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Jennifer Barley: Design For Living

Taking the plunge: Pleasure Point couple decides to remodel

EDITOR'S NOTE: Over the next three to four months, the Sentinel will be following the Johnsons as they remodel their Pleasure Point home.

Have you ever considered remodeling your home? I mean, actually taking the plunge to renovate, redesign, re-orient and just re-do.

Remodeling is often a very overwhelming idea, and the mere thought of how to tackle the project can seem incomprehensible.

Where do you start? How large or small should the project be? How much is a reasonable budget? What if you run out of money or ideas before the project is completed? What if your contractor quits the job before it is finished? Should your project be clearly for re-sell value or for your family to enjoy right now?

All these thoughts and more can run through the mind of someone considering a remodel.

This past summer, Cheryl and Paul Johnson hired me to help with the selection of some furniture and lighting fixtures for their Pleasure Point home. While working together, Cheryl said that she and Paul were ready to take the plunge with a remodel.

With extreme interest, I asked if I could tag along and follow the remodel process for the duration of the project and write about the project once a month in the Sentinel. Needless to say, the Johnsons agreed.

Over the next three to four months, I will be following the Johnson remodel including the hiring of a contractor, defining the project, work in progress, the budget and any challenges that may come up.

Meet The Johnsons

Paul and Cheryl Johnson have been married for four-and-half-years, and they have lived in their Pleasure Point home since 1996. The home was built in the late '40s and in the '80s a strange second story was added on. The total square footage of the house is approximately 1400 square feet with a large portion of that square footage in the upstairs master bedroom.

Paul and Cheryl now have two young children, Janie and Fischer, as well as two black labs, Harpo and Tompson. Their house was beginning to feel smaller and smaller.

The Johnsons love their community, being close to the beach as well as being able to go for long runs on East Cliff Drive. Staying in their house was important to them, and they wanted to remodel the interior of the house to create a more spacious feel.

Their old and outdated kitchen needed to be completely gutted while Fisher's bedroom needed



□ Fisher Johnson takes in the view from his room in the family's Pleasure Point home, which is currently being remodeled. (Shmuel Thaler / Sentinel)

insulation to be usable. Their second bath had not been used in years and was due for an overhaul. The Johnsons decided to redefine the space within the existing footprint of the home.

Hiring A Contractor

With some ideas of what work need to be accomplished, it was time to hire a contractor. Finding a contractor who is a good fit takes some research. Besides the actual work that needs to take place, a homeowner and a contractor have a true partnership which needs to form to help the project run smoothly, to help meet timelines and for communication to be as clear as possible.

The Johnsons ended up contacting three different contractors who were referred by three different people.

Of the three, one contractor never returned the Johnsons' phone call. The approaches to the project were different between the two contractors, and Paul and Cheryl really felt that in the way they approached the bidding process they were not going to get an apples to oranges quote.

In the long run, the Johnsons hired James Hartje Construction to be the contractor on this project. Paul was really impressed with Hartje's organizational skills, knowledge of projects this size and the amount of time and effort Hartje put into creating the proposal.

James Hartje Contruction, Incorporated, has been in the building and remodeling service since 1985. They are an independently owned and operated company who is fully licensed, insured and bonded. Jim Hartje, the president of the company, supervises all phases of every project and has a full crew who work for him. He has a team of subcontractors throughout Santa Cruz County that he works with that he says provide excellence in workmanship.

When Hartje presented the budget, he really itemized each part of the project and had a budget number attached. This helped the Johnson's decide what part of the project was a priority. The original contract was signed for close to \$127,000.

After signing a contract, a schedule was put into place. The project began in December and has an anticipated completion date of early May. In an effort to help reduce the level of chaos in their life, the Johnsons needed to rent another place to live for the duration of the project.

The rent on the house is \$2300 which adds to the overall budget of the project.

Demolition Time

So far, the interior of the house has been gutted. The kitchen walls have been torn down, the sheetrock is off the wall and the roof has been reframed to make a vaulted ceiling in the front part of the house.

Decisions are currently being made about cabinetry, new windows for the bathroom and Fisher's room as well as where skylights are being placed.

The Johnsons and Hartje have meetings to review decisions that need to be made. Hartje creates an agenda and provides it in advance so the Johnsons can come to the meeting prepared.

The project is moving fast, and the Johnsons have a list of items that need to get accomplished to keep the project moving forward.

Often in remodel projects, homeowners will hear themselves say "while you are at it..." And in the Johnsons' case this is true.

The Johnsons decided this week to go ahead and tear out the existing exterior entryway to the house and create something more in character with the home, adding more curb appeal to their

Pleasure Point bungalow. Jim Hartje is currently working on the change order proposal.

After being in the remodel process for a month, the Johnsons feel great about their contractor, the progress that has been made and watching their home take a new shape.

Next month, we'll see how far they've come in the project.

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