

# Improving the Castle

Expanded remodeler shows homeowners how to get the most 'green' for their money

BY FRANK JOSSI

It's hard to avoid the words "green," "sustainable" and "energy-efficient" in home construction and renovation these days. Homeowners have never been more aware of the myriad opportunities to reduce their impact on the environment and save money in the process.

Remodelers have also caught the green wave, among them Castle Building & Remodeling, a Minneapolis-based firm that has worked throughout the Twin Cities for decades and recently opened a St. Paul studio at Snelling and Jefferson avenues.

According to general manager Steve George, a kitchen remodeling project by Castle was the first in Minnesota to earn a certificate from the Minnesota GreenStar program. He will present a workshop on how to select a contractor and take full advantage of green remodeling at 10:15 a.m. Saturday, April 4, during the Macalester-Groveland & Highland Park Home Improvement Fair.

George said home remodeling projects are, almost by their very nature, sustainable since they require no more land and lead to greater energy efficiency through the installation of new appliances, windows and insulation. "Remodeling is a very green type of construction because you're using, in most cases, existing space," he said. "The question we ask our clients is, 'How green do you want to be?'"

One of those clients was Deb Lane, who lives in a 1½-story Tudor home in Highland Park with her husband and son. The family hired Castle to remodel their 13-by-8-foot kitchen to be as sustainable as possible within their budget. The family faced a common conundrum in remodeling—how to get the most "green" for their greenbacks. For example, they debated whether to install recycled countertops that cost more or to install more affordable Formica counters and use the difference to purchase Energy Star-rated appliances. The appliances won out.

Green renovation is all about such tradeoffs. "With a different budget, we could've chosen different products," Lane said. "We could've had bamboo floors, but that would've been more expensive."

*"(The difference) might be as little as a couple of thousand dollars," Jaydan said about green remodeling. "It's more, but it's not expensive. We're not doing a good enough job dispelling that rumor."*

The family made a variety of similar energy-conscious decisions in the \$37,000 project (not including appliances). They kept the kitchen the same size to save on materials and utility costs. They installed light fixtures that use compact fluorescent bulbs. And some of the products used in the project did have recycled material, just not as much as the more costly greener options, Lane said.

So how does a homeowner pull off an affordable green remodel? Castle interior designer Katie Jaydan suggested several strategies that cost little to no extra money. Even full-blown green remodeling projects only cost 2-8 percent more than traditional projects, she said, and the difference is often recouped in



Interior designer Katie Jaydan shows off 12-by-12-inch square sections of cork flooring in the model kitchen at Castle Building & Remodeling's new St. Paul studio at 362 S. Snelling Ave. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

energy savings over just a few years. "(The difference) might be as little as a couple of thousand dollars," Jaydan said about green remodeling. "It's more, but it's not expensive. We're not doing a good enough job dispelling that rumor."

To save water and money from bathroom remodeling projects, Jaydan suggests dual-flush toilets and low-flow shower heads

with aerators. To bring natural light into the home, she often recommends Solatube Daylight Systems to lend a brightness that equals standard ceiling lamps.

"Solatubes are great for providing natural daylight and they're not like skylights, which don't look quite right in older homes," Jaydan said.

Home improvement projects always involve painting and nearly all

of the best brands offer a line with low volatile organic compounds, Jaydan said. Home improvement projects should also include adding insulation in the room being remodeled, she said. According to her, Castle frequently uses Icynene, a renewable, spray-on foam.

High-efficiency furnaces and on-demand water heaters require little additional expense and save money on heating costs, Jaydan said. A programmable thermostat can also make a difference if the homeowner programs it correctly, she added. Weather-stripping doors, the simplest energy-reduction option, offers one of the best returns in energy savings. Installing new windows will also help retain heat, though the payback takes several years.

In many remodeling projects, existing doors can be reused. Some

## Castle schedules grand opening, classes, consultations

The grand opening of Castle Building & Remodeling's St. Paul studio, 362 S. Snelling Ave., will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday, April 4. The public is invited to check out the studio's full kitchen, bathroom and product samples and to register to win \$500 in free design consultation or remodeling services. Wine and appetizers will be provided.

Castle also offers monthly education classes at its two locations. Upcoming classes will focus on bath-

room remodeling on Tuesday, April 7, in St. Paul and kitchen remodeling on Tuesday, April 21, in Minneapolis.

The company also provides free design consultation from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on the first and third Saturdays of each month in Minneapolis and on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month in St. Paul. To register, call Jaydan in St. Paul at 651-690-7661 or George in Minneapolis at 612-789-8509 or visit [www.castlebr.com](http://www.castlebr.com).

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