

# Architecture [remodeling]

## County Architects Discover Homes' Hidden Potential

**A**S HOME VALUES RISE exponentially in Yavapai County, many residents are tempted to sell their homes and “move on up.” But a lot of families like their existing neighborhoods, and they would be content in their homes if it weren’t for cramped kitchens, dingy bathrooms and interiors with all the ambience of an underground cave.

If you want to stay put, but still add some light and life to that old house, a remodeling architect may be just the knight in white shining armor that you need.

Architects are often the missing link in a home remodel. While a homeowner or a contractor might work with the existing walls and layout of a home, an architect can take in the overall structure and suggest tearing out walls, adding windows and any number of other changes that will make you feel like you’re living in a brand new house in your old neighborhood.

But remodeling doesn’t always mean adding on, and it doesn’t have to be extraordinarily expensive. One Prescott architect, Tom Reilly, who specializes in remodels through his company, Renovations, said he often encourages people not to build on. “We’ve done some renovations (without additions) where you’d never know it was the same house, or we did a very small addition of 250 square feet. Paint, floor, wall and ceiling



Prescott architect Michael Frerking founded Living Systems Sustainable Architecture, LLC and focuses on environmentally friendly and energy-efficient design.

finishes, and lighting are inexpensive ways to ‘refresh’ your home,” he said. “There are so many reasons to stay where you are. You can do some tremendous things to increase space and (blend) indoor/outdoor living spaces.”

Prescott architect Michael Frerking owns Living Systems Sustainable Architecture, LLC. He pioneered a poured-earth building technology and specializes in “green building,” which encompasses vast new resources of energy-efficient and environmentally friendly technology. Along with dramatically reducing energy usage with some smart remodeling, Frerking suggests that homeowners can add great interest and efficiency to their homes with materials that are not necessarily the most expensive. For

instance, at his home, he built an attractive fence of the leftover metal panels from stamped manufacturing parts. The eclectic fence serves to keep javelina from overrunning his landscape. He also added virtually zero maintenance “roof decks” to his home with a thin layer of sand and inexpensive, lightweight pavers and steel railings. The decks add several hundred square feet to his living space, and last year he harvested a successful crop of casaba melons from a planter on one of the decks.

Frerking also agrees that remodels are not all about adding space. “A large house that is not designed right can feel claustrophobic. But with good indoor/outdoor relationships, you can design modest interior spaces that can feel great,” he said.