



Architect Emile Jansen here been monitoring the progress of a renovation.

New lease of life for family home

Amanda Davey

HOMEOWNERS are starting to take advantage of low interest rates to spruce up their kitchens and/or bathrooms, put in decks and landscape their gardens, thus generating a modest renovation boom across the peninsula.

While double-dip recession is still a concern, the economic downturn has been counterbalanced by the so-called "nesting effect", as homeowners opt to spend their weekends walking the aisles of their local hardware stores in a bid to add value to their homes.

In 2004, NSW spent \$10.3 billion on home renovations but by December last year, spending had dropped to \$8.3 billion.

But now the figures show that renovating is undergoing a resurgence.

There's always a few winners in a downturn and this time around homeowners can capitalise on lower prices and better service from the trades.

Today, when you call a tradie to do a job, chances are they will turn up on time and then provide a reasonable quote into the

bargain, which for many is good news and perhaps a pleasant surprise.

Renovating, while not cheap – as well as being messy and inconvenient if you are living on the premises while the reno takes place – can prove to be a much more financially feasible option than starting over in a brand new place.

Compare the price of the renovation, with the cost of a subsequent purchase with its hefty stamp duty fees, real estate commission and moving costs, along with the upheaval of leaving a trusted neighbourhood, and it's easy to appreciate why many homeowners opt to stay put in their existing abode in uncertain economic times.

Embarking on a major renovation generally means an architect will become involved, ideally one who is experienced with the style and level of renovation desired.

When choosing an architect the rule of thumb is to compile a shortlist of candidates for the job then ask to view their previous work.

It's important the relationship between architect and client is both constructive and amicable, so choosing someone with whom you can work with is fundamental. If

Property development: fun and profit for girls



Author and property developer Jo Chivers. Picture: ANNIKA ENDERBORG -PP309644.

READY to try your luck in the property game?

North Curl Curl based property developer Jo Chivers is a co-author of *Property is a Girl's Best Friend*, a girls' guide to buying and investing in the Australian and NZ property market.

This handy little book is a great reference tool, covering everything from investing, sorting out finance and tax strategies, to finding the best real estate agent and researching and negotiating deals.

Step-by-step procedures, analysis and strategies are provided for the uninitiated, along with plenty of tips

and tricks to get started – and stay ahead – in the property game.

Now busy with her 30th property development, Ms Chivers said it's been specifically written by women for women, citing numerous case studies of successful female property investors who have done very well for themselves.

"It's really important for women to be financially independent and investing and developing in property is a great way of creating wealth," she said.

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you know what you want then you need someone who is willing to follow your brief and be prepared to compromise.

Avalon architect Emile Jansen (Jansen Design and Architecture) agrees that architects should not be too precious about changes to their proposals.

"A good architect should be flexible," he said.

"I always encourage my potential clients to write down a list of what they want and a list of what they need.

"Wants and needs are very different so doing a must-have list and a wish list actually lets you crystallise your ideas."

To achieve the best possible outcome, Mr Jansen also advises investing time and thought into the planning stage of the project before the building starts.

"The more thinking you invest in a project, the better the building will be.

"The design will be better and the financial outcome will be better.

"It's all to do with planning and if you plan carefully you can't help but get a good result."

Mr Jansen passes on five tips to improve your home:

1. Let there be light;
2. Keep it simple;
3. Call in the experts;
4. Do it right and don't assume that a cheap job won't show;
5. Plan twice, renovate once – because failure to plan often results in overspending.

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