

Good Time to Renovate?

That remodeling project you've been considering may now cost less

A bad economy can be a smart time to renovate.

"It is a good time—prices have come down," says Valery Tessier-Leon, a project designer at Case Design/Remodeling. "We're more aggressive in how we approach projects. People are more aggressive in getting deals. Our suppliers have come up with incentives—a free dishwasher for a kitchen remodel, upgrades on countertops, free recessed lights if you order so many."

Some plumbers, electricians, and other subcontractors have dropped their rates by as much as 30 percent. The cost of lumber, copper, and aluminum has also dipped.

Larry Weinberg of **Bowa Builders** says it's not just that prices have shrunk: "We can build things faster. It used to be we would need to call subcontractors three weeks before. Now we can call them four days before. A lot are saying, 'Can I bring two crews?' We can build quicker and more efficiently than during the boom."

In hard times, it's even more important to choose a stable firm.

"There are smaller guys who are going to go out of business, and it's a mess if it's on your job," says Thomas Gilday of Gilday Renovations. —SHERRI DALPHONSE

