

Bathroom remodels add luxury with spa-like features

By Michael J. Solender

PUBLISHED IN: HOME & GARDEN

When Jay and Leanne Johnston of south Charlotte decided to remodel their home just more than a year ago, the master bath was a priority. The home, built in the 1980s, had outdated features, like poorly designed closet space in the master bath and a small shower.

“We simply adore our Park Crossing location and neighborhood and did not want to move,” said Leanne Johnston, 54, “But certain aspects of the house didn’t fit our lifestyle anymore, and there were many features we wanted in our master bath to make it more comfortable and convenient. Double vanities, additional built-in storage space and spa features like two heads in our shower were all elements we added in the remodel.”

The Johnstons’ tastes are in line with national trends that see homeowners adding spa-like bath features at home in larger, more expansive master baths, said David Bengston, president of Charlotte-based Lighthouse Residential Remodeling, the contractor the Johnstons used.

“Five to seven years ago, remodels were more basic ‘pull and replace’ on master baths,” said Bengston. Those upgrades simply involved replacing old cabinetry, tiling and bath fixtures. “Today, the trend is significantly more geared to complete bath remodels, expanding square footage, removing oversized Jacuzzi-style tubs for added space and a dramatic increase in demand for spa features, especially in the shower.”

Bengston said he’s worked on master bath projects over the past few years that have ranged from the low teens to well over \$100,000. High-end upgrades may include complete sound systems, re-circulating hot water pumps,

- In for the long haul?

- Bengston said one of the components he adds when redoing master baths is placing plywood behind shower and toilet room walls. “If people want to add grab bars at a future date, they aren’t limited to locations where there are studs. They can place them anywhere on the wall,” he said.

- Consider countertop and toilet heights that are a bit higher than the standards of 10 years ago; 36-inch countertops are the new standard. “Comfort-height” toilets have their rims 17 to 19 inches above the floor, whereas standard bowls are approximately 14 to 15 inches high, according to Consumer Reports.

- Heated bathroom floors offer radiant heat and are comfortable for cold, aging feet. If having your floor retiled, laying a simple coil heating element won’t be a budget buster and, depending on the space heated, can run less than \$1,500, according to Bengston.

Related Stories

Related Images

heated floors, and marble or granite countertops. He said the average mid-range upgrade for a master bath of 200-250 square feet would likely run between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

Fine-tuning wasted space

Anne DeCocco is an interior design consultant based in Raleigh. Her firm, DeCocco Design, provides consultation and design services for all manner of home improvements and remodeling.

“I see a lot of fine-tuning of what was previously wasted space in master baths,” said DeCocco. “People want built-ins. More storage space for linens and bath products is great for de-cluttering, as are drawers equipped with electrical outlets for hair dryers and flattening or curling irons.”

DeCocco said that granite countertops, popular upgrades a decade ago, are slowly giving way to quartz and high-tech composite materials such as IceStone (icestoneusa.com) a surface made of recycled glass, cement and pigment. She also sees larger “subway” or oversized rectangular tiles used in remodels.

“The color palates that I most often recommend lean towards beige and gray for the bath,” DeCocco said. “These are very classic and neutral.”

Spa experience at home

Showers get special attention from most customers, Bengston said. “Almost every project I do has at least two showerheads, one being an adjustable unit that can also be used as a handheld. Variable-height body jets and steam showers are also very popular. What is particularly nice is today, the controls can be placed where people don’t need to get wet when accessing them.”

Homeowners can recreate the spa experience with steam units that involve small tanks plumbed behind shower walls that heat the water into steam and then direct it through a vent in the corner of the shower away a safe distance away from the occupant. Options for aromatherapy include small wells where scented oils, such as soothing eucalyptus, can be dispensed along with the steam.



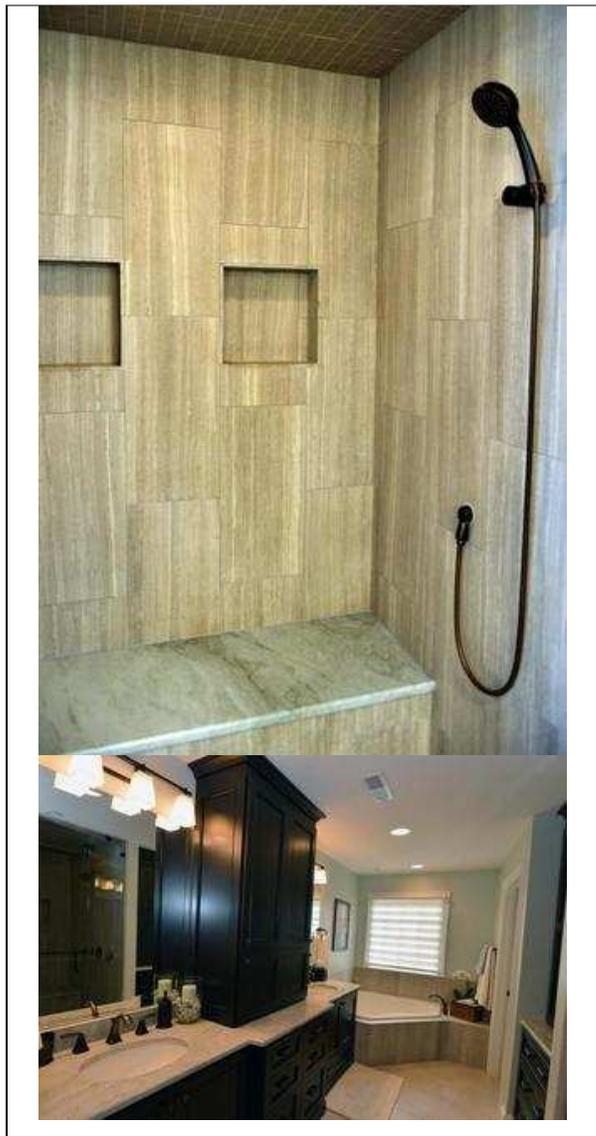
The Johnstons opted for two showerheads in their new bath and also added space including custom built-in storage separating his and her vanities.

“We are very pleased with the results,” said Leanne Johnston. “The way they rearranged the bath allows for access both from the master suite and an adjacent hallway. We also added additional closet space and pocket doors that help with opening up the room. Everything has improved, clean lines. We love it.”



[Subscribe to The Charlotte Observer.](#)

This affects comments on all stories.



The Charlotte Observer welcomes your comments on news of the day. The more voices engaged in conversation, the better for us all, but do keep it civil. Please refrain from profanity, obscenity, spam, name-calling or attacking others for their views.

Have a news tip? You can send it to a local news editor; email local@charlotteobserver.com to send us your tip - or - consider joining the [Public Insight Network](#) and become a source for The Charlotte Observer.

[Read more](#)



Add a comment...

Also post on Facebook

Posting as Michael J. Solender ([Change](#))

Facebook social plugin