

Should I stay or should I go? Part 2

Last time, I reviewed site and context issues — the land surrounding your house and the neighborhood — regarding the decision to expand the house or build a new one.



David Fleming

Many site and contextual issues are related to the house itself. Western New York has a wide variety of historically significant houses built prior to 1940.

These houses are often located in convenient and desirable places. They were built well structurally and contain attractive wood floors and architectural details that are very expensive to replicate today.

But, older houses have their disadvantages, too, including poor insulation, outdated mechanical systems, poor wiring and above grade access to power.

One overwhelming advantage of building a new home is you are starting from scratch. Just like the site, you have fewer limitations on a blank slate. "Must have" features are easier to incorporate.

The size and arrangement of spaces in a house built for a lifestyle of six decades ago are not easy to manipulate. The more severe the renovation is, the more severe the cost is.

It is common for a young family to purchase an old home for a low price with the intention of renovating or add-

ing on. I have witnessed several instances where the new homeowner starts renovating only to realize a few years later that the ultimate need for an addition calls for demolishing the part they just renovated.

To avoid this, consult an architect to provide at least a schematic design before any major work is done to the existing house. An architect's experience, creativity and technical knowledge can help you flesh out your options and get the biggest bang for your buck.

Also, comparing prices from different contractors can be extremely challenging. The more detailed and accurate the drawings and specifications are, the easier it will be to obtain and compare competitive bids from contractors. Until you have gone through the complete process of designing your addition, you won't get an accurate price from a contractor.

Even after obtaining final bids based on quality construction documents, expect additional costs due to hidden conditions and design changes to exceed 2 percent of the original bid price. Now you are ready to compare the cost of your addition to the cost of a new house.

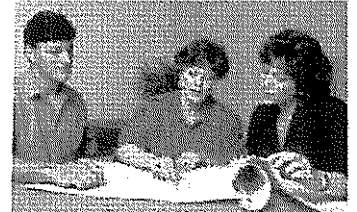
So is now a good time to build? A recent article in CNN Money.com stated that experts say you can expect to save

at least 10 percent on the cost of a renovation project. Locally, I predict the savings to be closer to 5 percent.

Petroleum-based products such as asphalt roof shingles and vinyl siding are decreasing in price due to the sharp drop in oil prices. While labor prices remain relatively constant, contractors may be able to provide higher quality and service due to their reduced work load.

I don't recommend extreme cost-saving measures such as being your own general contractor and hiring the subcontractors yourself unless you have experience in the building industry. A good general contractor can deliver a completed project faster, with higher quality and with fewer headaches.

In summary, I recommend you make a list of the pros and cons of your existing house, site and context. It is an encouraging sign if other homeowners on your street have added onto their house. You




An architect's experience, creativity and technical knowledge can help you flesh out your options and get the biggest bang for your buck.

can learn valuable lessons by talking to them.

With a design and price in hand, you can decide whether your existing home can be modified to satisfy your needs and how the cost of that compares with the cost of a new home.

David Fleming of DRF DESIGN is a registered architect in New York and Virginia. He is a board member for the Buffalo-WNY chapter of the American Institute of Architects.



Homefinder

The Place To Look For A Place To Live

Among the top resources used to find a new home, newspapers rank in the top 5.

THE BUFFALO NEWS
Source: 2007 National Association of Realtors.

0% COMMISSION
Available through
MLS 2.5% Real Estate Direct

With America's Choice, you pay only a low flat fee!

AMERICA'S CHOICE

View complete open house schedules on our websites. Pick up our monthly magazine "Your New Home" of Wegmans and Tops!

Full Service Real Estate Agency
- We Do It All!

2.5%
Real estate direct

COMMISSION 2-5%
Available through
MLS Real Estate Direct

americaschoice.com • 691-0596 20 NORTHPOINTE PKWY, SUITE 180, AMHERST NY 14228 keepequity.com • 564-1618

 ALDEN: 11919 Westwood, 3/3, 3 car gar, & barn w/2 car gar, 40 acres! 691-0268 48390 \$199,500.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 7 Briarcliff, 3/2, hdwds, granite kitchen, fab, character & charm! 691-0268 #1771 \$179,000.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 88 Oroff, Duplex, 2 bdrm, 1.5 each, full bsm., deck, shpd. 691-0268 #1510, \$151,900.	 AMHERST: 259 Lamont, Move-in! 3/1, updated kit, & bath, gorgeous hdwds, laser oil roof, \$99,900. Sue.	 BOSTON: 9482 West Hill, Stunning 6/2 log home, 2 car gar, move-in! \$239,900. Kathleen.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 219 Chapel, 3/1, detached gar, updated oak kit, bath, furnace, roof, \$64,000. Peter.
 CLARENCE: 5615 Kraus, 4/2.5, built 2007! Upgraded Backs to woods. 691-0268 #1612 \$335,000.	 DEPEW: 166 West, 3 bdrm., 3 full baths, rec. rm., 2.5 car fin. gar., deck. 691-0268 #1572 \$149,900.	 EDEN: 2355 March, 3/1, hdwds., new roof/windows/siding/furnace/a/c, wooded. 691-0268 #7393 \$119,000.	 HAMBURG: 3245 Queens, Move in, 3/1.5, air master 2 closets & bath access, Granite ppr., deck. \$169,900. Laura.	 N. TONAWANDA: 425 Deerfield, 3/2.5 Colonial, 2 car gar., den, 1st flr, laundry. \$177,500. Scott.	 W. SENECA: 42 Cherokee, Brick, 3/1.5 ranch, fully fin. bsmt., no rear neighbors. \$110,900. Barb.
 ELMA: 41 June, 3/2, renovated! Open flr. plan, granite, ac, no rear neighbors. 691-0268 #1170 \$155,000.	 FILLMORE: 10439 Hancock, Log home, 3/2, 20 acres, stocked pond, bordering state woods. 691-0268 #1586 \$319,900.	 NOLLAND: 8501 S. Protection, Contemporary, 3/1.5, in-law suite, 2 pks., 3+ acres. 691-0268 #1611 \$288,000.	 AMHERST: 320 N. Franch, Brick 2/1 ranch, new roof, hdwds., sitting rm., 1.5 car. \$104,900. Sue.	 E. AMHERST: 151 Forest Edge, 2/1.5 townhome, Corian, fplc., air, loft, fin. bsm., 2 car gar. \$166,900. Sue.	 TONAWANDA/TOWN: 225 Ferndale, 3/2 log ranch, lg. lot, fin. bsmt., cathedral ceiling, fplcs., 3 season rm. \$129,900. Peggy.
 LANCASTER: 33 Northwood, 2/1.5 townhome, fplc., air, 1st flr, deck. 691-0268 #1728 \$163,900.	 LANCASTER: 37 Hill Valley, House w/appl., 3/2D, in-law apt., + fin. bsm., w/3rd kit, amenities! 691-0268 #5424 \$385,900.	 LOCKPORT: 6763 Merrick, Home 147, 2 1/2, Suburban Area, air, shpd, deck, 2 car gar. 691-0268 #1710 \$139,500.	 AMHERST: 2084 Dodge, Custom 3000', 3 car gar, 1+ acre, furnisshg. \$298,900. Carol.	 BLASDELL: 147 Madison, Brick 2+ bdrm. Cape (could be 4 bdrm.), hdwds., new windows. \$72,000. Kathleen.	 NIAGARA FALLS: 108 Council, 3/1.5, waterfront contemporary located on Cayuga Island. \$295,000. Lynn.
 N. TONAWANDA: 415 Bennett, Open Sun, 1-3, 4/2, natural wdwk, hdwd. Mrs., fence, 2 car gar. 691-0268 #1708 \$95,900.	 ORCHARD PARK: 7514 Mestrip, 3/2.5, custom built '02, 1st flr, master, in-ground pool, .75 acres. 691-0268 #1554 \$384,000.	 PENDLETON: 4797 Mapleton, 3/1, wood-burning stove, 8+ acres, patio, Starpoint, warranty! 691-0268 #8098 \$165,000.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 1375 Harlem, 3 unit property, 1.5 car gar., excellent condition. \$109,900. Kathleen.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 269 Shanley, 3/1, updated kit, & bath, in-ground pool, finished gar. \$99,000. Lisa H.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 72 Kemp, 3/1 brick ranch, air, fin. bsmt., new furnace, windows, roof, \$87,500. Peter.
 CHEKOTOWAGA: 29 Hillpine, Immaculate brick duplex, 6 bdrms., 2.5 car gar. \$184,900. Kathleen.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 269 Shanley, 3/1, updated kit, & bath, in-ground pool, finished gar. \$99,000. Lisa H.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 72 Kemp, 3/1 brick ranch, air, fin. bsmt., new furnace, windows, roof, \$87,500. Peter.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 29 Hillpine, Immaculate brick duplex, 6 bdrms., 2.5 car gar. \$184,900. Kathleen.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 269 Shanley, 3/1, updated kit, & bath, in-ground pool, finished gar. \$99,000. Lisa H.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 72 Kemp, 3/1 brick ranch, air, fin. bsmt., new furnace, windows, roof, \$87,500. Peter.
 CHEKOTOWAGA: 269 Shanley, 3/1, updated kit, & bath, in-ground pool, finished gar. \$99,000. Lisa H.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 72 Kemp, 3/1 brick ranch, air, fin. bsmt., new furnace, windows, roof, \$87,500. Peter.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 269 Shanley, 3/1, updated kit, & bath, in-ground pool, finished gar. \$99,000. Lisa H.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 72 Kemp, 3/1 brick ranch, air, fin. bsmt., new furnace, windows, roof, \$87,500. Peter.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 269 Shanley, 3/1, updated kit, & bath, in-ground pool, finished gar. \$99,000. Lisa H.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 72 Kemp, 3/1 brick ranch, air, fin. bsmt., new furnace, windows, roof, \$87,500. Peter.
 CHEKOTOWAGA: 269 Shanley, 3/1, updated kit, & bath, in-ground pool, finished gar. \$99,000. Lisa H.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 72 Kemp, 3/1 brick ranch, air, fin. bsmt., new furnace, windows, roof, \$87,500. Peter.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 269 Shanley, 3/1, updated kit, & bath, in-ground pool, finished gar. \$99,000. Lisa H.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 72 Kemp, 3/1 brick ranch, air, fin. bsmt., new furnace, windows, roof, \$87,500. Peter.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 269 Shanley, 3/1, updated kit, & bath, in-ground pool, finished gar. \$99,000. Lisa H.	 CHEKOTOWAGA: 72 Kemp, 3/1 brick ranch, air, fin. bsmt., new furnace, windows, roof, \$87,500. Peter.

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--