We collect art to celebrate a memory, support emerging artists, make a statement, create a legacy, beautify our home or office, or maybe just to add joy to every day,” she says.

In addition to offering greatly reduced pricing on all inventory, Citko partners with quality suppliers around the world for custom moldings and frames.

“We have in-depth knowledge of custom framing and encourage folks to bring their art in for gorgeous displays, especially if they had them done more than 10 years ago, so we can preserve the piece and update the look,” Citko says.

When it comes to memorabilia and artwork, Michele Larson, owner of The Frame Shop in Reno and Sparks, suggests custom displays that won’t hurt the pocketbook. Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and graduation ceremonies are all occasions to be celebrated with many frame-worthy elements to consider.

“We see jerseys and golf balls for dad; graduation caps, medals, tassels, as well as graduation certificates for the graduates; and moms love to see a piece of art their young children made in school inside a colorful, bright ‘fun frame,’” Larson notes.

For those who like the look of a framed piece with the option to change the artwork easily, Larson recommends a Wexel frame. Using two clear pieces of glass or acrylic between mounted magnets, these frames are esthetically pleasing and simple to update.





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Bringing the Outdoors In

Feeling closed in is outdated when there are so many choices that take advantage of outside spaces. Tayona Tate, global real estate adviser with Compass in Reno, suggests an aesthetically pleasing alternative to the traditional garage door, for example.

“A lot of people are using sliding glass doors or French doors to replace their garage doors,” she explains. “It gives a modern flair and provides a light, open, and airy feel. People are looking more for that now and want to continue to bring the outside into the home in creative ways.”



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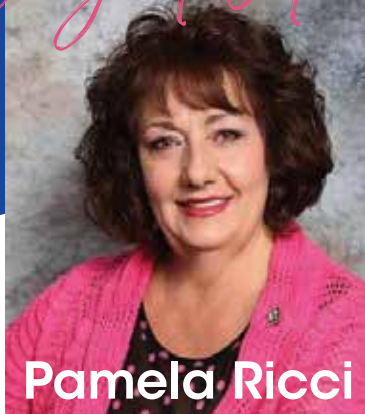
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Grills Mastered

When it comes to barbecues and outdoor cooking spaces, Sam Olson, team lead/owner of The Olson Group of RE/MAX Realty Affiliates in Reno, reminds readers to put safety at the top of their minds.

"A briquette barbecue should be kept away from your house; make sure it's fully extinguished and away from kids," Olson says. "An outdoor kitchen adds mountains of value to the house, expands the footprint, and can be a really fun focal point for outdoor entertainment. I would recommend reaching out to someone mentioned in this Home Guide and have it professionally installed. If you're running water lines, electricity, and gas for a full kitchen, it's important that it's done professionally and worth the money to do it right. As for me, I'll keep using my trusty Weber and a cooler."

Market Madness

The Reno-Tahoe housing market continues to be affected by low inventory and rising prices. Karen Walker Hill, residential specialist for Ferrari-Lund Real Estate in Reno, encourages those who are thinking of selling to jump in.

"It's the best time to sell something that is difficult [to sell], with no backyard or view, or something considered a fixer upper. Inventory is not at an all-time low, but it is still pretty low. We're seeing multiple offers, multiple bids, and people going over asking [price]."

For those looking to buy, she recommends people stay patient and be tough.

"When you make your first offer, have everything in order with proof of funds and approvals. Know what your market is, and if you want it, you have to bid for it. The new-home market is still incredibly good for people who can wait."



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Kevin Jepsen, loan officer with Omega Mortgage Group in Reno, recommends that those not ready to buy or sell consider using the equity in their current homes for remodels.

"With home prices going up, remodels in the kitchen, master bedroom, and master bathroom are some of the bigger adds as far as adding [value] to the home," Jepsen says. "I've had a lot of people who've done remodels over the past couple of years, and they refinance to pull the equity out of their home for cash to do different things, which can end up saving money in the long run. Avoid high-interest loans or credit card bills by refinancing for those improvements."

Whatever you do with your home, be sure to make it your own, be smart about projects, and enjoy some bonding time in the kitchen, all courtesy of some great area businesses. ❖



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