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Making it Their Own

A couple relocating from Montana overcome their remodeling fears to turn a Tumalo house into their dream home.

Photos by Simone Paddock, courtesy of PGC Building + Design

by Susan Thomas Springer, for The Bulletin Advertising Department



For a Montana couple retiring to Central Oregon, a Tumalo property looked good by the numbers. The five-acre property had a fenced pasture for their three horses, a 2,000-square-foot, one-level, three-bedroom house, a barn, and a workshop.

But something just wasn't right. They looked at the house four times. Their Realtor decided to bring in a design build team to assess how realistic it was to update the house. When they learned a remodel was doable, Ed Brown and his wife, Margot Boileau, purchased the property, loaded up their horses and never looked back at their huge log home on 27 acres of Montana wilderness.

"When our horses looked around, they thought they'd died and gone to heaven because they no longer had

to share their pasture with wolves, elk and bear," said Brown. "They've been calm ever since they've been here."

The decision to remodel wasn't an easy one. Brown and Boileau had a negative past remodeling experience and wanted to be reassured their bid was realistic. Fortunately, the state of the economy opened up the opportunity to purchase and remodel this property at a price that was more reasonable to them while meeting their dream-home expectations.

For Brown and Boileau, it took a realistic assessment of the property, honest talks about money, and a professional team to make it happen.

The building team's contractor climbed into the attic to make measurements, and the designer questioned the couple about the types of

materials they wanted. Both treated Brown and Boileau as if they were family members.

"When you do a structure, you are involving their personal lives and their tastes," said Dan Sustaita, contractor with PGC Building + Design. "I think all of us put ourselves in their shoes. I think one of the greatest assets of a local builder is they can do that."

"We're all looking at it with the clients' objectives in mind," said Pamela Armstrong, PGC designer and project manager. "Remodeling or

burning fireplace was added in the living room because the homeowners wanted the option of being off the electrical grid.

"If you can keep the footprint of a room the same, but open it all up, you're going to be saving a lot of money in flooring and in structural components," said Armstrong.

She added that the new plan is more modern, open, and takes advantage of available natural light.

Armstrong calls the style contemporary ranch, which features texture and natural elements without

home's age and whether or not it has had problems such as mold or water damage.

Choose an experienced local builder who addresses both building and design.

Bring in subcontractors to accurately estimate costs such as electrical work. Make sure the contractor is licensed and has liability insurance and worker's compensation coverage.

Lastly, discuss all costs, including how to account for changes during the remodel.

"If you can keep the footprint of a room the same, but open it all up, you're going to be saving a lot of money in flooring and in structural components."

any kind of building is a process, and maintaining the vision of the client and guiding the client through the process is a big part of what we do."

The house was originally built by Adair Homes, which came with a big advantage for remodeling.

Adair, which has decades of history building homes in this area, builds load-bearing exterior walls, allowing interior walls to be moved more easily than traditional stick-build homes. Professionals at PGC Building + Design assessed the house's potential.

The remodel began last spring and finished ahead of schedule last fall. The most dramatic change was removing a wall which separated the kitchen from the living room. Kitchen appliances were rearranged, propane was brought in, and a wood-

looking rustic. The house has subtle accents of red including red flecks in the granite countertops, a red wood stove, and a rich paprika red front door. She used a budget-friendly trick in the kitchen with inexpensive tile for most of the backsplash and more expensive tile for decorative elements.

"Knowing where your focal points are and giving them the best attention possible doesn't necessarily have to cost a lot of money," said Armstrong. "It just means that you have to be careful about how you use the more expensive material."

The PGC team recommends several ways to keep remodels on budget and progressing smoothly:

Start with a knowledgeable Realtor who researches the history of the house so the buyer knows the

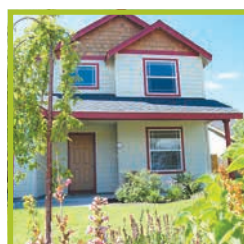
Sustaita also noted that reality TV shows about remodeling may be entertaining but don't accurately show how problems within walls should be handled. He said he works hard on bids to give clients what he calls "the real reality."

According to Sustaita, now is a good time to get the most bang for your buck with remodeling because both material and labor costs are lower and more reasonable.

Brown and Boileau say it was well worth cooking out of the kitchen in their house trailer through the summer while the work progressed. They were relieved to avoid the hassle and run-away costs of their previous remodel. They are also happy to have moved closer to family and scale down with the option to tour their new neighborhood on horseback.



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