



### *Word from the Home Office*

As some of you may have experienced, there have been some issues with photo uploads lately. GCI would like to inform you that we are diligently working with our IT department to help improve the ease of use with our website overall. Part of this entails updating our photo upload system to help streamline the process for all.

GCI is also aggressively pursuing new business to help keep our company strong and thriving in these ever-changing economic times. We have been successful in bringing on a few new clients and are actively in talks with others. We look forward to your cooperation in helping us to succeed in retaining the clients we are bringing on and pursuing.

Thank you to all of our inspectors for your attention to detail and quick turnaround times. GCI strives to be the top inspection company in the industry, and with such high quality inspectors on our team we surely will be!

*Regards,  
The GCI Team*



## **Bathroom Remodels Becoming More Popular**

by Phoebe Chongchua<sup>1</sup>

**W**hile kitchens are still high on the interest list for buyers and homeowners, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) is reporting that remodeler survey respondents say that a bathroom remodel was one of their most common projects during the first six months of 2010--as much as 61 percent of their remodels were done on bathrooms.

"In previous years, kitchen remodeling was reported as the most common activity by more than 70 percent of remodeler respondents," according to the NAHB news release.

NAHB reported that its Remodeling Market Index sunk to 40.7 from 47.9 in the first quarter. The survey also showed a decline in larger remodeling projects "such as room additions, whole house remodeling, bathroom additions, and second story additions. But NAHB is forecasting encouraging news. "While remodelers are continuing to struggle, we expect the rest of 2010 to be a period of stabilization for remodeling, with the first stages of recovery emerging by the end of the year, followed by a robust recovery beginning early next year," said NAHB Chief Economist David Crowe.

However, these market conditions are making now the right time to take on remodeling projects that can not only increase comfort and functionality but also add value to your home.

No matter which room you're going to remodel, doing your homework and knowing exactly what you want will save you not only money but also potential headaches. Things like checking references and visiting some of the recently remodeled projects are a great way to determine if the company you plant to hire will be suitable for your needs. Neglecting to do this could mean that you bring in the wrong company and, worst case scenario, a simple job turns into months of work and extra expenses.

*(cont'd on page 2)*

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Phoebe's articles, feature stories, and columns appear in various publications including The Coast News, Del Mar Village Voice, Rancho Santa Fe Review, and Today's Local News in San Diego, as well as numerous Internet sites. She holds a California real estate license. Phoebe worked for KGTV/10News in San Diego as a Newscaster, Reporter and Community Affairs Specialist for more than a decade. Phoebe's writing is also featured in Donald Trump's book: The Best Real Estate Advice I Ever Received and The Complete Idiot's Guide to Buying Foreclosures. She is the author of If the Trash Stinks, TAKE IT OUT! 14 Worryless Principles for Your Success.

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## Bathroom Remodels *(cont'd)*

Here are a few things to consider when remodeling. Some experts say, if you're planning to stay in the home for five years, remodel it how you like. In other words, put in the countertops that make you happy--even if they're not the most popular. Use the color paint that expresses your inner feelings. However, I always say, remember there's a balance. If you remodel and create something that is so unusual, you may run the risk of it not appealing to the masses and therefore you will have to find the few that are searching for that particular look. That doesn't mean you shouldn't design and decorate based on your likes, it's just a matter of considering how the remodel will impact you when it comes time to sell the home and then choosing the best option for you for both short and long term.

**1. Write it down.** Just like your goals in life are more likely to come to fruition when first penciled out on paper, your ideas for your remodeling project also need to be clearly spelled out. When you do this you are able to clearly see which projects you want to tackle first, how much money you can afford/want to spend on the remodeling projects, and if your goals conflict

with your ultimate objectives. You will find clarity by writing down what you hope to accomplish. This step alone can turn the project into a success from the start.

**2. Slow down.** Don't rush into a project. If you just purchased a home, some experts recommend living in it a year before you start to knock out walls. Your taste and needs might



change. Get to know your surroundings and then thoughtfully consult with design-build companies to help ensure the project's success. Visit other people's homes and see how they increased storage and used space-saving techniques in their design. I am frequently visiting remodeled homes and am amazed at the creative ideas that add functionality for the homeowner and aesthetic beauty.

**3. Let there be light.** Light and bright is a commonly used term when listing a home. It's popular because it's

appealing to buyers. If you're in the design phase of your remodel, especially for a bathroom--but other areas too, be sure to make sure that you will end up with enough light. The folks over at HouseLogic.com concur. Making lighting a priority. "When it comes to adding creature comforts, your first thoughts might be multiple shower heads and radiant-heat floors. But few items make a bathroom more

satisfying than lighting designed for every-day grooming," writes author and residential builder, John Rhia.

**4. Keep it clean.** One of my pet peeves is yucky bathroom air. Poor ventilation creates enormous problems in the future. Homes that were designed without bathroom windows that open can quickly develop mold, mildew, and stale air if there isn't a very good ventilation system installed. High-

quality bathroom fans help. These are often not thought of because they're not obvious "fun toys" like heated floors, but bathroom ventilation systems that exhaust to the outside are vital. Consult with your remodeling expert for the best choice for your room.

Before beginning any remodel, talk to lots of experts, get all your ideas out on paper, and prioritize wants and needs. Taking the time and steps to create a plan with your hired experts will ensure your needs and desires are met in a timely fashion. ■

# INSPECTOR CENTRAL

## “OUTSTANDING... IN THE FIELD”

### Jeff Kirkpatrick

Jeff Kirkpatrick has been working with GCI since 2005 completing more than 1,000 draw inspections. A home inspector since 2001, Jeff has conducted more than 4,000 home inspections. He is a certified home inspector and a member of the California Real Estate Inspection Association (CREIA), the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) and the National Association of Home Inspectors (NAHI). Jeff's company, Coastal Inspection Services, provides property inspection services throughout Southern California in Orange, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Riverside Counties. Jeff's consistent excellence in all phases of our inspections and his positive attitude has contributed tremendously to our success in delivering quality service and results.

Jeff is married to his wife, Tracie and has two children, Keri (18) and Kenny (17). Jeff enjoys photography, baseball, football, water sports and traveling.

Jeff began working in construction cleaning his uncle's construction sites as a teenager. After college, Jeff worked as a police officer and after a back injury returned to work for his uncle, this time as an estimator and project manager. Later starting his own construction company, Jeff's construction company completed many residential and public works projects.

“Having owned my own construction company helps me understand how buildings are constructed. During my time as a contractor I was able to gain in depth knowledge of all of the trades and the relevant code requirements. This knowledge has been incredibly helpful in performing draw inspections on complex multi-million dollar homes that are built in my area. Working with GCI has allowed me to augment my income and stay current on building techniques and materials,” Jeff commented.

***Thank you Jeff for all of your hard work and dedication to our cause and our level of customer satisfaction!***



### Jeff Kirkpatrick

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# GCI's TOP 5

## Top 5 Photo Issues

- 1. Dark photos:** Please do not submit dark photos as GCI is not able to submit these to the lender. If you are unable to clearly see the photo on the display of your camera then we will not be able to see it either.
- 2. Close ups:** Close-up photos are only accepted when you provide more photos of the room. We understand some rooms are smaller than others, so it is difficult to get a nice wide-angle

shot. In these cases, we ask that you simply take a couple more photos of the room so we have a better idea of what is going on. Please see our section "How to Take Great Inspection Photos" for some examples.

- 3. Blurry photos:** If there is movement when taking photos, the picture will likely come out blurry and unusable. Again, if you can't clearly see the photos on your display, we won't be able to see it either.

- 4. Incorrect/inappropriate photo labels:** Please keep all photo labels professional, straight

forward, and accurate. Please refrain from submitting any personal comments and photos.

- 5. Quantity:** The amount of photos will depend on the size and type of the project. 10 photos may be sufficient for a foundation inspection but would clearly be insufficient for a \$5 million home in the finishing stages. Providing photos from all sides of the home and interiors of every room is essential. When in doubt, take more photos. *Note:* this includes exterior and interior of garages (detached/attached) or any additional structures located on the property.

## How To Take Great Inspection Photos



Poor Photo



Great Photo



In the great photo we are able to see cabinets, countertops, backsplash, flooring, electrical trim, and appliances as opposed to a poor photo where we are unable to determine if even the cabinets are complete.

(cont'd on page 5)



## How To Take Great Inspection Photos - continued



Poor Photo



Great Photo



In the poor photo, we have a shot of the furnace, but in the great photo we are able to see the furnace, water heater, slab and an interior door.



Poor Photo



Great Photo



The wide angle shot shows a much better story of the exterior work. Here we can see the siding has been installed along with the soffit and fascia. The window and entry door are in place as well as a partial shot of the patio. Close up shots are ok but wide-angle photos provide a much better picture of the progress and the project.



## Inspector Compliance Corner

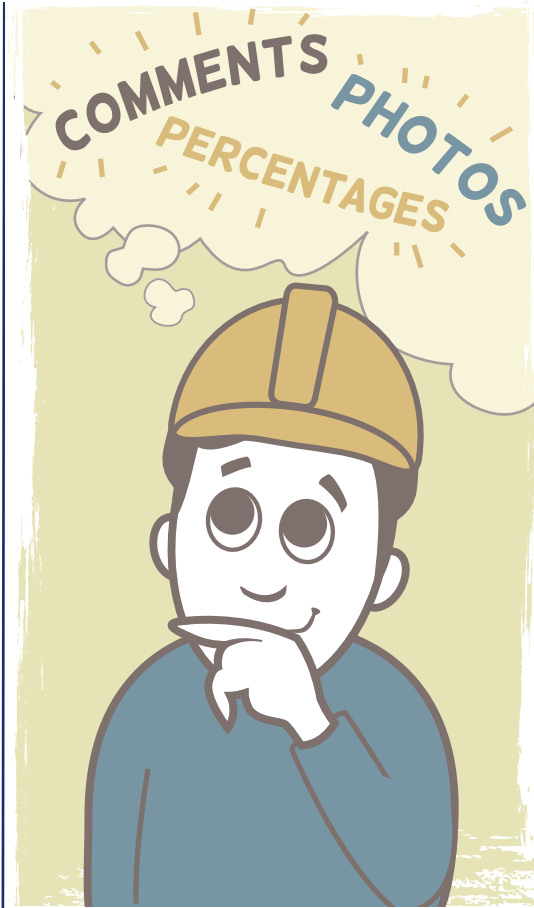
The information that consists of percentages, photos and notation you submit on your report is what we use to tell the story of the project being built. The inspection report has three required fields that GCI uses to communicate the project conditions and progress to the client.

One of the more critical fields is the photos. The photos you provide serve several purposes. First of all, they provide us and the lender with the visual evidence of the work being completed. They also help you, the inspector, in backing up your percentages and comments. More importantly, they assist our QC department in providing the most clear and accurate report to the lender to support their funding decisions. Unless otherwise noted, interior and exterior photos are required on every inspection. The old minimum required of 8-10 photos is long gone. Lets be clear, 8 photos hardly paints a picture of the work in progress on any project.

The comments you provide are equally as important as they help you communicate to GCI any issues, problems, or concerns you observed while on the property. Your comments also allow you to give us a narrative of the project and its progress to accompany the 30 or more photos you provided.

Last, but certainly not least, are your percentages. GCI requires that inspectors update every line in the budget if applicable, not just the photo focus items. Please also be aware GCI does not give credit for uninstalled material and/or deposits. If there are materials on site please use the comment section and leave the line at 0%.

We are not looking for inspectors who only meet the minimum requirements. We are looking for inspectors that exceed expectations and are consistent on every inspection. The inspectors that consistently turn in high quality inspections are the ones who GCI will turn to as we take on new clients. ■



*“Sure, the job sounded good, until they told me they’ll only do inspections in the dark!”*

Granite is a member of:  
**THE INTERNATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
CERTIFIED HOME  
INSPECTORS**



For more information about NACHI, visit them at [www.nachi.org](http://www.nachi.org) or explore their resources at [www.inspectormall.com](http://www.inspectormall.com).



## **NEW CATEGORY** **Inspector Exclusive!**

Jim Sechrest has been conducting inspections for GCI for the past five years and is considered one of our top inspectors because of the quality of reports, photos and communication. Jim has also been an Inspector of the Quarter and continues to receive recommendations and accolades from our Quality Control (QC) department.

Jim never declines any assignments and is consistently looking to improve his Turn-Time and documentation (notes and photos) on his reports. This interview was conducted to provide assistance and recommendations from one of our top performers on how to conduct a GCI inspection.

### **How long have you been reviewing construction activity?**

I have been in the construction industry for 36 years. I started as a painter and eventually owned my own construction business.

### **What do you like about working with GCI?**

Everyone seems to see the big picture as to the product and service that GCI provides. This puts all of us on the same page when it comes to customer service. Knowing that working as a team puts GCI ahead of the competition. That keeps us all working.

Truly a novel concept: we all work together to make GCI the best and it's a win win!

I like that! Great people make for a very pleasant work environment.

### **When you get to the project site, what is your approach on completing the inspection as efficient as possible?**

I try to approach each inspection in the same manner. Be methodical and try not to get distracted, noting any



**Jim Sechrest**

questionable items as I go. Then, after the initial inspection is completed, I will then go back and make sure nothing was missed and get answers to any questions. This seems to work for me and makes it less likely to miss anything. No one wants to go back to check on something you missed. It's about being consistent in the approach.

### **If you need clarification on any aspect of the inspection order, whom do you contact?**

A quick call to GCI will usually take care of any logistical problems. If it's a field issue and no one is available on site, then a call to GCI followed up with a notation in the report to make sure everyone is on the same page seems to work. Communication is the key, that way no surprises.

### **Do you treat each inspection the same? If not, please explain.**

Yes. I try to keep the approach the same. Consistency is the key. There are only subtle differences in our inspections and if we keep the same approach it is less likely that anything will be missed.

### **How do the GCI Special Instructions help you to obtain the critical information requested on each inspection?**

It gives me a picture to go by before I even see the project in the field. Good contact numbers are especially appreciated as that makes everything go smoothly from the start.

### **Are there any line items you don't look at? If so, why not?**

I look at the entire inspection prior to the field inspection. There are times when there are changes and clarifications are needed. A quick call to GCI will head off any issues before they become an issue. COMMUNICATION! It makes everyone's life easier.

### **How much time do you spend at the construction site on average taking into account the different types of**

*(cont'd on page 8)*



**Inspector Exclusive** - continued

**inspections you perform for GCI?  
Residential? Commercial?**

I do whatever it takes to be thorough. I have completed inspections in 15 minutes and some have taken as much as 2 hours depending on the complexity. Size and complexity of the project generally dictates how long the inspection takes. I never hurry through, as that's when something may be missed. Nobody likes to be inputting a report and not remember if the HVAC was installed.

**Do you have a pattern or method you follow on every inspection to provide the "Virtual Walk Through" of the project that GCI requests?**

Again consistency is the key to good repeatable inspections. Pictures do tell a thousand words and the more pictures the better the QC department can do its job. When in doubt, take a picture.



**What recommendations if any, might you suggest to a new inspector just beginning to conduct inspections for GCI?**

Develop a consistent and repeatable method for your inspections. This allows for fewer mistakes and the QC department's examination of your inspection will be much easier to complete. If you have questions then call GCI and ask for further explanation. Don't assume if you don't know. The personnel at GCI are very knowledgeable and will help steer clear of any potential misunderstandings.

**What about our existing inspectors, any word of advice or encouragement?**

Just to remember that we represent GCI and everyone who works there, including all the inspectors throughout the system. We are only as good as our last inspection. ■

**Calling all HUD Inspectors!**



GCI is recruiting GCI is seeking HUD approved inspectors with HUD Fee/Compliance and 203K Designations for this fast growing segment of residential home improvements.

Contact GCI at 800.919.8903 or at [inspectorinfo@gcinspects.com](mailto:inspectorinfo@gcinspects.com) to learn more!



GCI's mission is to deliver a high quality, cost-effective inspection, utilizing a professional and highly trained nationwide network of inspectors, supported by specialized in-house representatives.



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# ANNOUNCING



## GCI's *INSPECTOR WORLD*

[WWW.MYINSPECTORWORLD.COM](http://WWW.MYINSPECTORWORLD.COM)



Inspector World is an online resource for GCI's qualified network of more than 4,000 inspectors nationwide, filled with construction inspection news and trends. Designed specifically for GCI's inspectors, the website features the quarterly *Construction Inspector Review* e-newsletter, a full catalog of newsletter archives, inspector news and events, inspector frequently asked questions, GCI company information, industry links, and much more to come.

