



Designer FYI

By Kris Linder

Buyer Beware WHEN IS A 'FIXER UPPER'... NOT?

Instead of “fixer-upper,” the ad should have said “burner downer,” right?

So when is a fixer-upper... not? At what point do you make the decision it's worth remodeling? Is it the price, the location, the challenge?

Everyone has his or her personal concept of what a fixer-upper is.

For some, it is painting, landscaping, replacing appliances and updating sinks and faucets. For others, it is devotion to a project that could take a year or more.

Let's look at a local scenario (names and location have been omitted to protect the innocent). A vintage home in an upscale location, it appears charming, well built and in need of a little TLC. But this house turned out to be a perfect example of what to avoid.

Our vintage charmer looked like a great investment for the future. The owners wanted to keep the character and just update the kitchen and baths. Instead, they found out that the electrical was not up to code and had to be replaced entirely.

Once contractors opened the walls to fix the wiring, they found that the house was built with rock walls instead of standard framing. Over the years, rats and other little animals had made their homes there. New framing was necessary in order to remodel several rooms.

As the remodel progressed, it was apparent that most of the house had to be stripped back to its studs. As if that wasn't enough, uneven floors needed to have new sub-flooring material, which required all the doors to be shaved down in order to fit.

See where this is going? The budget for remodeling the kitchen and baths tripled. This is a perfect example of why one should strongly consider all possibilities when purchasing a home in as-is condition.

Realtors today often advise buyers to get a home inspection on an as-is sale, but most of these inspections are limited. The National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) suggests calling a licensed general contractor and listing all the areas you want checked, including the attic, under the house, electrical and plumbing.

Having an architect or interior designer who knows remodeling involved before you sign the final papers will allow you to get professional advice on the parameters of your remodel.

If you have unlimited funds for your fixer-upper, go for it. In the Bay Area housing market, it appears that you cannot go wrong improving real estate. But if you're on a budget, remember the words at the top of this column, “When a fixer-upper isn't.”

Happy remodeling! ⬆

Interior Design Source owner Kris Linder consults, designs, remodels and provides interior furnishings for a large segment of Silicon Valley. Call her at 408.395.4028 or visit www.interior-design-source.com.



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