

Americans Keep Improving **By Jeff Cooper**

Higher real estate values have caused home equity to go up “by a mind-blowing \$5 trillion since 1995,” writes syndicated columnist Kenneth Harney. He adds that new research from Harvard University shows Americans “have been plowing that value back into their homes at a dizzying pace – nearly one-quarter of a trillion dollars toward home improvements each year.”

Harney explains that “those improvements usually help pump up home values even more.” Additionally, “owners are focusing on high-end kitchen transformations, multi-room additions, lavish bathrooms, spas, entertainment rooms and other upscale renovations. Think big ticket,” Harney says.

Your plans may call for adding a deck, installing an energy-efficient furnace, or finishing a basement or attic. Many homeowners borrow against their home equity to boost the value of their property, while also increasing the enjoyment of living there every day.