

# THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

Greater Houston Edition  
themetropolitanbuilder.com

## Greymark Construction Offers 'Wow' Remodeling

Greymark Construction | Houston, Texas

SPONSORED BY



Weyerhaeuser



# Greymark Offers “Wow” Remodeling

By Kathy Bowen Stolz | Photography by Kathleen O. Ryan

SPONSORED BY  Weyerhaeuser



Refrigerators have special significance for Leslie King. As a college student leasing dormitory refrigerators, they gave Leslie her first “real” income. Now, as owner of Houston’s Greymark Construction, a design/build firm, refrigerators and their placement are a focal point for a business that specializes in kitchen, bathroom and whole house remodeling, improving the livability of a home.

King prefers remodeling “because we get to go in and do the fun stuff. We get to do the ‘wow’ that the homeowner couldn’t afford when they built the house.” Greymark does about 30 projects a year.

With the average cost of a kitchen at \$75,000 and the average cost of a bath at \$25,000 for a home that sells for \$500,000,

homeowners get more than their money's worth at re-sale with remodeling, she said. For example, Greymark just increased the value of a \$1.2 million home to at least \$1.4 million by renovating the kitchen and whole first floor for \$185,000.

Being a woman can be an advantage in the male-dominated construction industry, King said. "I understand how a kitchen should work because I cook. I ask things like if someone is right- or left-handed so we can place the dishwasher in the best spot. I also ask How many pairs of shoes, purses, belts or scarves do you have? (when doing a closet). Men don't think of things like that."

But King is comfortable competing against men because she's been doing it for most of her professional life. After earning her degree in marketing from Sam Houston State University, Leslie determined that she wanted to earn \$1000 a month and be able to set her own hours. Her dad encouraged her to look to the oil fields for opportunity. With two job offers, she joined Haliburton in September

She said what really helped her improve her skills was joining the Remodelers Council in 1997 and two peer-review groups, Remodelers Advantage Group and Business Networks. She now meets with 11 other remodelers from across the country twice a year to sharpen her skills.

Back when she started in 1995 working for homeowners, she heard comments that she didn't know what she was doing, but those comments have disappeared over the years, she said.

No doubt Greymark's many awards have had something to do with those comments disappearing. Greymark Construction won the Greater Houston Builders Association Grand Remodeler prize in 2010, 2011 and 2012, in addition to the 2012 Chrysalis Award for the nation's best Universal Design in 2012. Greymark received a Texas Lone Star award for Best Historic Renovation.

Also, the Better Business Bureau gave Greymark its award for excellence in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 in recognition of



1979 where she was one of 10 women among a couple of thousand men on the payroll. She also sold recycled pipe thread protectors for a while and worked as a restaurant management trainee for Marriott Hotels for two years. But it was her year selling real estate that really shaped her future. Divorced, with two small daughters to support, King started buying older homes in 1992 to remodel and resell while selling properties for others. She learned construction techniques from the two old carpenters she hired. Although some men presumed that she couldn't understand technical elements of construction because she didn't wear a tool belt, she asked a lot of questions and learned everything she could.

its A+ rating. Texas Association of Builders gave Greymark its Texas Lone Star Award for Best Whole House Remodel over \$500,000 and Best Kitchen over \$100,000. Other national recognitions are being named one of Remodeling Magazine's Big 50 and Best Whole House Remodel from Professional Remodeler Magazine.

With so many plaques on the wall, nowadays almost all of Greymark's clients ask if theirs will be an award-winning job! "Everybody wants to be award-winning," she adds.

Leslie King is now recognized as a leader in the construction industry. Past president of the Remodelers Council of the Greater Houston Builders Association, Leslie will become

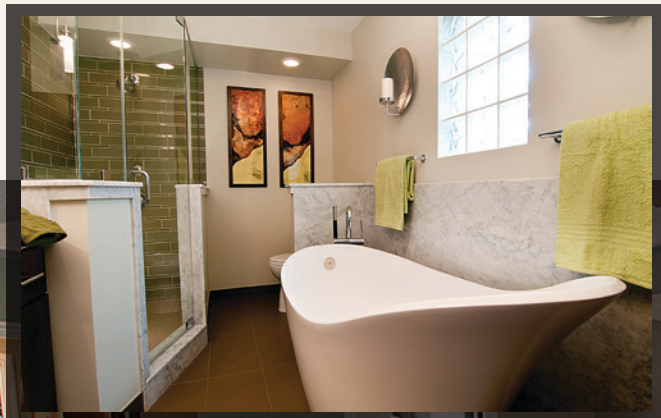
president of the Greater Houston Builders Association in 2014, the second woman and the second remodeler to lead the organization long dominated by male custom builders.

King created Greymark Express in 2011 as a way to weather the economic downturn and to expand the company's market area beyond Houston's Inner Loop and I-10 West Corridor into the suburbs. Unique to the Houston market, Greymark Express promises to complete a bathroom remodel in two weeks if no plumbing fixtures or walls have to be moved. "In the down economy small projects were the only thing homeowners could afford. Greymark Express allowed us to get our foot in door with clients, which is huge." Those bath remodeling projects were \$15,000-\$20,000 and up. People are now spending more money, King said.

But when the economy soured in 2009, most custom builders became remodelers to keep their businesses afloat, she said. However, they didn't realize how different remodeling was from ground-up building. Suddenly their clients were around every corner, watching them as they worked, because they were living in the project, not viewing it from the street.

These custom builders asked King what was the secret to remodeling. "Communication is a huge part. That and listening."

While hearing has been something of a challenge for Leslie, who has life-long severe hearing loss, listening comes





easily to her. King keeps Greymark focused on its clients' satisfaction. Its goal is to keep its customers happy every day. She said they do that by anticipating problems and eliminating surprises as well as finishing projects on time and on budget. She cites 90 percent of business coming from referrals and repeat customers.

She uses Builder Trend software, updated by her field people, so that clients can track their projects' progress on-line. "Clients love it," she said, because people are becoming more technically focused.

Since 2009 she has used GuildQuality, an independent survey company, to track Greymark's customer satisfaction results. Greymark's website links viewers to the results so that they can read the comments for themselves.

"People hire us because we know what we're doing and they trust us. Those are huge things," she stated. "We're being hired for a service, for our expertise. We're able to establish trust from the beginning."

King refocused her business in 2004 from just building to design-build because she could control the costs that way. "If a client brings us architectural plans, it is usually outside the client's budget. For example, one project's budget was \$200,000, but came in at \$400,000. If we design it, it stays within the client's budget. We make sure we anticipate every expense. It's a win-win for the client."

Leslie said she prefers design work but also does estimating and sales. "My job is to give ideas and to anticipate the best operating function" to meet the homeowners' needs. Two other designers are on Greymark's payroll. One is a Dallas-based award-winning kitchen/bath designer and the other is a registered designer on site. Three other women are on staff: a project manager, a salesperson, and an office assistant. King said it's coincidental that all are women, that she has employed a male project manager in the past. All of her subcontractors are men because she hasn't found women with the level of technical skills that she demands.

One reason King chose Greymark as the company name back in 1994 is because it lent itself to succession, which is something she thinks about these days. Although King's two daughters were exposed to construction as children when they helped clean up job sites, she's not sure if they'll succeed her at Greymark. The older one is a CPA who told her mother she couldn't afford her accounting services, but the younger one is an architectural student focusing on historic preservation. Leslie thinks the younger daughter is her more likely successor.

But even if it does not become a multi-generation business, Greymark and its founder, Leslie King, have made their mark on the Houston building scene. And it's an award-winning mark. Just look at those plaques on the wall if you don't think so.

For more information contact Greymark Construction Company at 2211 Norfolk, #626, Houston, TX 77098 or 713-722-7226 or [info@greymarkconstruction.com](mailto:info@greymarkconstruction.com). Its website is [www.greymarkconstruction.com](http://www.greymarkconstruction.com).



SPONSORED BY



# WHAT WE'RE ABOUT

Our customers and our business are one. Everything we do is with

**PASSION AND COMMITMENT**

to provide the best possible customer experience.

We do

**WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE,**

not what we've always done.

**Agile.  
Adaptable.  
Always  
There.**

We are grounded in compassion and care for one another.

**WE WORK TOGETHER —**

associates and customers — to improve not only what we do, but also who we are.

**INTEGRITY IS THE**

**FOUNDATION**

of our business, driving all of our actions and interactions today and setting a precedent for the future.

Serving all of your single-family, multi-family and remodeling needs with quality building products and professional service.

Houston Distribution Center 800.392.6354  
8503 Golden Spike Lane - Houston TX 77086



Weyerhaeuser