

at www.nkba.com or the National Association of the Remodeling Industry at www.nari.org) can help you make the best use of your space. They'll help you identify trouble spots, such as insufficient storage or lighting, and guide you when selecting materials and fixtures. They'll also advise you about a realistic time frame for the project; major renovations can require at least six months.

One of the first questions to consider is how long you plan to stay in your home. If you'll be moving in five years or less, skip expensive options such as a jetted tub or luxury shower, but replace the tub, faucets, and sink, which may appear dated if they're more than a decade old. "You'll get to enjoy them without overbuilding," says Patricia Nunan, CKBR, CKD, and Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) in Perkiomenville, Pennsylvania. "If you're staying indefinitely, spend as much as you can afford to please yourself and make the space comfortable for as long as you live in the home."

Step two: Prioritize your spending

Although product and installation costs vary according to the size and breadth of your project and where you live, expect to spend at least \$15,000 to renovate a typical 5 x 7-foot bathroom, according to *Remodeling* magazine. This would involve gutting the space and updating and replacing all fixtures, tile, and faucets in their original spots. "The most cost-efficient renovations involve putting the sink back where the sink was, the shower where the shower was, and so on," Masiello says.

Costs increase if you need structural work, such as reconfiguring the space or expanding the room by borrowing from an adjacent closet or bedroom. Also, older bathrooms (20 years or more) may need to be torn out to the stud walls to ensure that plumbing and wiring are safe and that no leaks or moisture are lurking behind the walls.

"In many projects, product choice drives costs up most," says Chris Donatelli, CKBR in San Jose, California. "Decide if it's necessary to buy custom cabinets if modular ones are just as durable and attractive. There are so many options

now that it's not necessary to break your budget to get the look you want."

Step three: Choose fixtures wisely

Bathtubs: Stand-alone showers or soaking tubs are being chosen more often over once-popular jetted spa tubs in many remodels. "Jetted tubs can be noisy and expensive, starting from \$1,500, plus installation," says Nunan. Because of their large volume—75 gallons or more—they also can strain your water heater to maintain their water temperatures. "On the other hand, a 20-inch-deep soaking tub costs about \$800." For safety and comfort, incorporate Universal Design (UD) features, such as ensuring that a wide deck is built around the tub (measuring at least eight inches wide) so you can sit on it and swing your legs over. Vertical grab bars also make it easier to enter and exit.

Showers: "If you plan to stay in your house long term, choosing a shower over a tub is certainly practical as you get older," says Suzanne Lane, CKD, CBD, in San Diego. Curbless showers are easy to enter and exit; there's no need to navigate over a tall tub lip. And while spa-inspired rain showerheads and multiple shower jets are in demand, "installing a multifunction handheld shower and two sets of shower controls to accommodate different heights can be a more economical alternative," Nunan says.

Sinks: Though pedestal and vessel sinks are beautiful, they're not always practical. They create the illusion of more floor space in a small room, but you lose storage underneath, and they can be awkward to clean," Lane says.

Toilets: Replacing an old toilet may be a good idea even if you're not renovating. Toilets account for about 30 percent of residential indoor water consumption; those from 1992 or earlier are heavy water wasters, using between 3.5 to seven gallons per flush (gpf). New toilets must not exceed 1.6 gpf, while high-efficiency toilets (designated "WaterSense" fixtures by the EPA) use less than 1.3 gpf. Some utility companies also offer rebates for replacing old toilets with high-efficiency models.

Continued on page 86