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Eric Olson transformed his 1905 Dutch Colonial by adding a screen porch and glass-walled orchid room on the back.

Architects talk about making your home work for you

Four architects are taking part in a panel discussion to explore how you can remodel to make your house fit you.

By LYNN UNDERWOOD, LUNDERWOOD@STARTRIBUNE.COM
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ERIC ODOR, AIA
SALA Architects, Minneapolis

Q Which rooms do you remodel most often?

A The kitchen and mudroom, which are the best investment. Most of the remodeling I do is tearing down walls, opening up spaces and updating older homes for the way we live today.

Q How have you improved your own home to make it work for your family?

A It's better insulated. We added a screen porch for summer and a sunroom for the winter. We also tore down walls on the first floor to open up spaces and make them flow better. After painting, tearing down a wall is probably the next least expensive transformation.

Q Name a few of your favorite green products.

A Dual-flush toilets, recycled high-fly-ash concrete for the foundation and recycled galvanized metal roofs and siding.

Q When is a job too small to hire an

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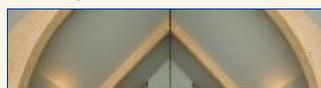
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architect?

A No job is too small. I can give one-hour consultations that include conceptual design ideas and costs.

CHRISTINE ALBERTSSON, AIA
Albertsson Hansen Architecture, Minneapolis

Q Which remodeling projects give homeowners the most bang for their buck?

A A kitchen remodeling allows for better family connection and gives you the ability to multi-task efficiently. But don't blow half your budget on expensive appliances. It's more important to design a kitchen that relates to the rest of the house and creates spaces where the kids can do homework and play in the back yard while you cook, not how many burners you can cook on at once.

Q Why should someone hire an architect?

A We've solved the problem over and over of making an older home more livable for today's lifestyle. We bring the ability to see through the walls and uncover the latent potential of each house. We're also creative at looking at economical ways of making an existing space work without taking down walls.

Q Which style of home do you enjoy working on the most?

A All of them are appealing, but I have a fondness for simple Early American-inspired style. I also like to work on cabins because of the limited space, the closeness to nature and rustic materials -- but not necessarily in the North Woods mold.

Q What are some ways to save money on remodeling?

A Limit the amount of added space, use wood countertops instead of stone, go with simple white field tile. We do a lot of Ikea kitchens, but it helps to work with an architect to lay out the modules so they look attractive.

Q Where should you never cut corners in your remodeling budget?

A Things you touch. Don't settle for cheap cabinet and door hardware.

DENNIS WEDLICK, AIA
Dennis Wedlick Architect, New York

Q You've designed a passive house in New York that drastically cuts energy costs. Why aren't more homes designed this way?

A The passive house is based on a brand new way of building homes that simply hasn't had time to weave into the marketplace. The principles of passive solar design - super insulation, airtightness and the like -- have been incorporated into the construction of modern homes. However, those concepts will not live up to their full capacity when only a token one or two are used. A whole-house approach is required for any real energy savings.

Q Which green elements would you encourage a client to include when remodeling?

A Energy efficiency is No. 1, and is easiest to achieve through better windows and doors and added insulation.

Q How have you improved your own house?

A When I first built my house nearly 25 years ago, I didn't know that the most important spaces had to do with the domestic aspects of life: cooking, cleaning and storing. It was originally 800 square feet and I made it 50 percent larger mostly for a mudroom, better kitchen and better organized storage all around. The house feels 10 times as big and twice as comfortable.

Q What is your favorite style of house to work on?

A Freestyle: When a client admires the character and details of a wide variety of styles of architecture and would like to combine them in a way that is unique and



Architect Dennis Wedlick's Hudson Passive Project

Eliot Kaufman, Provided photo

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personal. I've designed homes that combine the classical with the modern, Arts and Crafts with minimalism, and a farmhouse with a SoHo loft. The trick is doing so in a way that doesn't feel like a bad mash but a complementary composition.

JOHN GAVIN DWYER, AIA

John Gavin Dwyer Architect, Minneapolis

Q Which features make a home livable for the long term?

A Flexible spaces that can easily change their use over time, such as converting a home office into a caretaker's suite, and spaces that incorporate universal design elements -- wider doorways, larger bathrooms, roll-in shower and ground-level access.

Q How can homeowners best use their sweat equity to stretch their remodeling dollars?

A Painting is a big one. I also advise people to shop for appliances ahead of time to find good deals and I'll design around it.

Q What three things should you ask an architect before hiring him or her?

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