

# natural stone

a solid investment even in tough economic times



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**W**ith the nation's economy and the real estate market in a slump, more homeowners are postponing, or foregoing altogether, the move to a bigger home, opting instead to stay where they are and make renovations to their existing home.

While we may not be seeing quite the gains in home values that we were several years ago, some remodeling projects pay-off better than others. Two of the remodeling projects that continue to deliver significant increased value at the time of resale are kitchen and bathroom renovations, with homeowners typically recouping 73-90% of the project's cost at the time of resale. And nothing adds more to the value of these areas than the use of natural stone.

A recent study of 10,000 consumers, conducted by the Research Institute for Cooking and Kitchen Intelligence, found that kitchen renovations remain at the top of the list for consumers seeking to add value to their home. And granite countertops were among the kitchen features they wanted most.

Many consumers are tightening their belts but remain eager for granite countertops, according to Garis Distelhorst, Executive Vice President of the Marble Institute of America, the nation's leading natural stone association.

"Historically, consumers recognize that granite countertops enhance the value

of a home in ways few other improvements can," said Distelhorst. "No other countertop surface can measure up to granite in terms of practicality, timeless beauty, durability and safety. This natural stone has held its value in ways more trendy materials have not."

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Lending to granite's appeal is its wide range of color and finish options, incredible hardness and durability, inherent natural beauty and relatively low maintenance. It does not scratch, is not subject to cracking, and is extremely heat and stain resistant, making it an ideal kitchen countertop surface. Granite is also an excellent choice for vanity tops, table

and bar tops, tub deck surrounds and outside applications such as patios and grill areas.

## Dispelling the Myths

Over the years, granite countertops have come under attack for being "unsafe" for food preparation, although in all our years of installing granite countertops we have never heard of a single incident of someone becoming ill from their countertops. According to the Marble Institute of America, granites have absorption rates (% water, by weight) ranging from .05% to .40%, indicating that the pore volume capable of absorbing a staining agent or food liquids is very slight. The impregnating sealers applied at the time of installation make this even more unlikely. Routine care, like simply wiping up spills promptly with a mild dish detergent and a soft cloth, virtually eliminates this as a concern.

The most recent negative publicity surrounding granite is that of radon emissions. There have been some media reports suggesting granite countertops may elevate levels of radon in the home posing a health risk. The good news is results have just been released from the most comprehensive, independent scientific study of the health threats from granite countertops. Scientists conducted 400 tests of 114 different varieties of granite countertops, including stones cited in media reports as being potentially problematic. The stones tested include types of granite that comprise approximately 80 percent of the annual U.S. market share for granite countertops, based on the most recent market data available. The study specifically included types of granite most commonly used in countertops in the United States and more exotic stones that represent a tiny share of the market. The study found that not one stone slab contributed to radon levels that even reached the average U.S. outdoor radon concentration of 0.4 picocuries per



At Banta Tile & Marble our emphasis is on providing outstanding customer service and expert craftsmanship and quality, whether we are working with homeowners, builders/contractors or designers in residential or commercial settings.

We specialize in the fabrication and installation of polished and honed granite, marble, quartz and limestone for countertops, as well as the sale and installation of stone, slate, porcelain, ceramic, glass and metallic tile.

We invite customers to visit our well-appointed retail showroom, browse our impressive slab yard or shop our stone remnants for that one-of-a-kind top for a treasured piece of furniture or table.

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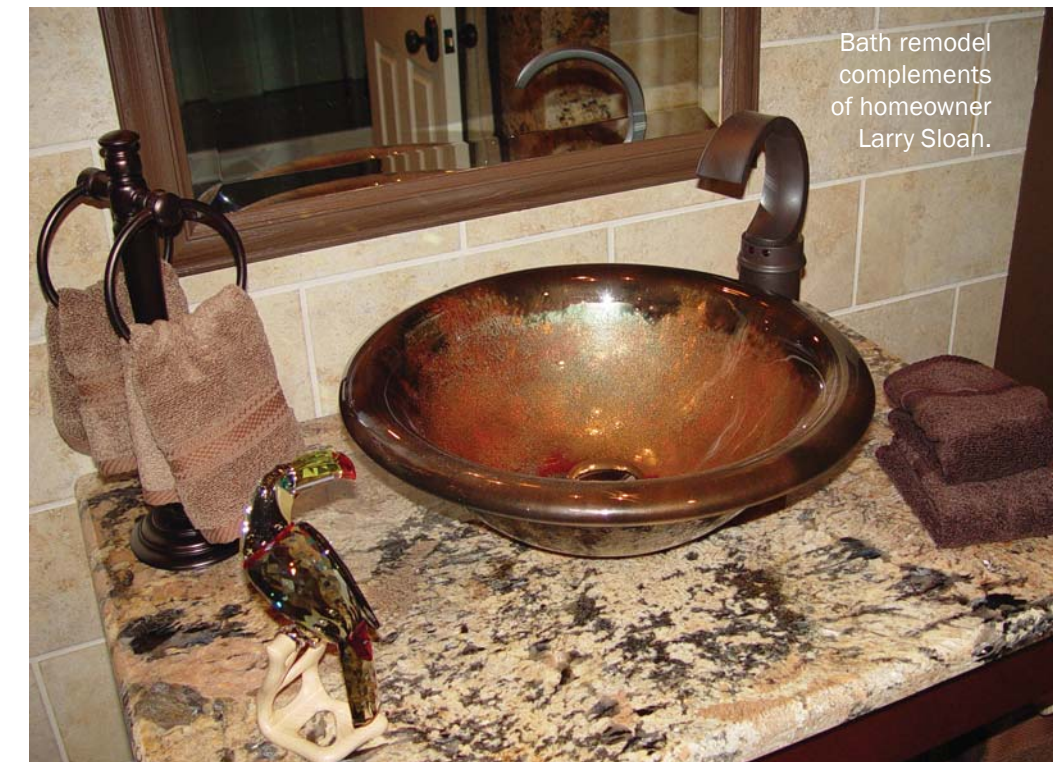
liter—one-tenth the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency level for remedial action within a home. The stone slabs found to emit at higher levels—though still well below average outdoor background levels—represent a small share of the U.S. market for granite countertops, less than 1 percent of sales.

Essentially, "the study showed that you are more likely to have a fatal fall from bed than to develop a health problem related to the most common granite countertop," said Dr. John F. McCarthy,

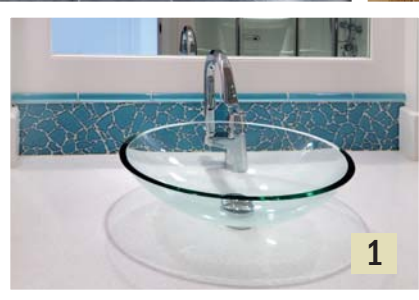
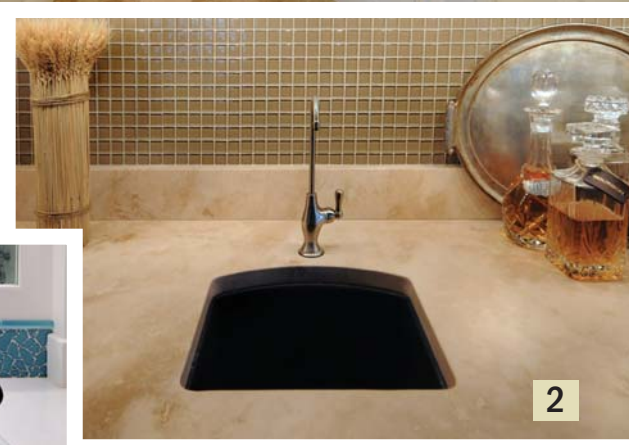
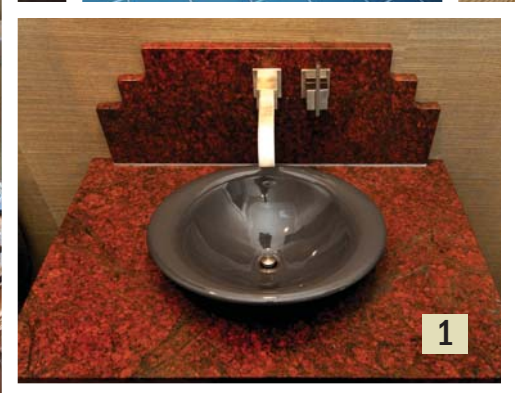
president of Environmental Health & Engineering, the independent environmental testing firm that conducted the study.

## The Maintenance Factor

Another misconception regarding natural stone that we hear frequently expressed is that it requires constant resealing to maintain its beauty. It is true that all natural stone needs to be sealed but this process is far simpler than most people realize. Resealing



Bath remodel complements of homeowner Larry Sloan.



While all the projects shown in this article are the work of Banta Tile & Marble, contractor/designer credits are as follows: 1) Simeral Construction; 2) Olde Towne Interiors-Ralph E. Myers; 3) William J. Patrick Inc.; 4) Steiner & Houck, Inc. (including the bar in the ad below); and the kitchen on the opening page by Simeral Construction.

is an easy do-it-yourself wipe on, wipe off procedure using specially formulated stone sealers available from your fabricator. It is also true that marble, limestone and travertine are softer, more porous than granite and will require more frequent resealing—generally once a year. Some of the darker colored granites may go up to 3 years before needing to be resealed.

**A New Option in Sealers**

For those homeowners who do not wish to be bothered even once a year to reseal their countertops, for the first time there is a new lifetime sealer available called Granite Shield™. Unlike traditional impregnating stone sealers, Granite Shield™ utilizes mul-

iple catalyzing polymers inside the stone and then carbonizes the surface pores with Crystasheen™ leaving a harder, smoother, glossier surface inside and on top of the natural stone. Because of its proprietary formula, Granite Shield is only available through approved distributors and adds an additional \$5 to \$9 per square foot to the overall price of your job. Granite Shield™ comes with a transferrable limited lifetime warranty. Flooring is under warranty for 10 years from time of application.

All things considered nothing beats the warmth and beauty of natural stone and little adds more to the value of your home, even in these uncertain economic times. So while you might have decided to postpone that move to a bigger home, now may be the perfect time to remodel the one you are in. You get to enjoy a more luxurious living space in the short term and you will



reap the rewards of your investment later when you decide to sell. For more information on natural stone or to talk about your remodeling project, we invite you to visit our extensive showroom and slab yard at 1284 Loop Road in Lancaster, open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 9 AM to 5 PM, Thursday 9 AM to 8 PM, and Saturday 9 AM to noon.

(Radon test results and quotations reprinted with permission from the Marble Institute of America.)

R&A



# A Reflection of Your Style

Entertaining friends, meals with family, or quiet moments of relaxation, your home is an extension of you. It reflects your taste and style. Nothing will make your home uniquely yours like exquisitely crafted, expertly installed natural stone and tile.

Consider a visit to our showroom and slab yard. Let us show you the difference 75 years of experience makes.

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Sat 9AM-Noon, or by appt.

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