

---

# HOME IMPROVEMENTS

---

## THAT IMPROVE VALUES



**RICHARD C. BROWN**

# **Home Improvements That Improve Values**

---

Your guide for getting the most  
money out of home improvements

**By**

**Richard C. Brown**

**&**

**Tara M. Brown**

Published by Richard C. Brown & Tara M Brown

Copyright ©2025 Richard C. Brown & Tara M Brown

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

**DISCLAIMER AND/OR LEGAL NOTICES:**

While all attempts have been made to verify information provided in this publication, neither the Author nor the Publisher assumes any responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, or omissions. Any slights of people or organizations are unintentional.

This publication is not intended for use as a source of legal or accounting advice. The Publisher wants to stress that the information contained herein may be subject to varying state and/or local laws or regulations.

The reader of this publication assumes responsibility for the use of these materials and information. Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations, including advertising and all other aspects of doing business in the United States or any other jurisdiction is the sole responsibility of the reader. The Author and Publisher assume no responsibility or liability whatsoever on behalf of any reader of these materials.

If your property is currently listed with a Realtor, please disregard this notice. It is not our intention to solicit the offerings of other brokers. Printed in the United States of America.

# Table of Contents

PART 1	1
CHAPTER 1 REMODELING - IS IT WORTH IT?.....	3
CHAPTER 2 WHERE TO SPEND THE MONEY.....	7
CHAPTER 3 IMPROVEMENTS THAT COST MORE THAN THE ROI.....	14
CHAPTER 4 TRENDS TO AVOID.....	23
PART 2	39
CHAPTER 5 DON'T OVERDO IT. KEEPING YOUR AREA IN MIND.....	41
CHAPTER 6 OUTDOOR IMPROVEMENTS.....	47
PART 3	61
CHAPTER 7 FLOORING, WALLS AND LIGHTING.....	63
CHAPTER 8 COOKING UP A NEW KITCHEN.....	72
CHAPTER 9 LIVING ROOM UPGRADES AND RENOVATIONS.....	79
CHAPTER 10 BEDROOM AND ATTIC RENOVATIONS.....	86
CHAPTER 11 BATHROOMS: RENOVATIONS AND THEIR ROI.....	93
CHAPTER 12 REMODELING, ADDITIONS, AND ROI.....	103
PART 4	109
CHAPTER 13 IMPORTANCE OF GOOD PICTURES.....	111
CHAPTER 14 STAGING SOLUTIONS AND OPTIONS.....	118
WHAT IS YOUR HOME TRULY WORTH?.....	127
<i>ABOUT RICHARD C. BROWN</i> .....	128
<i>ABOUT TARA M. BROWN</i> .....	129

# Part 1



*"I THOUGHT I'D TRY MY HAND AT A LITTLE HOME IMPROVEMENT. IT'S THE 'IMPROVEMENT' PART THAT SEEMS TO BE THE CHALLENGE."*

# Chapter 1

## Remodeling - Is it worth it?

Remodeling. You've been thinking about it for a while now. That choke point in the kitchen is maddening, the wallpaper in the bathroom is a crime against good taste and the basement has looked like a dungeon for years.

Not to mention all the upgrades to the doors, windows and landscaping that have been the subject of many dinner-table discussions.

Naturally, you might wonder whether or not it would be better to just move and leave all of that for someone else to figure out. Then again, the job isn't going to last forever, and you may have to move in five or six years. Maybe it would just be best to tough it out until then.

After all, no one really gets their money back on remodeling projects anyway. The truth is that deciding to remodel can be an extremely stressful decision. It affects your savings, the enjoyment of your home and the potential resale value of the home.

Yet, since the housing bubble burst and the Great Recession got underway, more and more people have decided to take on the task of remodeling, even frequently doing the projects themselves to save money.

In fact, in 2023, homeowners spent approximately \$522.25 billion and is expected to reach \$ 615.58 billion by 2029.

However, in 2024, there was a decline in spending, with homeowners investing around \$485 billion in home renovations. This decrease reflects a shift towards essential upkeep and lifestyle-enhancing upgrades. That number does not include expenses from routine maintenance that one normally incurs.

In 2024, approximately 62% of American homeowners had planned to undertake home renovations or remodeling projects, up from 48% in 2023. Of these, 43% intended to complete the renovations themselves (DIY), while 29% planned to hire a professional, and 28% considered a combination of both approaches.

This has been driven largely by the effects of the pandemic in the U.S. in 2020, effects that led many people to try to cut costs wherever they could and so they took on projects themselves (DIY) rather than hiring costly contractors. Even in the current market, in which home prices are going back up and homes are moving off the market in a matter of days in many places, remodeling can still be a wise decision.

The improvements may help to set your home apart from the pack if you choose to sell. Or you may find that while your home will sell quickly and for a good price, you still can't afford the upgrade you would like.

It only makes sense that if your home is increasing in value, the values of the homes you are looking at will also be going up. Alright, so you are not alone in deciding to remodel. But then comes the hard part - deciding what to do and how much to spend.

There are a lot of factors to consider here. How long do you plan on staying in the house? What is your budget like? What kind of projects do you need done the most? Or rather, what about your house drives you the craziest?

How long you plan on staying in the house is maybe the most important of those questions. The less time you expect to spend there is also less time you get to spend enjoying the fruits of your hard work. It also means that you are going to need to have some money left over when the time comes to move. In such a case, you are going to want to focus on the projects that give you the biggest return on investment (ROI). Simple and relatively inexpensive things like replacing old doors and windows can have a return of

over 60 -70%, depending on the materials used and energy efficiency in the right market.

The goal of this book is not only to show you that remodeling for both personal satisfaction in your home and for increased value should you decide to sell is possible, but also to help you decide where and how to best spend your money so that you get the most possible out of your hard work. Now, before you go off and start planning that \$20,000-dollar bathroom renovation, it is important that you do the research beforehand to make sure that you are going to get the best possible results.

The single best thing you can do to help direct your home renovation project, especially if you are planning on selling within the next few years, is to contact a real estate agent.

While we'll be going over a number of examples of where to spend your money that transcend several markets, each market is still different. An agent will know your own market and what sort of improvements, colors and styles are most sought after in your area.

He'll also be able to suggest simple fixes that don't cost a lot of money, as well as contractors who are able to perform the work. Another simple rule to follow is making sure you get whatever permits your municipality or county requires.

Trying to skirt the permit system may seem like a good idea in the short term but can lead to far more anxiety over getting caught or just having to answer a lot of uncomfortable questions. With all of this in mind, let's dive into the nitty-gritty of home remodeling, beginning with a more detailed look at where you should spend your money and how much you should expect back from your investment.

# Chapter 2

## Where to Spend the Money

The best return on remodeling projects is not even given by full-scale remodeling projects. It is by replacing already existing things like windows and doors with usually a mid-range upgrade.

We are going to take a quick look at several of the best places that you should spend your money at. We'll also dive into details of where and how much you can expect to recoup when you decide to place your home on the market. We'll begin by going over some of those replacement projects and continue with an overview of some of the other big hitters: the kitchen and bathroom remodel.

### Replacements

These projects are relatively simple and low-cost, placing them within the reach of most homeowners. The top four improvement projects in terms of ROI are the following:

- Entry Door -188%
- Garage door – 193.9%
- Landscaping Minor to Major– 25% - 380%
- Siding Replacement – 94.7%

As you can see, these things are not spectacular. You should first notice where they are. They are all on the visible exterior of the home, creating a positive first impression in the minds of potential buyers, an impression that helps set the value of the home in their minds.

Other replacement projects with a good return include replacing old windows with new you can expect to recoup around 60%-75% and installing a new roof: with returns of over 60-70% respectively.

It is also worth noting that the ROI numbers will vary depending on what market you are in. The 2024 Cost Vs. Value Report provides valuable insights into return on investment (ROI) for various home remodeling projects.

## **Remodeling**

Naturally, there can be much to be gained from work on the inside of the home as well. One chief benefit of redoing a room or two inside the home is that it will increase your own enjoyment of your home.

Another pro is that if you are selling, it is important to carry a good impression that was formed as a result of your exterior and interior improvements of the house. As with all other aspects of home improvement, there are better and worse ways to spend your money. And as the adage goes, kitchens sell houses.

Citing Cost Vs. Value Report once again, kitchen remodels average a return of 96.1% nationwide, making it the best investment for a total remodeling project.

Other good remodel projects to consider include:

- Attic bedroom - 72.9%
- Bathroom - 73.7%
- Basement - 70%

These projects can be costly, with national averages for job costs running in the tens of thousands of dollars, so be sure to carefully consider just how much you are willing to spend and what is in demand in your particular market.

## **Additions**

One other thing to consider adding value to your home as well as make it more functional for yourself is to consider the addition of certain rooms. Clearly, in most cases this is a large step with an even larger investment involved.

Therefore, do not consider this if you are planning on selling within the next few years. That said, if you plan on staying where you are for a while to enjoy your additions, they can result in a reasonable ROI, though some are more worthwhile than others.

Look below.

- Master suite – 35.5%
- Deck - 82%
- Bathroom – 60 -70%
- Sunroom - 50%
- Garage – 60-80%

As you can see, there is a fairly large range in your ROI involved, though not as large as a less ambitious remodel. And a careful reading of the data actually shows that some of the most expensive projects (a sunroom addition averaged over \$72,000 nationwide) actually provide the lowest returns.

The simple fact is that buyers may not have the same taste as you, and even if they do, they only see the finished product with little understanding, or interest, of what went into creating it. That last point brings out the need for having a slightly deeper understanding of the way these statistics often play out in real life. For example, a roof replacement is often cited as having a high ROI.

While this can be true, it is important to understand this in context. After all, you have heard others asserting that a new roof doesn't really add value to a home. How to square these seemingly contradictory statements?

A roof is much like a bass player in a rock band, you should only really notice it when it isn't doing its job. That is, a roof isn't something you should really need to think about unless it is leaking or has a colony of moss growing on it. Therefore, a bad roof can certainly detract from a home's value.

A solid, trouble-free roof is simply expected. Its chief value as a seller is how it may favorably compare with other, similar homes with older roofs that are showing clear signs of wear.

Keeping this in mind, don't replace your roof with an eye toward selling unless your home clearly needs it. One caveat to include is that things like energy efficient, architectural shingles with a transferable warranty may be highly attractive to the right buyer.

Also, more money does not necessarily mean a bigger return. Going back to the kitchen example, a relatively minor remodel of \$20,000 yields a much higher ROI than a \$55,000 remodel.

While buyers certainly love a large kitchen complete with island and shiny stainless-steel appliances, they won't be as quick to assign significant value to the best hinges, custom stained cupboards, and imported Wolf appliances that money can buy.

At some point, things like very high-end appliances can even be a turn off either because the buyer is unfamiliar with them or because he is and knows how hard it is to get parts when they fail. Basements are also tricky. A nice big recreation room is certainly a draw but often it will not be counted as living space in an appraisal or in the square footage when the home is listed.

People also tend to have their own ideas of exactly what a rec room should be. If you have not finished your basement already or are planning on leaving in less than five years, it is best to either leave it alone or just put-up walls along the outside of the basement and put in a cheap but decent looking carpet and inexpensive drop ceiling, allowing the buyer to customize to his own tastes.

It is also important to never forget the basic systems. When people are looking at a home, they do not expect to find leaky pipes, a furnace that doesn't work or electrical outlets that pop a breaker as soon as something is plugged in.

These and issues like mold, the aforementioned leaky roof or stained and damaged carpet are things that will generally tum off a buyer, regardless of how amazing the kitchen and bathrooms may be. Some of these, especially less visible issues like an aging furnace or water heater may seem like a waste of money if you are planning on selling soon.

And indeed, a buyer may not notice such issues on the initial walk through. But even if an offer is made and accepted, that is not necessarily the end of the story. Appraisers and inspectors will both almost certainly be coming through the home as part of the process and either of these can derail a sale. An appraiser will notice such aging equipment and other factors like old carpet and flooring and adjust the home's value based on the current market.

Home inspectors are less concerned with market value, but they will point out that even if it is running flawlessly at the moment, a 25- year-old furnace can give out anytime, leading a buyer to want to subtract the value of a new one from the price of the home. So, even if you are intending to move in the near future, it is worth it to pay the extra money to fix or repair the basic system of your home. Certain systems do provide a good ROI.

The furnace and air conditioning units in particular can be a selling point if they are the new, energy efficient models. An additional bonus here is that there are often tax credits associated with them, lessening your initial investment. And don't forget, even if any of these repairs do not add additional value in the eyes of a buyer, they don't subtract value and will aid the fast sale of your home.

## **Chapter 3**

# **Improvements that Cost More than the ROI**

Over the course of many years, we have been conditioned to view almost any home improvement or repair as something which automatically increases the value of the home, and so to guarantee a great return on investment upon selling it.

When deciding about adding a new addition, fixing up the basement, purchasing new appliances, or any other home improvement project, there are a few important questions that you need to ask yourself: "How do I know that this project will indeed add monetary value to my home?"

Is this repair truly a necessity or am I just listening to the suggestions of money-hungry scam artists?

Are these new appliances going to fill my needs and make me happy, or am I buying them because I think that they will add value to the home when I sell it in a few years?

There are certain repairs, renovations, and upgrades that just won't help you with the sale. Let's take a walk through your home and look at things more closely. New carpeting. While this could appeal to many people, homebuyers are generally turned off by it because they will feel the need to have it professionally cleaned before moving in.

They also might be more aware of health hazards due to allergens that could gather in carpets. Have you ever thought about all the germs that can be collected in carpet, not to mention the odors from the kitchen and anyone's unclean socks? These thoughts and more cross through the minds of home buyers while making their decisions.

If you have good flooring, why not show it off? You're much better off with hardwood flooring that can be topped with area rugs or even carpeted over later if the homebuyer chooses to do so. It's a bedroom, not a zoo. If you want to have pets, have pets, but be careful to avoid making huge structural changes like adding built in cages or aquariums.

This is an example of detracting from the value of your home, because unless you find another Dr. Doolittle to purchase the home, you're going to have to convert it back to normal before anyone else would buy it. The same goes for other highly personalized conversions such as a cold pantry or wine cellar. Anything you do that is truly unique to you needs to be done in such a way that it is easily undone before putting your home on the market.

Otherwise, potential buyers will view these personal extravagances as expensive projects to undo or instead, make it part of the deal that you undo them yourself.

### **Where is the garage?**

If it looks like a garage, potential homebuyers are expecting it to be a garage. If they walk in and find that it's been completely changed into something else that can no longer have a car drive into it, they will not be too excited.

There are a few people who might not care about having hail damage their vehicles, having to clean off the ice or snow in the morning, or leaving the car exposed to night-time pranksters, but you will find greater success with a real garage.

Does that mean that you can't create that family room, theater, or gym? You can still have these in your garage if you set them up in such a way that the garage can become a garage again with minimal costs. For example, once again, don't carpet it.

If you want to cover the garage floor, do so with large area rugs, or if you want to use carpet, just roll it out onto the surface

without attaching it with glue or permanently installing it in any other way.

If you have built-in storage cabinets, leave them as such instead of dismantling them to hang up the big screen.

### **The famous kitchen.**

So, if you're planning to live in your home for many years and you want to enjoy an updated kitchen, go for it. But, if you plan to renovate the kitchen in hopes of raising the value and increasing your profits at the sale, be warned.

On paper, kitchen renovations are worth about half of what homeowners normally spend on them. New granite countertops, new tile flooring, a new brushed stainless sink, and a sophisticated cabinet system with a hideaway refrigerator - all of these things and more can be your dreams coming true, but that doesn't make them the appraiser's dream nor necessarily the potential buyers'.

If remodeling is a must, treat with caution and avoid overspending. In general, the kitchen is the heart of the home, so it will impress potential buyers to have a nice one. No one is telling you to hang on to the plaster or old ceramic sink or countertop, but the wanting is to tread with caution.

### ***Take a dive elsewhere when the weather is HOT.***

It could save you thousands, and even tens of thousands. Before installing an in-ground pool before the sale with the hope of adding value to your home, think of the risks involved. Do you live in Southern California, Florida, or Las Vegas? And still, you should think twice even in these states.

If you live in a state that experiences real winters, an in-ground pool holds less value than in the states where the sun hardly sleeps. You may argue that you can have a heated pool in an enclosure, but then it becomes a question of adding the pool for your own enjoyment, or simply to add value to your home.

Regardless of whether you choose to install an indoor or outdoor in-ground pool, or even a permanent above-ground pool in a deck, heavily weigh the pros and cons.

Are you going to enjoy the pool yourself for a few years with the kids or grandkids, or are you installing it with the intention to add to the value of the home? What happens when the kids move out or move out of state?

Are you prepared to fill in an in-ground pool or dismantle an above-ground pool at a buyer's request?

Many potential buyers will view the pools as a hazard, especially if they have children or grandchildren who will be in the home with them. They are also aware of the extra costs attached to the pool for maintenance and water bills.

If your wallet will be just as happy with or without the expenses attached to installing a pool, keeping up with the maintenance, and potentially losing out on tens of thousands of dollars when you can't recoup your investment at the sale, then go ahead and have fun with a pool. Taking it up a level? Do you need more room to fit your family for a few more years?

**Is your mother-in-law moving in so you need to build a special suite for her?**

There are valid reasons to build additions onto your home, but if you are planning on moving out anyway and the addition will only be a temporary bandage, hold off on making expensive changes.

If your house is the smallest in your neighborhood and everyone else has a second story, you have a better chance of recouping your costs than if it is the other way around.

Homebuyers want to be comfortable in the home and with their surroundings, if you are adding onto your house in good taste so that it does not stand out like a sore thumb, the appraisal

will likely be more in your favor. However, covering 100% of the cost of any addition is very unlikely, so don't get your hopes up.

### **Don't go chasing waterfalls.**

It is very lovely to see yards that are beautifully landscaped with colorful plants, mini hills, and the little trickle of water flowing down amidst the flowers. It is indeed a very picturesque setting that pleases the eye and relaxes the mind.

Good landscaping is important for the general enjoyment of any home by its residents, but there is no need for you to invest in extravagant creations to try to bring up the home's value for re-sale.

A sprinkler system is a very practical investment of several thousand dollars, and there is greater perceived and real value in this addition than in a pretty mini babbling brook that will attract all the birds and insects.

If you are thinking of ways to upgrade your yard, the sprinkler system would be the wiser choice.

The question of the basement raises much conversation among homeowners. There are those cases in which finishing a basement has proven to be a great loss to the homeowner, and those cases in which the appraisal value showed an increase and buyers were willing to happily pay the price.

Finishing your basement as local code allows can be done in different ways, and if you do this without completely altering the structure, like adding walls or creating extra rooms, it's possible to still come out as a winner.

As with everything else, making permanent alterations can cost you at the sale, because while you might enjoy camping beneath the night sky and counting stars in your basement, potential buyers won't necessarily view this expensive ceiling as a benefit, and some may even want to have it removed.

If you're upgrading an older, hundred-year-old home to include these features, or if you're updating the duct work or entirely replacing the heating and air units in a more recent model home, do not expect homebuyers to be thrilled or for the appraisal to reflect what you spent on the work.

There are certain things we all take for granted including central heating and air, running water, and electricity in every room.

If a home lacks any of these, the value goes down, but when these are present, the value is not affected, even if you were to spend thousands on the best in the industry. You may get some bonus points for more efficient and environmentally friendly equipment, but not much else. This goes the same for buying new gutters.

On the other hand, improvements on necessities such as new siding or a new roof will often yield a much higher return than the more unseen repairs of electricity, piping, or central heating and air.

### **What about the bathroom?**

Indeed. Another necessary component of any household is the toilet, and a home without one would be a tent. Renovating a bathroom could cost you a handful or loads of money depending on your plans.

Replacing the floor covering or the wall color will not cost as much as a full-blown renovation that replaces and rearranges the toilet, the sink, the shower or bathtub, or that expands the room size. Installing a special glass door and spacious shower, a hot tub, or an extra-large vanity topped by an over-sized mirror in addition to new walls, flooring, and lighting will put your price tag on the opposite end of the spectrum,

### **Do you need a new toilet?**

By all means get it. Is your vanity too small?

Then replace it. Is the tile cracked or linoleum peeling back? It's time for a floor makeover. Be practical. You do not want potential buyers cringing at the site of an old toilet or rusted shower head, but you do want to recoup as much money as you can at the sale.

If you over-spend on luxuries, you may still make the sale, but not at the full amount needed for you to at least break even for your efforts.

While you're living in your house, enjoy yourself and make yourself comfortable. You have a right to be happy. Just don't break the bank when making changes, especially if you're doing this while making plans to sell. Making your money back is not always guaranteed, and in many cases as you have seen, the risk of loss is great.

It isn't easy to strike a balance between what makes you happy and what will make the buyer happy, because ultimately, it's all very subjective.

What you like and what the potential buyers like will differ, but you can do your best to avoid over-personalizing to help make the sale. After all, every buyer needs a place to call home, because we all know, there's no place like it.

# Chapter 4

## Behind the Times

### **Inconsistent Architecture**

Having your home contain a hodge-podge of architectural styles can be off-putting to a potential homebuyer. For a ranch-style home, featuring columns on the front porch can be as jarring as a log-cabin-styled home with art deco accents.

Each architectural style has its own inherent beauty, so be sure to emphasize these factors. If you don't, it can be like eating pickles on ice cream!

### **Oversized Kitchens**

Hold the rise of celebrity chefs responsible for this one, but kitchens with every appliance imaginable and too much space can be off-putting. Unless you're hosting lavish get-togethers with a team of cooks, it may be time to divide the kitchen into segments, like multipurpose kitchen island or maybe a scullery pantry or a concealed kitchen.

### **Fake "Old World" Design**

By decorating or emphasizing a European style in our home (in particular, the region of Tuscany), we may hope to capture the elegance of the area, but bear in mind that this style has been a form of playing "Telephone".

Unless you're sourcing all of the materials (and a vineyard, to boot), there will be something inauthentic about channeling Europe in another region of the world.

## **White Appliances Think Twice**

If your appliances are white and old, it's time to upgrade. White maybe coming back in some café kitchens but is it a good choice to emphasize a spotless home? Everything shows up on white! But that's precisely the problem homebuyers will subconsciously feel the toil associated with wiping every surface down, or lingering stains that cannot come out.

In addition, plastic materials can fade over time, turning into a non-uniform yellow. Instead, choose matte black appliances or timeless stainless steel.

## **Wallpaper**

Wallpaper makes a very bold statement in a home. However, that same boldness may put off homeowners, especially if the wallpaper is a cheap, old, and/or common one or is very uncommon.

In addition, removing wallpaper is a labor-intensive process that can put off potential homebuyers, especially considering that the removal of older wallpaper may damage the walls and create more headaches.

Also, wallpaper can be a source of undetected mold growth, so stick with paint instead.

## **Carpeted Bathrooms**

There may have been a time when stepping across the master-bedroom and onto a cold-tiled floor may have brought about carpets in the bathroom, but those times are so over.

That's what bathmats are for! Carpets and water simply are asking for mold growth/damage, so tear those out already. Don't forget that modern homes can have heated floorings, which is a huge selling point to potential homebuyers in colder areas.

## **Gold Fixtures and Hardware**

Metallic finishes can really give your home warmth and sophistication, but if you have grimy, flaking (80's) gold fixtures and hardware, consider replacing them. And don't call them distressed just replace.

Instead, opt to replace these fixtures with warmer metallic finishes like bronzed gold which offer a sleek more modern look.

## **Tiled Countertops**

Your kitchen and bathroom countertops play a huge part in the back of a potential homebuyer.

If they're tiled, consider removing them at one time, this trend may have seemed modern, but the real nitty-gritty that's involved with maintaining tiled countertops can be off-putting. Think about it: what do you do if a tile chips and needs to be replaced?

Are you prepared to clean the porous grout regularly to prevent mold and bacteria growth?

## **Cheap Wood Paneling**

Wood paneled homes are beautiful, so if you have stunning wooden wainscoting throughout your home, leave it alone. However, if the walls of your house contain cheap wood paneling meant for a bingo club in Wyoming, remove it immediately.

It instantly dates your home and screams "cheap" to those looking at your home. Worse, it may imply that the wood paneling was put up to cover up larger problems, like a lack of insulation or unfinished walls.

## **Taxidermy**

Dead animals on display may not appeal to every homebuyer, so it's best to remove that moose head when selling. However, it

can be popular in certain regions of the U.S., where hunting is becoming more popular (ex. the southern U.S.).

That being said, similar items, like a bulls' skull strategically placed over a mantelpiece or in a garden, are appealing to certain types of homebuyers.

However, your goal is to make your home an open template.

## **Flooring**

Simply put, get rid of old worn-out flooring. At one time, it may have been a popular option. But simply put if your home is mixed with different flooring, be it by color or mixing different material types then just replace it. Neither you nor your buyer wants to look at that all day!

Instead, opt for flooring materials that are natural and made of sustainable products in earth tones that are not only comfortable, but also visually appealing.

## **Popcorn Ceilings**

If your home contains a popcorn ceiling (also known as a "textured ceiling" or a "stucco ceiling"), you instantly communicate to a homebuyer that your home hasn't been modernized. Popcorn ceilings were popular from the 50's to the 80's as a cheap, ubiquitous alternative to cover up imperfections and cover up unadorned drywall. But to modern eyes, it looks more like a dreary Motel 6 than a warm home.

Removal of popcorn ceilings, like wallpaper, is a labor-intensive affair, so be sure to get it done before your open house. In addition, be sure to look for any asbestos, which can make or break a closing if detected by a homebuyer (or inspector).

## **Glass Mosaic Backsplash**

One of the most common trends from the mid-2000s is a glass mosaic backsplash for your kitchen or bathroom. While it may have looked good then because of its relative scarcity, today it is nearly everywhere. Consider replacing it with the same material as your countertop and continuing the ceiling for a seamless look. However, beware of trends when selling your home.

## **Bold Paint**

The first thing that a homebuyer sees when viewing a house for the first time is the color: first, the exterior, and then the individual rooms.

Essentially, this "first impression" of colors sets the stage for your home's other features, including furnishings, decorations, and architecture. If you've chosen a bold color on the exterior, like a light pink, you may put off potential buyers that wish to blend in.

If you have a room that's too dark (think dark red) or too bright (think chromatic yellow), the features of the home may be muted or obscured as they compete for visual attention. Neutralizing your home is the best option (see Neutral Colors below), as buyers can project their own color palette to their tastes without being influenced by your preferences.

## **Converted Spaces**

It's a very modern notion to have our spaces fit our personalities, quirks, and interests. However, you may want to reconsider the current usage of each space that you've repurposed.

Having a garage converted for another purpose besides storage and parking a vehicle may be fine for your needs, but homebuyers may just want a garage for what it was intended. If you've converted your garage into a place to run your small business, exercise room, or as a music practice room, be sure to

bring it back to its "normal" state to appeal to the largest number of home buyers.

This is especially true for cities that have limited parking. Similarly, a converted bedroom into a small-office or storage space can be off-putting. This happens because it already puts the should-be-purpose of the room into the mind of a homebuyer and that's not your goal when selling your home.

### **Carpeting**

Even if you've went through the trouble of installing new carpet. Most homebuyers will still replace it.

Often, people may assume that the germs, pet dander, dirt, and other messes of the previous tenants are still present within the carpet.

Furthermore, the color choice for the room may clash with their sensibilities, leading to another item to their mental "To-Do" list when the time comes to customize the home.

Instead, hardwood flooring is a happy medium of some natural hues and the ability to customize. Should the homebuyer want carpet, then all they must do is install it on top of the wooden surface.

### **Too Much Landscape**

There has been a trend most recently of introducing the "outdoor living room" as a way to holistically connect nature with the home. Trimmed bushes in ornate shapes, carpet-like moss walkways, sustainable gardens, and ponds are all visually appealing, but there's a catch. A property requiring regular maintenance may make potential homebuyers hesitate, especially if their future finances are uncertain.

This also includes the recent trend of urban farming. While you may enjoy fresh eggs, honey, and chives daily, others may be

put off by the daily upkeep that animals require, so it's best to leave no signs that your home was once part-farm.

## **Hot Tubs and Pools**

There may have been a time when a pool was considered a selling point for new homeowners, but many homebuyers realize how much of a maintenance issue and eyesore it can be.

This is especially true for above-ground pools, which tend to take up a large amount of space, create a safety and liability hazard for children/guests, and leave an ugly spot of dead grass when removed.

This is true for hot tubs, too.

Hot tubs are notorious as a breeding ground for bacteria that can be difficult to maintain, and removal from a deck or backyard may lead to even more expenses down the future (ex. rebuilding a portion of your deck where the hot tub once was).

## **Whirlpool Bathtubs**

Whirlpool bathtubs may have been at one time considered an item of luxury and a major selling point, but tastes have changed in recent years. Those who've owned or used them may have enjoyed the luxury but realize just how much water they use (between 80 - 100 gallons) and how much space is taken up that could be used for other bathroom features like a bigger shower space or a separate vanity space for each spouse.

## **Minimalist Design**

Outfitting your home like an urban loft space has long been a trend in interior home design, but this may not be your best option for selling your home.

Minimalist design in this style can make homes seem unnaturally empty, without emphasizing the natural personality of the home that's attractive to homebuyers,

Instead, you should aim to add accents without creating a barren look. Subconsciously, an overly minimalist design communicates to buyers that the home shouldn't house furnishings and decorations, something that may be at odds with the buyer's intentions.

## **Improvement Trends**

### **Neutral Colors**

Agents, interior decorators, and potential homebuyers.

What do they all have in common? They all prefer neutral colors. Whether it's showcasing your home's features without distractions or removing the "personality" from the house, the choice of colors is very important when selling your house.

Picking a neutral color, like beige or cream, helps stoke the interest of those looking at online photographs (Gust imagine a bright yellow house on your computer screen!).

Let's take a look at some neutral color trends to help you sell your home:

- **Green:** A medium range green, not too dark, not too light, can be a versatile color to bring out the best from your home.

Green has a cheery, homespun coziness when paired with yellow, but also brings out the rustic features of the home when paired with an appropriate shade of brown.

This is especially true for wooden cabinets in a kitchen or bathroom, creating an inviting atmosphere.

However, caution should be used for using green against shrubbery/bushes, as a uniformly green presentation looks off-putting.

- Grey: In terms of sophistication and modernity, grey is an excellent neutral color.

It can help color accents stand out (like a bright green lamp or a red plush chair), or it can be the focal point when used as a darker shade to enhance urban-styled furnishings.

Of course, grey can be a bit dull and business-like if not used with caution, so experiment with different hues to achieve the desired effect.

- White: White is an excellent color to make your home's features pop.

White matches just about every color, whether it's used on the wainscoting, awnings, or ceilings. However, it should be noted that many shades of white are available, and not all are created equal.

Remember that while white is a neutral color, it shouldn't be overused. Painting your entire interior white makes it seem like an unfinished home, or it may be TOO bright.

However, it is a perfect complement to other neutral colors.

- Red and Orange: These colors are a bit of a gamble when it comes to finding neutral hues.

A soft red or orange works especially well for kitchens or dining rooms, where they exude a natural warmth and a vibrant, festive atmosphere.

However, a dark red or orange can seem too "serious" for rooms, especially a master bedroom where it might be construed as having a brothel undertone.

- Blue: For many people, light shades of blue have a soothing, tranquil effect.

This color should be reserved for rooms like master bedrooms, bathrooms, or rooms with lots of natural light, as these conjure subconscious feelings of the beach or a pleasant vacation in one's memory.

Dark blues can have a stem, ominous effect, like storm clouds or of night time, and should only be used with caution where there's plenty of light or a room's obvious purpose (i.e. a study).

- Brown: Brown and its variants are all excellent colors to choose for your home.

From dark earthy browns to the ever-present beige, brown is a versatile hue that's a great replacement for places where white would seem like an obvious choice. Dark browns give off a cozy feel that can keep a room from feeling too big, but be careful not to overdo it, as homebuyers may make a snap judgment that the size of the room seems too small.

Once you've chosen which neutral colors best suit your home, don't forget that adding a splash of color can bring a room to life. A light blue room with a splash of orange can open it up and play on the contrasts. Try to keep the color ratio at a maximum of 80% neutral, 20% others to avoid having colors clash.

### **Craftsmanship**

Authenticity is a big factor in selling your home. Many can claim to have replicas, but to feature a genuine display of artisan artwork or home features (ex. a custom fireplace, ornate woodwork for your stairs) is a key factor that homebuyers are on the lookout for.

## **Bold Front Door**

An easy way to snag buyers is to emphasize your house's curb appeal with a boldly painted front door. A dark red door among neutral colors can have potential home buyers eager to see what else the home features.

## **Embracing Textures**

It's widely misbelieved that neutralizing your home had to be boring. There are several features that could work well with some creativity, don't be afraid to experiment. Mixing wood grains with plain window dressing can work, as can furs (real or faux) work well with exposed brick.

This can be especially interesting visually, as it makes features stand out or be deemphasized based on your color and texture combinations.

## **Shape and Space Considerations**

Don't forget about using the shape of the room to your advantage when selling your home.

Instead of large, wraparound couches, more elegant pieces of furniture can create a visual impression of space and utility, which is a proper use of minimalism.

Emphasizing how organizational systems of the house, like hidden closet space or functional artwork, can open new possibilities of the home to potential buyers can have them already mentally unpacking all of their possessions before they even see another home.

## **Open Layout**

If you have two adjoining rooms with a similar purpose, consider knocking down the walls to create an open floor plan.

For instance, a kitchen and a dining room can be combined to create a more open atmosphere for entertaining guests and family,

which is a great selling point for homebuyers. The same can work for a dining room and a living room, creating a "great room" space that can create a stunning impression for those that visit the home.

### **Universal Designs**

Considering that a large portion of homeowners will be approaching their twilight years in the near future, having handicap accessible features that can accommodate older families can be a huge selling point to sell your home.

This can include roll-in showers, floating cabinets/sinks, wide doorways, and wheelchair accessible entrances (just to name a few). Of course, there are a few features that are not only designed for this segment of the population, but are also not off-putting to ordinary homebuyers, so consider incorporating if your home is located in a retirement-age area like Florida, Arizona or Nevada.

### **Make It Green**

Green remodeling choices are trends that are here to stay. From increasing energy efficiency, healthier indoor environments, and using sustainable materials, making your home green(er) is a very attractive feature to consumers who not only want to save money (including federal/local subsidies for participating programs), but also feel good about contributing to the welfare of future generations.

### **Smarter Homes**

Technology is here to stay, so expect potential homebuyers inquiring about how "smart" your home is.

Automation or appliances, utilities, and security at the touch of a smartphone can be attractive features for your home.

It is important to find a system that can work in the future, so be sure to find a dependable company that has software that can be updated as newer features come on the market.

## **Hardwood Flooring**

Hardwood flooring is a versatile component towards selling your home. Not only does it match with nearly any style, but it also allows the potential homebuyer to stain it with whatever color that matches their current furniture.

## **Stainless Steel Kitchens**

Almost in contrast to white kitchens that we discussed beforehand, stainless steel has the ability to blend in with different colors to create a cohesive effect, while still having the visual luxury of exposed metal.

In addition, clean-up is much easier and stainless steel won't rust over time, which is an attractive feature to homebuyers.

## **Don't Forget the Ceiling**

While we cautioned about getting rid of textured "popcorn" ceilings, to create a look of timeless elegance, choose beams or reclaimed wood in natural to ceiling to give a room a fresh character.

This is especially true for rooms like a den or a study.

## **Crown Molding**

Crown molding creates an instantaneously elegant look throughout your home, or even in small touches. It can create a centerpiece as a mantle for a fireplace or as little accents around your home, creating an attractive feel to your house for potential homebuyers.

## Part 2

Copyright 2002 by Randy Glasbergen.  
www.glasbergen.com



**“This home-improvement software is like working with a real contractor. It cost me three times more than I expected and half the time it doesn’t show up!”**

## **Chapter 5**

### **Don't Overdo It.**

### **Keeping Your Area in Mind**

How much should you plan on upgrading during your remodel project? The fact is, depending on what you are trying to accomplish, you can spend anywhere from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands in the very same room.

As before, we'll be moving into this discussion with an eye towards getting a good return from your investment, assuming that you will be selling at some point in the future,

After all, if you have no intention of moving at any point in the next ten or more years, ROI doesn't matter as much as your return comes from enjoying the finished product.

It seems intuitive that you would want to upgrade as much as your budget allows and make your home into the jewel of the neighborhood. However, while you will no doubt enjoy knowing that you have transformed your humble ranch into an HGTV-ready show home, such a move could backfire in a big way when you put your home on the market.

Take a look down your street. Observe the condition of the homes and yards in your neighborhood. Are they well maintained or a little run-down? What about the inside of the homes that you have been in?

Are the interiors tastefully decorated and contemporary or do they reflect the fashions of generations past, sporting an array of burnt orange countertops, olive green appliances and paisley wallpaper? Whatever the case, that should be your measuring stick.

The reason for this is simple: no one who can afford a \$1,000,000- dollar home is going to look in all areas surrounded by \$500,000 dollar homes.

Conversely, anyone looking in a neighborhood of \$500,000 homes can't afford the \$1,000,000 you would like to change, or they are looking for a deal.

So, if you go all in and design and build the ultimate spa-getaway in your master bathroom or put in that home theater you've always wanted in the basement, you are not going to get that money back if you are the only home in the area with those kinds of features.

Your home will sit on the market for months until you come down to a much lower price than you would have wanted.

How to avoid these kinds of mistakes?

If you remember, way back in chapter one, we recommended making use of a real estate agent to help determine what sorts of renovations you should pursue.

Your agent will already be familiar with the general standards of the surrounding area and what price ranges people are looking for. He or she will also be familiar with what improvements bring the best ROI, what styles are currently trending and even have suggestions on how to accomplish them quickly.

So, while you may well have been thinking about going all out and putting in marble or granite countertops and all new kitchen cabinets (a renovation that would surely cost thousands) he might talk you down to some fresh quartz for the countertop and a new coat of paint for the cabinets to brighten up the room

Your remodel cost just went down from several thousands of dollars and a week or two without a kitchen to a little more than \$2000 and a day or two of minor inconvenience.

An agent will also go beyond your neighborhood, looking at how your home compares with similar homes in the larger area. This is important as your real competition extends beyond what you can see out your front window.

Unless your neighborhood has a unique setting or is uniquely close to parks, beaches or a vibrant downtown area, there will generally be no reason for a person to buy a house on your street over one in another neighborhood on the other side of town.

Your real estate agent will be able to do side by side comparisons of your home with others that are similar, making sure that you are able to compete effectively across a wide area.

Take the general condition of the outside of the home into account as well. If the surrounding yards are patchy and overgrown with weeds, it is not worth putting in a ton of money to put in a golf course or enough flower beds and trellises that people driving by might mistake it for a bed and breakfast or a fine place for their daughter to have her wedding reception.

You know you have gone too far if they stop and ask how much it costs to rent the space.

Many buyers will also seek out new homes just by driving around, looking at neighborhoods they think may be in their price range.

Your stone walks, hanging vines and pergola will certainly catch a buyer's eye as he drives through, but if you are the only one on your street with anything even remotely like that, they will assume that you are charging more than they can possibly afford and won't even bother to look any further into it.

This can continue even after you have reduced the price after having the home on the market for a couple of months.

That isn't to say you should park some used appliances on your front porch if that happens to be common in your area and price range. Or that you should copy the neighbor's shrubbery,

You should at a minimum present all images of a well-cared-for house that is in solid condition. And standing out a little bit is not a bad thing, just don't overdo it.

Some agents say that the longer you are in the house after the renovation the more likely you are to recoup the costs. This is true that home prices tend to go up over time and the natural inflation will absorb whatever costs you incur.

Keep in mind though that this clearly is not a law as we all remember the recent housing crisis in which prices plummeted and from which some are still only just recovering.

Others will point out that the more recent the renovation, the more likely a buyer will see that it is new and thus assign more value to it. If your privacy fence or bathroom is a few years old, they will have begun to show normal signs of age and blend into the rest of the property.

Also, with any renovation, whether landscaping, doorways or kitchens, don't try too hard to make it meet the highest demands of fashion.

Make it contemporary, but don't go for the bleeding edge of home design.

Not only are you likely to spend too much money and price your home out of the market but you are likely to find that a couple years down the road, your height of fashion will become yesterday's news.

Or worse, it will become the new olive green.

What you hoped would be a pot of honey to attract prospective buyers with deep pockets will instead be more like a can of Raid, driving them away and onto the next property.

In short, keep it simple. If you are remodeling with an eye towards resale, less is often more.

Simple projects like replacing exterior doors, fresh stain on the deck and a fresh coat of paint are more likely to aid your home sale and result in a good ROI than larger projects like room and outbuilding additions.

Make sure that the basics are set, taking care of leaking pipes, buggy appliances and all the doors and windows open and close as expected.

If you do decide to go with a larger project, pick one that still leads to a good ROI like a relatively modest kitchen remodel, always being careful not to spend so much that you price yourself out of the market and make it even harder to sell.

# Chapter 6

## Outdoor Improvements

### Improving Your Front Yard

Curb appeal is incredibly important when it comes to making or breaking the sale on your home, so having your front yard in pristine condition will ensure that you have a leg up in the buyer's opinion of your home.

Landscaping plays a key role in curb appeal and is generally the first impression that a buyer gets, so properly planning your landscape is an absolute must in not only swaying a buyer's decision, but raising the value of your home, as well.

If you believe that landscaping is not the icing on the cake, with the cake being your beautiful home, then take a look at the following statistics, which will definitely change your mind:

- 90% of all real estate agents encourage their clients to invest in having their landscape cleaned up and perfected prior to putting their home on the market.
- Having a beautiful landscape can increase your property's value by 12% on average and will increase your resale value by up to 14%.
- Your home will spend less time on the market, by at least six weeks, if not more.
- If you spend at least 5% on landscaping [or your home's value, your ROI, real estate investment, can be at least 150%, if not more.

However, before you start planting flower beds and trees all over the place, sit down and conduct a plan on paper for what you

plan on doing with your front yard to step your game up with your front yard's landscape.

## **Your Landscaping Plan**

Start by constructing a list of what you'd like to incorporate into your front yard based on what you already have. For example, do you have a stone patio leading to your front door? If so, consider planting a flower bed around the perimeter with bright, vibrant colors to help boost the positive feeling of your landscape.

Or creating a Sustainable Xeriscape Design: of beautiful drought-tolerant plants. Creating a plan will also help you to budget everything. If you'd like to step your game up further, consult your landscaping plan with a landscape architect.

They will come out and show you what would look good and where, within your front yard, while taking your budget into account.

## **Planting and Having Trees**

If you plan on planting a tree, it's best to speak with a landscape architect to go over your options. You don't want to plant a tree that will take decades to grow, such as an oak, but instead go with one that will only take a few years.

If you already have a tree, however, then you're set. By using the I -Tree Design at [i-treedesign.org](http://i-treedesign.org), you can find out which trees are worth what when it comes to property value, storm water runoff, carbon dioxide reduction, energy savings, and even more.

For example, a red maple that is 24 inches in diameter is worth \$244 in McLean, VA, and will add value to your property.

## **Keep the Native Plants!**

Even if you're not a fan of the native plants in your yard, don't remove them. Saguaro, which grows in Arizona, can actually add up to \$80 - \$120 per foot to a home's value.

If you have a certain native plant on your property, you could even get certification from The National Wildlife Federation for creating or incorporating a natural back or front yard habitat for butterflies, birds, and other animals who are looking for a place to feed and roost.

Therefore, not only will keeping your native plants help to make your landscape look fuller, but they will also add vital properly value.

## **Letting It Fill in and Learning to Care for It**

Real estate experts suggest that you should never conduct serious landscaping, which includes planting trees and flowers, right before you are planning on putting your home on the market.

Instead, make and go with your landscaping plans at least six months or more before you put your home up for sale, to ensure that the work you are doing on your front yard has some time to grow, fill in, and look great.

Once your landscaping additions have had the proper amount of time to fill in, it becomes a worthwhile investment to your home's property value overall. You will also need to learn how to properly care for all the additions you have made, or you can hire landscaping experts to help you in maintaining it.

If you plan on doing all the maintenance yourself, you can always research the plants, flowers, and trees over the internet, where you can find gardening websites and blogs that will help give you full care instructions, and even tips on how to make the most out of your front yard.

## **The Importance of Outdoor Lights**

Even though buyers are most likely going to be coming during the day to see your home, outdoor lights are still incredibly important for many reasons.

It's a desirable feature that the majority of buyers look for, even if they won't say it themselves, and is definitely an essential component to have within your landscape.

Outdoor lights help to:

- Prevent tripping and falling over uneven surfaces or anything in the way.
- Add tasteful lighting to the side of your home and your hard and highlights landscape choices if they are placed in specific areas.
- Keep intruders away as outdoor lights reduce the risk of burglaries.
- Get you an insurance discount, considering certain insurance companies will give up to 15% off discounts to homeowners who have zero or reduced claims from burglaries, thanks to outdoor lighting.

Overall, if you didn't think landscaping and additions to your garden and decorations made a difference in the curb appeal and overall value of your home, you're dead wrong!

## **Improving the Exterior of Your Home**

The appeal of the exterior of your home is just as important as the interior of your home, and even more so, considering the exterior is one of the first things that buyers are going to see during a showing or an open house.

Sprucing up the exterior of your home is just as important as having a beautiful landscape, and there are many ways you can easily do so, without pulling your hair out! As you already know, curb appeal is critical and extremely vital when it comes to selling your home for more by adding value, so ensure that you are doing the right things in improving the exterior of your home before you put it up for sale on the market.

## **The Best Ways to Improve the Exterior of Your Home**

The following is a list of ways that help to improve the ROI of your home and their percentages of how much they are raised by:

- Adding or upgrading your patio or deck, 60 - 80%
- Replacing your front door, 188%
- Replacing your garage door, 193.9%
- Remodeling your kitchen, 96% for minor and 50% for major
- Adding an attic or space bedroom, 72.9% - 84%
- Replacing your siding, 78% for vinyl, 94.7% for a mix of fiber-cement
- Upgrading your bathroom, 60% - 73.7%
- Replacing your windows, 60% - 79%
- Remodeling your basement, 70%
- Adding another story within your home, 60% - 72%

If you're looking to step your game up in terms of your ROI, the bullet points listed above are the best ways to do it. Not only do the following suggestions for exterior home improvement help the curb appeal of the exterior of your home, but they also help the overall value of your home, as well.

## **Overlooking Your Roof - Don't Do That!**

When selling your home, you want to make sure that everything is in working order and perfect condition, right?

Considering that's the case for all homeowners, then why overlook your roof as if it's not the literal roof over your heads? Overlooking your roof Don't do that!

## **Deciding on Whether or Not Your Roof Needs to Be Fixed**

The best way to figure out whether or not you'll need your roof fixed before putting it up for sale on the market, is to look at the current market itself: check into all of tile sales activity in your general area and take a good look at your home.

Before listing your home, having a local service provider go up and take a good look at your roof to see if it could possibly raise any problems with potential buyers. If the inspection comes back with potential issues with your roof, whether they are minor or major, then you definitely need to make a decision.

The person who did the inspection could probably tell you what it would cost to have it repaired, and may even do it themselves, or you could bring in a roofing expert to get an estimate. However, ensure that you speak with at least three different providers, as the costs tend to vary for each one.

Once you know the total costs and have the cheapest estimate in hand, you can then look at your budget to see whether you can afford it. If not, be ready to tell each buyer who comes to view your home that the roof does need some work done.

You will also need to be prepared to take a fraction off the selling price as well, since the buyer and new homeowner will be the one paying the costs for the repair. Otherwise, have the repairs done as soon as possible to ensure that the condition of your roof

does not worsen, and adjust your selling price based on the value of the repairs that will factor into the overall price.

Homes that are upgraded, have all the necessary repairs, and are overall in great condition have all of the necessary potential to sell faster, and for a lot more money, as well. As an added step, have a roofing specialist conduct a maintenance service and further certify your roof for an additional four to five years. Once you have this certification for your roof, you will be able to show each potential buyer that they will not have to worry about any issues with the roof for the duration of the guaranteed period.

Doing so will also add double the value that basic or extensive, depending on how much work your roof needed after the inspection, repairs that needed to be done in the first place.

### **Replacing All of the Old Windows in Your Home**

A lot of homeowners forget that replacing their old windows is the most important aspect when it comes to renovating, upgrading, and improving your home before you put it on the market.

Old, outdated windows must be replaced with new ones for the purpose of energy efficiency and are more often than not an issue of safety.

Even though replacing all your old windows may be a bit costly, depending on how large your home is, the size of the windows that are needed based on their dimensions, and the total number of windows that need to be replaced, it's a task that is worth it in more ways than one.

As previously stated, replacing your old windows is also done for a safety precaution. Windows that are aged well past their prime become a hazard in tents of burglaries, as they will no doubt be easy to breach, and will be a target no problem. Old windows are incredibly easy to spot out among a street of houses that have new, updated ones.

You can also expect an ROI of at least approximately 60% to 70%, as well, so you will actually be making your money back, especially if you have more than 10 windows that need to be replaced within your home. Updating your windows is also incredibly important, if not the most important thing when it comes to home renovations before putting your home up on the market for sale, because buyers want to see a modern, up to date aesthetic when they are shopping around for a new home.

Therefore, to really hook in a potential buyer, windows that are upgraded or up to date in general are an absolute must before your home goes on the market.

## **Beautifying Your Backyard for a Better Home Value**

Your backyard is one of the most important parts of your home, especially from a buyer's point of view. This is where they will play with their pets or their children, have barbecues, entertain friends or family members, and so much more.

Therefore, creating an oasis in your backyard that will absolutely stun each buyer that sees it is the best way to not only add more value to your home, but to sell your home as fast as possible, as well.

These days, there are multiple trends that buyers are now looking for when it comes to the backyard of their dreams, which you, as the seller, will want to incorporate and utilize to your advantage in order to get your home's value through the roof and sell your home for more as fast as possible.

### **More Trees**

Over time, trees become beautiful pieces of art that really tie a backyard together. If you're looking to add a few before you sell your home, do so right now. Get any type that is about 8 inches tall and 1 to 2 inches in diameter that will sit within a pot that is 15

gallons in size, to ensure that in three to five years, the trees will be in full effect.

### **Smaller Lawn**

This may surprise you, considering most people see a large, healthy, green lawn in their mind when they picture the perfect backyard, but these days a smaller lawn is the trend.

Therefore, having deep planting beds in all of the right places with wide borders and even shrubs, for example, are the best way to ensure that, though the lawn may be smaller, the backyard is anything but empty and small.

To make the backyard, and the lawn, appear larger, have a square or a ring of flower beds going around the back fence or wall, depending on the setup you have.

Planting plenty of vibrant, brightly colored flowers will bring a more positive, bubbly vibe to the backyard, and will allow potential buyers to better picture themselves and their family entertaining or having some fun in the sun outside for many years to come.

### **Adding a Sanctuary**

To create the perfect backyard sanctuary, incorporating water is the perfect way to have a beautiful, oasis-like backyard.

For example, having a small pond with or without fish, a fountain, a pool, or a hot tub with some comfortable areas to sit will give potential buyers the feeling that they have stepped into a small, yet beautiful and sweet, sanctuary that could be their very own.

### **Adding a Swimming Pool as an Investment**

These days, a lot of homeowners who are putting their home on their market are having a swimming pool installed in their

backyards as an investment in order to really raise the value of their home.

If you've been weighing the idea around, then there are certain factors and vital efforts that you will need to keep in mind and stick to in order to ensure that your swimming pool is kept in perfect condition while your home is up on the market.

It's incredibly important to weigh the installation and maintenance costs out in front of you, to ensure that you have a good idea of what the figures are going to be when it comes to the value of the pool and the utility costs that go into actually having one.

To know for sure, speak with your real estate agent. He or she can give you the answers you need or refer you to someone who will be able to answer all of your questions.

## **The Resale Value of a Swimming Pool**

Though installing a swimming pool may seem like a sure bet in terms of resale value, you must first crunch the numbers to figure out if it's even worth it.

In general, the ROI will generally be between 40% and 75%, depending on where you live. Which is not very much in resale value. Depending on the size, the depth, and the accessories, the installation costs will run you between \$20,000 and \$100,000. However, this does not include the costs for chemical balancing and other maintenance.

It also greatly depends on where you live, as well. For example, if your home is located within the Midwest, you're looking at an ROI of only 30%, whereas if your home is in Florida, California or Nevada you could get an ROI of 50-70%. Some areas have several restrictions on pools. The best way to figure out if installing a swimming pool is worth it or not, is to speak with your real estate agent. They will be able to tell you whether it would be worth doing.

## **Renovating Your Swimming Pool**

If you already have a swimming pool, you will need to ensure that it's in perfect condition before you have any open houses or viewings, by checking all the areas listed below, you will know for sure if your swimming pool needs renovations:

- The liner, decking, and other materials that are worn down over time.
- The plumbing, filter, pump, and any system that is old and needs to be upgraded to current standards.
- An old design that no longer looks good and needs to be replaced.

You can also speak with your real estate agent about the current state of your pool, ask their opinion, and ask for help in finding someone who can renovate and repair your pool for you before you put your home on the market. An updated, beautiful swimming pool helps to add a fair percentage of ROI and value to your home.

## Part 3





## Chapter 7

# Flooring, Walls and Lighting

We've spent a lot of time so far talking about the pros and cons of remodeling, who to talk to make sure you make intelligent decisions about where to direct your time, money, and energy. Now we get to move onto discussing not just which project you should do but what materials you should consider making sure you are getting the biggest possible return on your project.

### Flooring

Floors have become one of the biggest show pieces for a home in recent years, making any decision to change what you have whether you currently have carpet or hardwood, one of the most important you will make as you begin remodeling. It is no secret that hardwood floors are far and away the most popular flooring choice across the nation.

Few other options even come close in popularity and only in niche markets like Florida where porcelain tile runs a close second. But it is also one of the more expensive options on the market. Between budget, comfort, ease of installation and care there are a number of factors to consider.

But never fear. We are here to help you find your way through the maze. We'll take you through the various options, one by one, looking at the pros and cons of each as we go along.

**Carpet** - Carpeting is the kind of flooring that most of us grew up with. While hardwood had been the norm for many years, carpet quickly overcame it, coveting our bedrooms, living rooms, and even creeping into dining and bathrooms years ago.

While it has fallen out of favor in recent years, carpet still has many positive qualities.

These include the fact that it absorbs sound better than any other option on the market, making it nice if you have young children. Speaking of young children, they tend to fall down a lot

Carpet provides a much softer impact that will literally save you blood, sweat, and tears. It also retains heat better than a harder option. Finally, it is considerably cheaper than other options at \$2-\$20 per square foot according to the World Floor Covering Association (WFCA).

As with all things, there are drawbacks. Perhaps the biggest is that it is difficult to keep clean. Every bit of food that is dropped and speck of dirt that is tracked into the house gets ground deep into the carpet if not cleaned immediately. Pet stains can alter the color and leave an odor that can linger for a long time after. In recent years, a related problem has come to the fore.

The fact the carpets retain so much of the surrounding environment means that they also retain allergens that have been blamed for exacerbating allergy related problems and asthma.

These problems can be mitigated by frequent steam cleaning, but this at least partially negates the cost savings.

**Linoleum** or **Lino** - This is a hard, durable material that also has fallen out of favor in recent years, giving way to tile and hardwood. However, it is cheap at \$2-\$9 per square foot, the color goes all the way through (a nice attribute if you should drop a kitchen knife on it) and can be cleaned easily.

It also lends itself to design creativity as it is easy to cut into unique shapes and styles. Linoleum can be a good way to create an eye-catching look for your kitchen or bathroom

However, Lino is generally durable, it can be more susceptible to scratches and dents. It also needs to be polished occasionally to continue looking good and will stain if you do not clean spills quickly enough.

**Ceramic Tile** - Tile is one of the most durable options available. It will take a hit from nearly anything you drop on it. Should the tile get scratched, it can easily be buffed out. Tile also is highly stain resistant and still fairly cheap at \$3-15 per square foot. Tile is also advantageous from a design perspective, as there are nearly an unlimited number of options available for creating more eye-catching designs.

Naturally, the same caution about those designs mentioned with the linoleum applies here. Its strengths are also often weaknesses in other ways. That same durability can lead to breaking anything you do drop on it. And if the tile chips, it can be very difficult to do a quality repair job on your own.

Tile can be harder on your feet as well, making you want to rush back to those carpeted areas. Dirt also tends to collect in the grout lines, making it difficult to clean.

**Luxury Vinyl Plank or LVP**- is commonly found in many middle-class neighborhoods across the country. It is also water resistant and a durable option available at \$2-\$7 per square foot. If comfort is an issue, this is the most comfortable option other than carpet and mimics real wood or stone

Unfortunately, that affordability comes at the price of inconsistent quality that's why it's important to consider the construction and thickness of the product. It can also be susceptible to water damage if it is laid down in tile form as liquids will find their way between the seams.

**Hardwood** - As stated, hardwood is easily the most popular choice for flooring. With a ROI of 70% -80%.

It presents a clean and distinguished look throughout the home, is easy to clean, durable and tends to be more comfortable than tile. It also has the advantage of being able to be restored every few years, meaning that any scratches, cracks or loose boards can be corrected periodically, resulting in what looks like a

brand-new floor any time it is refinished, and often at a cost far less than changing out carpet or any other material.

There are negatives of course.

They tend to be cold and not retain heat as well as carpet or certain kinds of vinyl and the refinishing is difficult and will take time. The price can also get quite high \$6-\$15 per square foot plus installation.

Taking everything into consideration, if you can afford hardwood floors, buyers are looking for them and will even pass up homes without hardwood.

Not only are they looking, over half of agents report that buyers are willing to pay more for a home with wood floors. And given the former craze for carpeting, it is very possible that under your dated shag is an oak goldmine waiting to be uncovered and refinished to its former glory.

Should you not have such a treasure waiting under your feet and budget is an issue, you can go with an engineered hardwood, which provides many of the advantages of hardwood at less cost at \$4-\$9 per square foot.

## **Walls**

No doubt you can remember not very far back when the color choice for nearly every wall was white. bland, boring white, or even when Grey became the new white.

Of course, there was also that phase of bold, dark colors in the 1990s that seems a bit garish by contemporary standards. And if we go back a bit more, we might be able to remember wallpaper covered with very small print that looked like a precursor to those Magic Eye pictures.

Needless to say, times and tastes change and if you are looking at selling your home in the near future, few things will help you more for less money than a fresh look to the walls. Keep

in mind though, buyer preferences are likely different now than when you first bought your home.

**Paint** - This certainly is the most popular wall covering and has been for years. It is easy to apply yourself, is relatively cheap and anything but an eggshell or flat finish is easy to clean.

Speaking of finishes, satin provides a good balance between a slight sheen that brightens the room and still not advertising any flaws in the wall the way a glossier finish will.

When it comes to colors, avoid painting a room a bland color like white or a bold color like violet or a deep blue.

The biggest colors to avoid are red and bright yellow, which Zillow indicates that homes with these colors received offers approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000 thousand dollars less in asking price.

Instead, opt for neutral tones as these colors create a blank canvas, allowing potential buyers to envision themselves in the space.

Feel free to paint the trim or decorate with a bolder color to accent the room. If you are particularly adventurous, you can even go ahead and do a whole accent wall in a bold color, but don't do this in every room.

One place where white is still recommended is the exterior of the home. It looks clean and is easy to accent by painting the trim, doors and shutters a bolder color that will help your home stand out from the crowd and enhance its curb appeal.

When it comes to how much to spend, there is not much to worry about here. A hundred dollars will buy you all the paint and materials you need for nearly any room.

And if you are repainting with the same color or one similar to what is already there, you can save a little money by going with a lower quality paint and only doing one coat. If you are

completely changing the color though, spend the extra money for a good paint, preferably from a specialty store like Sherwin-Williams.

**Wallpaper** - Once the most popular option for covering up drywall or accenting a room in the form of borders, wallpaper has very much fallen on hard times of late with potential buyers.

And for very good reasons. It is highly personal, most people are not likely to like eagles, wolves or a particular kind of flower as much as you once did, if not applied correctly it can begin to peel, and it is nearly impossible to remove without causing damage to the walls, damage that then has to be repaired before painting can begin.

For these reasons, nearly every agent working today will encourage a seller to remove it and paint before listing.

It is worth noting though, that wallpaper is making a minor comeback.

If you spend time watching shows like Property Brothers, you will have noticed it showing up in nurseries and laundry rooms on occasion.

Given this, there is no harm in checking with a real estate agent to see if there are buyers in the area who are interested in the more modern designs of wallpaper. Still, should you go this route, approach with extreme caution and do not proceed without doing your homework first.

## **Lighting**

Lighting can have a huge effect on the way your home looks. A well-lit home is warm and inviting while not having enough light can highlight flaws and make your home look dark and dingy.

There are a number of things that you can do to improve the lighting and help make a good impression on buyers when they walk through your home.

**Bulbs** - Upgrading your lighting from a 60W incandescent bulb to an LED that is the equivalent of a 100W bulb will both give you more light, and save you money in the long run.

Add in the fact that they only use 20-25% the energy of an incandescent bulb and can last up to 25 times longer and they are a very worthwhile investment, especially if you do not plan on listing in the immediate future.

**Fixtures** - If you have some spare money and plan on listing soon, consider replacing outdated recessed or track lighting with more modern monorail or pendant lights. Exterior lights are also a prime candidate for updating as they tend to get looked over anytime you are focused on the interior of the home.

Yet, they are essential to forming a good impression in the mind of a buyer. In addition to the lights off the side of the garage and front door, consider placing inexpensive stake lighting along the driveway or the walk up to the front door, instantly making your home more inviting.

## **Chapter 8**

# **Cooking Up a New Kitchen**

You've heard it said before and we'll say it again, kitchens sell houses. Especially since the kitchen is a place where your family and friends are likely to spend a considerable amount of time together.

It is also very often located either in a central part of the home or one of the first places you walk through when entering from the garage, making it an area that you are at least going to pass through several times a day, even if you eat out two out of three meals.

As such, kitchens are a prime target for any home remodeling projects.

They are also one of the places where you can get yourself into trouble, spending far more money than you are ever going to see back. If you recall from chapter two, a mid-range kitchen remodel has a much better ROI than a more expensive job will provide.

Therefore, we'll be steering towards a combination of the kind of simple, quick fixes you can use if you are on a budget and other, more ambitious project that you can tackle if you have the time and money,

If your budget is high and you have to have those marble floors and countertop, go right ahead. And send pictures, it will look great, but that isn't going to be our focus here.

### **Appliances**

Unless you have a very modern kitchen with point of use refrigerators, drawer microwaves and everything else hidden

behind cabinet doors, a buyer's eyes are naturally going to be drawn to the appliances.

If they are clearly old, whether a white that is dingy with years of use or even the dreaded avocado green they will be sure to turn the buyer off. A relatively cheap solution is to replace your older appliances with new ones sporting a stainless-steel finish.

It offers the same look, feel, and protection of full stainless at a lower cost. And if you are not listing for a while, don't feel like you need to replace all at once. Take it one at a time, just make sure they all match when it comes time to sell.

As for what to get, stay away from the luxury brands as they just don't bring enough return. Look for a good consumer brand with good reviews. Another key element to keep in mind when replacing appliances is that sleek is in.

If you have an old electric coil stove, get rid of it, replacing it with a smooth top stove. Where possible, and budget allows, but in a cooktop, separate from the oven. And put the oven in the wall, opening at approximately waist height.

## **Cabinets**

Cabinets can easily be the second, or even most expensive aspect of a kitchen remodel. If you have the money, replacing all the cabinets with a contemporary style that focuses on simplicity will serve you well.

When doing this, get cabinets that go all the way to the ceiling, adding valuable storage space and getting rid of dust and junk collection points on top of lower cabinets.

If you already have wood cabinets and doors, a simple paint job will accomplish much the same effect.

White is a commonly popular color for kitchens, though earth tones are also in vogue. Make sure you get a good quality paint for the cabinets that will take the beating a kitchen often receives.

Going cheap here can lead to several scratches and chips within weeks or months, ruining the effect for a buyer.

Also on the cabinet front, one can give an updated look to existing cabinets by replacing the hinges, handles and pulls. Feel free to go with a uniform brushed nickel look or add a splash of color with accented pulls, breaking up the white.

Another excellent feature to add, either as part of a full-scale remodel or as a separate project is drawers and shelves that slide out. This allows the contents to be organized and accessed easily without having to bend over and reach into the back of a cabinet, groping for that can of beans you swear you put there last week.

## **Counters**

Laminate counters were once the norm throughout many kitchens.

These days, options like butcher-block tops, quartz and even concrete have grown in popularity. Granite was once the go-to option for a countertop upgrade and is still very popular, but it has lost much of its luster in recent years. Part of the reason is that it has mainstreamed considerably.

Others should be resealed annually to prevent stains. They are also very unforgiving to anything that is dropped on it. Because of this, crushed quartz tops have become immensely popular.

Quartz is available in more colors, is more forgiving, lower maintenance and lower price than granite, making it an excellent option if your budget allows. Butcher block is also a great option that won't break a moderately healthy bank account. It also provides a look that sharply distinguishes itself from the look of natural stone.

Barring any of those options, going with a fresh laminate is a very budget-friendly option and there are many styles now that

imitate the look of granite and quartz. Using the same material for the backsplash can also help give a modern look to your kitchen at a fraction of the cost.

One project to take on if there is any room in the budget is to get rid of any choke points.

As stated earlier, the kitchen is often a very high traffic area with people often having to pass through it get from one end of the house to another. Considering this, it is somewhat surprising that it was once common to have a peninsula come out directly across from the refrigerator.

The refrigerator is one of the most used parts of the kitchen and is frequently being opened for snack or gathering food to cook whatever meal is coming up next.

This creates a natural bottleneck that should be removed by moving either the peninsula or the fridge.

## **Sink**

The sink is easily the most used area of any kitchen. From dumping unfinished beverages, cleaning, or getting a drink of water, any homeowner visits their sink several times a day.

As such, it should be one of the more eye-catching parts of your kitchen as well.

The simplest thing that can be done to modernize a sink is to replace the faucet. Go with something contemporary with multiple spray settings, an extendable nozzle and a built-in filter.

If you're also doing the countertops, anyway, consider spending another bit of money to replace your old sink with a modern under-mount sink. These result in a cleaner looking counter and even make cleaning said counter easier as food can be swept straight from the counter to the sink with a garbage disposal.

## **Lighting**

As stated in the section on lighting, increase your wattage and replace incandescent bulbs with LEDs and consider an update to your fixtures. There are some kitchen-specific ideas to consider though.

Light is very important for food preparation, yet all too often, the counters can be left in the dark as much light can be blocked, by you or by the old cabinets.

A quick fix for this is to get adhesive lights, or rope lights to put under the cabinets. You can turn them on and off as needed and if they are placed intelligently, add to the value of your kitchen with a very small investment.

These are a great solution for any dark pantries or cabinets in your kitchen and throughout the home as well.

Naturally, if you are already doing things like replacing cabinets or the backsplash, it will make more sense to just install the necessary wiring for installed lights under the cabinets.

## **Think outside the box**

You've taken all of our advice and done the simple fixes to update your kitchen and still get a good amount of money back.

Yet, it still needs something. Time to get a little creative.

Do you have any empty wall space? Put up some open shelving. It is low cost, leaves the space feeling more open than if you installed cabinets and can put your normal-use dishes into a display piece.

What about the ceiling? If it is tall enough or if there is space in an area where no one will walk directly under it, you can put in a ceiling rack for storing pots and pans. This creates an interesting atmosphere and lets you see what you need without having to rummage through a stuffed drawer.

Is there a lot of open floor space? If so, you can install a separate island. A simple countertop with some additional drawers for storage will do a lot to improve both the efficiency and look of your kitchen.

As with many projects, less is more when talking about a kitchen remodel. Especially if you are selling soon, spend as little as possible to refresh your kitchen and give it a contemporary feel. Keeping it simple will not only save you money, but it will help you get on the market faster, so you get on with the business of searching for your new home.

# Chapter 9

## Living Room Upgrades and Renovations

### Plan Everything Out

Research and extensive planning are key when it comes to any successful renovation, especially when you're planning on making changes that include structural renovations and a strict, set budget. Developing ideas and setting them in motion takes time, so ensure that you do your research, always have your budget in front of you, and write everything down.

Once you have a general idea or theme on what you'd like to do, do some research on it and get some examples of how things will look when it comes to the finished product. Always remember to think long-term, as you are not only planning for the one stage, but for many years to come, as well.

For example, if you are planning on having children within the next few years, take your future children into account while you are planning your renovations and upgrades.

That way, when the time comes where you are pregnant or have children already, you will not need to redo everything, except for maybe a few minor changes in the way your living room is set up.

Keep in mind that your living room is where you are going to be entertaining guests, being friends, family, or whatever the case may be, and that you want it to feel open, welcoming, and have an overall inviting feeling to it. There are many ways to have the space feel as open as possible while squeezing in some extra seating.

You are also going to want the buyer to feel like they could entertain happily within the living room, so planning out how your

furniture is going to be staged is incredibly important! If you're short on ideas, or have no idea where to begin, speak to your real estate agent. They can help you with figuring out what to do or can refer you to a professional staging expert that will work with you to create the perfectly staged living room.

### **Using Mirrors to Open the Space Up**

Did you know that by using mirrors in the correct places, you can make your living room look and feel more open than it really is? Using mirrors to add the illusion that your living room is larger than life really works, especially if there's a shortage of windows.

If you don't have a focal point in your living room, such as a structural beam or a fireplace, create one using a large mirror. Strategically place the large mirror straight across the largest window, or the only window, in the room.

The mirror will reflect the outside view and give the impression that the room is larger than it really is and will also give you a main focal point to use to your advantage for other items and decorations that work well with focal points.

Once the mirror is up and in the perfect position, incorporate a few decorations to enhance the mirror as the main focal point in the room. For example, have a tall plant on the side, if possible. Focal points are important in general, as they are the main viewpoint during an open house or viewing.

When a buyer walks into the room, the first thing their eyes will be drawn to is the main focal point in the room, so ensure that you have one, and that it is highlighted as much as possible.

### **Small-Scale Furniture Goes a Long Way**

Sofas that are a full size can be more practical when it comes to seating arrangements, and armchairs can be comfortable, but they are also incredibly bulky. Small-scale furniture, however, is definitely the way to go when it comes to living room upgrades.

Look for small love seats, settees, and chairs that will work with your style, theme, and the space. Small furniture will give the buyer an illusion that your living room is larger than it seems, and will allow them to picture their own furniture, decorations, and belongings in general within the room

### **Small Side and Coffee Tables**

Having small side and coffee tables works a lot better than having a large coffee table and a couple of large sides, for example, because it allows people to maneuver around the room a lot easier.

Sure, you could always have one walking path in your living room, but by having multiple paths and smaller furniture, especially if you're having an open house instead of individual viewings.

As with smaller furniture, smaller tables will allow the buyer to envision how they would style the living room should they choose to purchase your home.

### **Staging Tips for the Living Room**

Listed below are just a few simple bullet points on staging tips for the living room that will be an extreme help when going through the process.

- Remove all personal items out of the room, such as a figurine your child made in art class, family photos, etc.
- Add a new lick of paint for the cosmetic value, which will also help you to get more from the sale price in the end.
- If anything in the room needs to be repaired, do it now, so you won't have to stage around it and can incorporate it into the staging.

- Do a thorough cleaning of the living room, even in spots the buyer won't see, such as under the couch or the cobwebs in the corner of the ceiling.

- Remove furniture pieces that don't make sense with the rest of the room, such as a chair that does not match your furniture set.

- Never, ever mix themes!

If you're leaning towards modern or Victorian, for example, don't try to create a decor theme out of the two, just stick with one.

- Placing fresh, never fake, flowers around the room, but not too many, will help brighten and freshen the living room up a bit.

## **Entertainment Systems and Home Theaters**

Entertainment systems and home theaters add an incredible amount of ROI onto a home up for sale.

Home theaters bring a larger ROI especially and make the most ordinary home feel like a fabulous, upscale masterpiece. If you're looking to build a home theater before you put your home up for sale, you're going to have to weigh your options.

For example, if you are looking for a return on your investment, then you're going to need to bring in some extra help for budgeting, such as your real estate agent or broker, considering home theaters can cost only a few thousand dollars, all the way up to a million.

Therefore, for a return on investment, you're going to want to be somewhere in the middle. When it comes to the equipment, do some research and shop around for the right equipment.

You're going to need seating, projectors or TVs, screens, speakers, AV equipment, etc., so ensure that you find the perfect

supplier that can not only supply everything you need, but one that is reputable and of good quality.

It's best to ask your real estate agent, or a home theater expert, for help. When you work with a home theater expert specifically, they will help you through the equipment, construction, and finishing touches stages, so everything goes perfectly.

## **Painting and Decor**

When selecting a color of paint, choose a solid, light color that helps make the room more open.

When in the paint section at your local hardware store, for example, speak with a specialist, or the person working in the paint aisle, about which brand of paint would do best.

For decor, remember to select and place pieces that will open the room, and add bits of style that matches the overall theme of the room

Selecting beautiful paintings that are more classical are always a nice touch, as well.

## **Expanding Your Living Room**

You also have the option to expand your living room and make it larger by knocking out a wall or two and extending the space.

When it comes to adding value to your home, extending your living room is definitely the way to do it, and you can speak with your real estate agent on how to go about it.

They will help you find and hire a construction company that specializes in adding and expanding rooms to a larger size.

If you are serious about making your living room bigger, you will need to set a budget and look at the cost for knocking walls

out, adding the foundation, and the cost of hiring a crew to do it all.

Though this may not be an easy task, it is one that is worth it at the end of the day and will add plenty of value to your home.

Your real estate agent will know all of the right connections or will be able to find them for you through research, to ensure that this process is less stressful on you as the homeowner and seller.

# **Chapter 10**

## **Bedroom and Attic Renovations**

### **Renovating Your Bedroom**

Adding value is incredibly easy when you renovate your bedroom and makes it more appealing to buyers during an open house or viewing.

Though this project may be a daunting one, there are plenty of ways you can get help, such as speaking with your real estate agent to find the right crews and help, so you're not doing this alone!

### **Expanding to Make It Bigger**

When selling your home and making renovations, expansions, or changes in general, a homeowner should always keep their return on investment in mind. By expanding your bedroom, you're looking at an ROI of approximately between 40% and 80%, depending on factors that you can go over with your real estate agent, who knows all about ROI and the factors that go into the percentage that comes with each room in a home after it's been remodeled and expanded.

For example, a larger master bedroom with an expanded closet and a bathroom that comes with a dual head shower or a spray system that is custom are among the most popular expansions that homeowners are choosing to go with these days.

While still popular, a lot of homeowners are also expanding their bathtubs before they put their houses up on the market to a bathtub that is deep, large, and with a shower that is closed off, tiled, and roomier. In fact, expanding your bedroom to add a bathroom will always bring a good ROI, because it gives the buyer the sense of the general area being brand new.

Buyers will be willing to pay more if a house has areas, in this case being the bedroom, that are completely remodeled, expanded, or anything related.

Turning your bedroom into a livable master suit decked out with a better closet and a beautiful bathroom is the best way to really catch a buyer's eye, close a deal quickly on your home, and sell your home for more.

## **The Cost of Remodeling and Expanding**

When it comes to remodeling and expanding your bedroom, the cost will be within the thousands, but it's definitely worth the investment.

If you're planning on remodeling your bedroom completely, the cost [or new drywall, carpeting, insulated windows, new trim, moldings, a refinished ceiling, upgraded heating fixtures, and paint, will cost you around \$8,000, depending on the size of the current room

If you are planning on expanding and remodeling, then you're going to be looking at a cost around \$10,000, if not more. Again, it all depends on the size of the current room, but in the case of expanding, you're going to be looking at a lot more. The cost of new windows is generally between \$300 and \$700 per window, depending on the size and the requirements.

Fiberglass for wall insulations with a value of R-19 will cost you about \$1.80 for every square foot it's installed, while insulation of R30 value for ceilings and attics will cost \$2.25 for every square foot it's installed. Per square yard, tor installation and padding, carpeting averages at around \$15 to \$25. Drywall tor ceilings and walls will typically cost you around \$11.00 per panel, not including any of the finishing compound, nails, or screws.

The price also does not include the removal and the disposal of all the original paneling and tile scraping on any textured ceiling paint, either.

The average cost for new moldings is around \$3.00 per installed foot, while baseboard heating fixtures will run you between \$50 and \$600.

Hiring a professional painter to sand, prime, and paint, in accordance with the upgraded ceiling and drywall, is going to run you up to \$20 - \$35 per hour, if not more, unless you have the knowledge, the skills, and the extensive amount of time to do it yourself

You're going to be paying at least \$70 per hour to bring in an electrician to get the lighting and electrical wiring up to code. Depending on how large you've expanded your bedroom, you may be paying more than this. Carpenters generally charge the same amount as well, but both electricians and carpenters will sometimes base what they charge on square footage.

To find the right people to help you achieve the renovations, remodeling, and extension that you have in mind, speak with your real estate agent. Chances are they have helped previous homeowners in the past or can direct you to another agent who has.

From there, they will help you with the research, your budget, and to get all the resources that you'll need to get the job done!

## **Staging the Right Furniture**

Before you can get started on the furniture, remove all clutter and personal items from the room. This helps to create an open, stress-free environment, and you will need to ensure that no personal items are ill viewed. You can always put family photos in a dresser drawer, for example.

If you do not already have one on your bed, consider a comforter or a duvet that comes with matching shams, in order to create a solid look. For example, you could have a classic theme, or even a pastel one.

Don't be afraid to move the furniture around in your bedroom to see what works and what looks good. You never know, your dresser may create a more open space across the room. It's also a good idea to flip your mattress, as well.

Also, if you don't have a headboard, now is the perfect time to get one, as it creates a simple, yet sophisticated, look. Remove any piece of furniture from the room that does not go with the main pieces, them being your dresser, bed, etc., which would not make sense with everything else.

Adding a tall, potted plant is always a nice finish.

## **Renovating Your Basement and Attic**

Renovating your basement and attic will add plenty of ROI to your home and will allow you to sell your home for more! Buyers love to see basements and attics that are put to good use, so why not make the best of both?

### **Renovating Your Basement**

Though the cost of renovating and remodeling your basement is within the tens of thousands, you're looking at a 70% ROI which means that all of the work and money put into getting the basement ready before your open house or viewings will be well worth it when it's time to close the deal.

If you're overly concerned about your ROI, go with a renovation that will be perfect for appeal and overall use. For example, an extra bedroom, a home office, or even a playroom that would be perfect for kids. In fact, it's better to stick to a general use during the renovation period, just so you can get an idea of how you're going to stage it, what color of paint you're going to use, etc.

A walk-out basement is also a nice touch as well, especially if it connects to the backyard. This will give potential buyers the option to rent out their new basement to tenants should they

choose to do so, which is something that some buyers do in fact look for when it comes to buying a home.

Take a look at the staircase that connects the basement to the rest of the house to see whether or not it needs repairs. Like the bedroom, your real estate agent can help you find all of the connections you need to make everything for your basement renovations possible.

## **Renovating Your Attic**

Renovating your attic into a bedroom has an ROI of 70 %, it will definitely give the "wow" factor off to all the buyers who come for the open house or individual viewings. Renovating your attic into a bedroom is the absolute perfect way to sell your house for more, and can easily be renovated, considering the basic structure is already present, being the roof and the floor.

Buyers love to see a home with an attic bedroom, as they are incredibly desirable, have quirky characteristics, and are charming overall. It costs about the same as a basement to renovate an attic into a bedroom and has almost as much ROI.

For extra value, you could also consider adding a private bathroom into the attic bedroom, depending on how much available space there is, and whether you will need to make an extension. If you do decide to add a bathroom, no doubt buyers will be making you offers straight away, as attic bedrooms with bathrooms are rare gems when it comes to real estate, unless a homeowner makes the decision to do it themselves after they've purchased a home.

Like the other areas of your home, you can easily find all of the help you need to make an attic bedroom, or any other type of room in your attic, possible by speaking with your real estate agent. They can give you all the necessary help and connections.

# **Chapter 11**

## **Bathrooms: Renovations and their ROI (Return on Investment)**

If you're looking to get the maximum return on the renovations that you make on your home, there's no better place to concentrate your efforts than on the bathroom.

According to sources like The Wall Street Journal, it's understood that a bathroom's renovation more than pays for itself. According to the estimates provided by the National Association of Realtors, a bathroom remodel can recoup nearly 73% to the amount you've put into bathroom renovations.

While sinking \$10k for average bathroom remodels and \$26k for an upscale renovation (the national averages according to Remodeling Magazine) into a bathroom may seem like a needless expense to selling your home to potential homebuyers, the most high-trafficked parts) of your home (what day don't you use the bathroom?) is very important to the decision-making process and to your home's value.

An immaculate, modern bathroom communicates consciously and subconsciously to the comfort, style, and most important to the seller of the home, of the value that the rest of home contains. Nothing is more off-putting than an outdated, dysfunctional bathroom, especially considering the high costs and headaches associated with water damage and mold growth.

Determining your budget (monetary AND timewise) beforehand is a sound way to ensure that your bathroom renovations don't get out of hand. For smaller budgets, you may be limited to only cosmetic improvements, like updated fixtures or a new sink. Larger budgets can accommodate makeovers that

exponentially increase the home's value, like a larger shower, new windows, and artisan tiling.

Of course, contributing your own "sweat equity" to your home's renovations can save you money off of projects, so determine which projects you can handle, and which ones are best left to professional contractors. If you decide on hiring contractors, be sure to have a fixed plan in place and not deviate from.

The National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) recommends having a six-month plan ahead of time to ensure that things go smoothly, as most bathroom renovations last on average between 2 - 3 months.

As it is with most bathroom projects, costs and expectations can quickly get out of hand, especially when homeowners are eager to sell their homes. Be forewarned that contractors are aware of these complications (i.e., work stoppages, alterations to original plans), with some including clauses in their contracts that charge premiums for changing the original work plans that both parties agreed to.

That being said, let's look at various aspects of the bathroom and see what types of renovations can add more value to your home for homebuyers.

## **Bathtubs**

Choosing the right bathtub for your master bathroom is worth considering. Some homebuyers feel that a bathtub takes up too much space, which may be true for smaller bathrooms.

For those that prefer accessibility (i.e., mobility-impaired individuals), a bathtub may be a deal-breaker; for those that prefer elegance, a soaker tub may be appealing.

## **Sinks and Countertops**

One way to add a large amount of value to your bathroom is to focus on the countertops and the sink. One popular trend is to invest in a stone countertop.

Typically, bathroom countertops tend to be smaller than kitchen counters, so you can spend a significantly smaller amount and still get a desirable spa-like quality.

One strategy for saving money AND adding value is to purchase a slab that contains imperfections. If you make sure that the imperfection is masked by the sink that will be placed in/on the stone surface, you get the best of both worlds.

It also helps to think creatively. One common trend for DIYers is to take an old dresser and mount a sink on the top as a pedestal, or recess the sink on the top counter, creating an elegant solution. This is useful, too, if you're struggling to find adequate cabinet space (see below) to fit the look of your bathroom.

Don't forget to update the faucet if it's within your budget. Attractive metals like stainless steel or polished nickel can bring an extra oomph to your bathroom. However, be sure that the hardware matches the faucets, or your bathroom might have a hodge-podge feel that might ward off more finicky buyers.

Finally, you can make your bathroom even more attractive to new couples by offering multiple sinks for him and her.

## **Cabinets & Storage**

Bathrooms offer a challenge for homeowners in terms of storage. After installing a sink, bathtub, toilet, and a shower, there still needs to be places to store hygiene items and towels.

Plus, these storage solutions must be aesthetically pleasing to potentially homebuyers, so it can be a balancing act.

However, there are a number of solutions to take into consideration with the amount available space:

- **Vertical:** Most bathrooms don't utilize the upper wall space, leaving these spaces inexplicably barren.

To remedy this, try installing multi-tiered shelving units in strategic places, with towels within easy reach of the bath/shower.

Alternatively, offered recessed spaces between wall studs can create useful spaces for holding smaller items.

- **Moveable:** Using baskets or hampers for items can make the most of spaces where cabinets cannot fit.

Be sure these moveable additions to the bathroom match the decor of the bathroom, even if they are not included with the sale of the house.

As for the cabinets, be sure that the materials are up to date and not reflective of current trends, as these can work against a seller if this falls out of favor. Make sure that the colors of the cabinets are neutral or are made of a moisture-resistant wood appropriate for the bathroom.

## Shower

Having an attractive and functional shower is a great way to attract homebuyers, who may imagine luxurious and refreshing daily rituals when they purchase the home. Frameless glass shower enclosures enhance the spa-like feel of the atmosphere, match just about any color scheme, and are more appealing than flimsy plastic enclosures.

Don't forget who will be purchasing your home when renovating your shower.

There are a number of options out on the market, but it certainly helps to update the showerheads in accordance with the

type of homebuyers you'd like to appeal to. For potential owners under 45, multiple showerheads are a good choice.

For older homebuyers, hand showers that can assist seated individuals may be best. Seating also plays a factor for the elderly and infirm, who prefer to have some resistance when showering.

## **Tile**

Bathroom tile can be one of the more expensive things to renovate, so it pays to be deliberate in your choices. One smart way to save money is to limit tile strategically, focusing only on the floor instead of the entire floor (i.e., inside the shower stall).

Another clever trick is to use the expensive tile as an accent, mixing it along with cheaper tile to save money, but also highlight the more-costly tile in comparison. Because of the cost, you may want to align all of your renovations in accordance with the tile's color and attributes.

Remember that if you're also considering the installation of a heated floor, tearing up your floor again can be needlessly expensive.

## **Other Amenities**

### **Bathroom Ventilation**

There's more to remodeling your bathroom than meets the eye. While it may be nice to have a window to open after a steamy shower, consider this an "old" solution. The focus on modernity is automation and efficiency, so if your bathroom doesn't have a modern ventilation system, consider installing one as a top priority.

Moisture from excess humidity fogs mirrors, makes the floor especially slippery, and creates a breeding ground for mildew and mold. Having moisture under control is absolutely vital to ensure that not only are the physical hazards minimized (ex. slipping on wet tile), but also tile quality of the air and the damage that can result from mold and rot.

Make sure that the ventilation system exhausts air to the outside of the home, not the space between the joists of the ceiling (or other interior space).

Consider a ventilation system on the market that contains features like quiet exhaust fans and humidity-sensitive switches that automatically activate when moisture build-up in the air reaches a threshold.

### **Lighting**

One way to spruce up your bathroom at a fraction of the cost of more labor intensive renovations is to take a look at how your bathroom is lit. Lighting around your vanity mirrors can bring a luxurious feel to everyday grooming.

Adjustable lighting for soaking in the tub can create a relaxing atmosphere to the bathroom, as well. Some light fixtures offer heat lamps that can create a mini-sauna for the bathroom that can work in conjunction with your ventilation systems (see above).

And as a general rule, avoiding dark spaces and cheap/inadequate lighting adds value for potential homebuyers.

### **Paint**

Like lighting, one of the more inexpensive and effective ways to spruce up your bathroom is to invest in a few cans of fresh paint.

Pay careful attention to how you paint if you choose to go DIY, however; attention to detail is critical and a few blobs of paint on

the tub, sink, and so forth can degrade the improvements you've made.

Also, be sure to find a high quality, mold-resistant paint that can ward off mold growth. And don't forget to paint the ceiling, where hard-to-clean surfaces can be breeding grounds for mold and mildew.

### **Update the Fixtures**

The little details do matter, especially under the scrutiny of those who view your home.

This includes the light fixtures, doorknobs, towel racks, cabinet handles and so forth, all which can rust and degrade from the constant atmosphere of moisture and use.

### **Caulk and Grout**

Like a fresh coat of paint, paying attention to the fine details can bring a new look to your bathroom at a minimal cost. Cleaning grout may be tedious, but restoring its original hue can make the surrounding elements "pop."

The same goes for caulk. A tube of caulk is relatively inexpensive. A fresh application of caulk, especially clear or matching white colors, not only brings out the other elements, but also prevents moisture from eroding the structure of the bathroom

### **Going Green**

No, we're not talking about painting everything in your bathroom green. We're talking about the trend of going green or making your bathroom more environmentally sound.

More and more homebuyers are looking to find homes that only feature ethically sourced materials and conserve resources (water, power, etc.), but also help save money.

There are several ways to go green, some of which include:

- Low-flow sinks, toilets, and showerheads.

They can typically be found for the same or less cost than traditional models.

- Automatic light switches.

Some models adjust the amount of light based on the amount of daylight or if there's an occupant in the room

Great for forgetful people!

- Purchasing used or repurposing materials.

Nothing is greener than recycling old materials, like a vintage clawfoot bathtub, as you reduce consumption.

Thrift stores often have an assortment of used/reclaimed furnishings that not only have a vintage appeal but are also sold well below similar types of new fixtures.

## **Chapter 12**

# **Remodeling, Additions, and ROI**

When remodeling your home, building a room addition or adding a new level to your home can be pricier than, say, renovating your deck. There are the inherent benefits that homeowners can enjoy about a room addition, like the extra space and functionality, but homeowners should certainly be aware of the costs as well.

Arriving at a concrete number (no pun intended) is never an easy task, either for the homeowner or the contractor. Typically, remodeling contractors ballpark the cost of an addition in dollars per square foot. There are a few reasons for this, including:

- It provides a rough baseline of costs typically associated with your home addition (i.e. labor, materials, fees)
- The quality of materials can vary depending on the client's tastes (ex. wood flooring vs. tile)
- The availability of material
- The timeframe and expedience of the project
- It helps assist the homeowner determine a realistic budget
- It screens out wishy-washy clients

Home estimates in and of themselves take time and effort, so expect for the conception of your home's addition to cost money even before a single nail is hammered.

### **Factors Affecting the Cost of a New Addition**

One common question that homeowners ask is how much a new addition actually will cost after an estimate is provided.

The answer, however, is more elusive, as adding on to any home—whether it is building upon the pre-existing "footprint" or a new level—is subject to a host of complex factors.

These factors may include (when applicable):

- Architectural design
- Site preparation (i.e., demolition, excavation)
- Concrete work
- Support structure (standalone and/or in conjunction with existing structures)
- Roofing materials
- Siding
- Ceilings/Walls
- Carpentry
- Inspections
- Electrical and Lighting
- HVAC
- Carpeting
- Installation of window

### **Hidden Costs**

As a consumer, it is in your best financial interest to minimize costs when adding a new home addition.

One of the first places to keep an eye out for hidden costs is to scrutinize the remodeling contract. While it may cost more initially, be sure to demand a fixed-cost contract. This contract should include:

- a detailed list of the work involved

- a change-order policy
- a firm price

The advantage of this contract is that you can shift the responsibility of meeting the costs and budget onto the contractor. For instance, if it is determined that dry-rot is discovered in your support structure, leading to additional work and materials needed to complete the project, the contractor will be legally responsible for assessing this beforehand, not when your project is on the line.

Also, this helps offset the cost of materials that may rise during the duration of the project. This also helps filter out shady contractors that may try to exploit homeowners. The change-order policy is also important, as you have a right to change the project if you feel that alterations need to be made after the contract is signed.

This is a way that contractors protect themselves, but it also gives you a firm idea of what costs will occur should you change your mind during the completion of your home addition. Also, don't forget that if you secure a loan for a part or the entire amount of the addition, you'll have to pay loan origination fees and processing fees, which can amount to 1 - 3% of the total loan amount. Lenders typically require appraisal and inspection fees to determine the viability of your home's addition, as well, so expect to pay these fees.

## **Taxes and Insurance**

As a result of any addition to your house, you should expect your insurance premiums to go up. Depending on the replacement cost for the new addition, your premiums can jump significantly. This all depends on your insurance provider among many other factors, but a good way to ballpark your new premiums is to take your home's value and add in a 125% replacement cost of the new addition.

For a home that was originally valued at \$200,000, now with a \$100,000 addition- \$300k in total, you can expect the premium to jump almost 50%. Taxes follow a similar logic but are also dependent on many fluctuating factors. On your building permit application, a value will be stated for the new addition—this amount will be added to your home's valuation for the following tax year, which typically increases your annual property taxes.

However, taxes change year-by-year based on the housing market - for a home's value that's skyrocketed based on a real estate bubble; you may see a significant increase.

Vice versa, a slumping real estate market may seem your taxes only raise minimally. These factors will play heavily into how potential buyers view your property when determining if your home is a worthy investment. Taxes and insurance premiums also will play a part in how much money you are willing to recoup for a house that's been on the market for a while, you may find that these costs begin eating into your ROI.

## Part 4



## Chapter 13

# Importance of Good Pictures

You've heard it before and you'll hear it again, your main goal in selling your home is to make money. Whether this is to make a profit or to pay off your current mortgage, your focus needs to be on making that sale.

Not excited about the idea? You can have loads of fun with it. For starters, how are you at taking pictures?

Pictures play a huge role in nailing that sale. If you have great pictures, you'll set yourself up above other homeowners battling for the same buyers. Think about it.

If you had to purchase a home in a particular city for work purposes and there were only two for sale in that city that could fit your needs, which seller would you trust more from the get-go? The one who posts casual pictures that capture dishes in the sink or a sock in the corner, or the one who gives the impression of a pristine lifestyle?

You can show off your pristine lifestyle and build up the buyer's confidence in the quality of your home by putting in a little extra effort. Isn't it true that the real winners in every category of life are ones who put in the most effort?

Need some ideas? Read through these tips to help get the ball rolling:

- **Pretend that you are shooting for a magazine.** It all starts with cleaning, cleaning, cleaning! Get rid of the clutter, move out old and ugly furniture, and hide away all your personal belongings.

You don't want your family photos, laundry, or the old torn lounge chair online for the world to see.

- **Shelter the pets. This is important.** Even if you're the most meticulous pet owner in the world, advertising to potential buyers that you have birds in a cage, a free roaming guinea pig, or a bedroom dedicated to a family of rare Siamese cats is going to scare people away.

Pets often create odors that stick around for a while, and since you'll be working hard to make this odor disappear, you want to avoid bringing any attention to these critters.

Don't only hide them from the photos, find another place to shelter them if you want the most luck making the sale.

- **Add sprinkles on top.** A few home accessories with colors that pop will go a long way. Do you have any bright sofa pillows?

- How about a healthy green plant or a vase of colorful flowers strategically placed in each room?

- **Light it up.** Are your pictures dark or washed out?

Not enough light from the windows? Add some lighting to bring them up a level. Bright LED lamps in the comers or off-camera can add just the touch you need.

- **Hire a stager.** If you don't want to go through the effort on your own, you can hire a professional stager who can come in to rearrange the furniture or even bring in some accessories or extra pieces of furniture.

When you're interviewing different stagers for the job, make sure to check on rates per room. You may decide to only photograph certain rooms in the house, but you'll win bigger with more pictures.

- Hire a photographer. Although you can take great pictures on your own without a very expensive camera, you might consider having a pro do the work.

This can give you an even greater advantage over other sellers by helping to increase the perceived value of your home.

## Photos of the Outside

It goes without saying that your potential buyers want to see the inside and the outside in any online listing or property website that you have. If you're going to show them, show them! Before taking pictures, take these important steps:

- **Cut that grass.** Whether you do it yourself or support your neighborhood professional, give your lawn a clean, close cut.

Get rid of some tension with your weed-whacker by obliterating those stubborn weeds and extra strands of grass along pathways, the house, and around trees.

- **Trim the hedges.** If there is one thing that helps to look like an abandoned hideout, it's a runaway row of hedges.

You can save the day by a quick aim to make sure that the bushes are nice and even, adding another spark of life to the outside.

- **Colorful landscaping.** Plant a variety of colorful flowers and lay some red cedar chips.

If you would like to provide a night photo for effect, consider adding some LED path lights.

- **Give it a bath.** Shine the windows, hose down the house, and clean the gutters. Sweep the pathways and driveway. You don't want pictures of cobwebs around your doorways or of water-stained windows.

Take strategic photos from angles that really show off your home. Following the above tips should make this easier because

you won't be trying to avoid capturing the grass or bushes in the photos.

## Drones

In the past, you would have needed to pay an expensive fee to a pilot for the use of a private plane or helicopter. Now, you can make it all happen more affordable with drones.

Besides being used by some to spy on neighbors, drones have a variety of uses. The good news is that one of these is to show off the high value of your home to potential buyers.

As regulation continues to shape the future of drones and their legal use by civilians, you can still stay ahead of the crowd by hiring a licensed drone photographer or getting the license to fly one yourself

Why does drone photography give you an advantage over other sellers?

- **Provides a big picture view.** You can give potential buyers a complete view of your property by an aerial photograph or video.

This is something that most homeowners never see for themselves for as many years as they have been in their homes.

The house, the yard, the distance from neighbors - this is a valuable shot.

- **Shows the road home.** If you choose to have the drone capture video footage, you can take the potential buyers on a ride up the street to your home and even pull up into the driveway and walk them to the front door.

Whether doing it yourself or hiring an experienced professional, make sure to draw up a plan.

Map out the route, plan the time of day, and be prepared to take multiple photographs or video shots to give yourself options.

Do you want to benefit from the lighting effects of sunrise or sunset? Do you want to catch the school bus route?

Do you want to include any wildlife around your property such as deer?

Think ahead, Planning the details will help your drone project move smoothly and provide a valuable finished product.

## **Walk-Through**

We're now a mile ahead of the rest. This is every home buyer's dream

You could use a drone or use your camera, but either way, taking potential buyers on a walk through their future home could be just the motivation they need to further explore the purchase and sign the contract.

How many entrances do you have to your home? Consider starting a separate video from each door and walking through the home to give the viewers multiple perspectives.

The more you can give, the more value you will create, the more offers you will receive, and the more quickly you will make the sale.

To take it up another notch, consider making it a guided tour by either having someone walk in front of the camera while explaining each room, or make it a guided tour.

There's always someone in your circle who has a great voice, so if it's not you, ask this person for a favor. Otherwise, you can hire a voice-over professional through an online agency.

If you could save a few long-distance potential buyers the cost of a plane trip, you've already won in their eyes. It now gives them

a sense of urgency to be the first to snatch up your house before it's gone.

# Chapter 14

## Staging Solutions and Options

### Renting

If you don't have the furniture that best compliments your home so that it's dressed to impress, renting some can be a convenient option. If the house that you are selling is completely vacant, renting furniture might not only be convenient, but the smartest move.

Before getting started on the selection process, take into account what you have at home. Storing away worn or dingy items is strongly recommended. Even just removing an old coffee table or couch can brighten up the space.

After you have done your best to comb through your house to rearrange or clear out furniture in each room, you can reassess to figure out whether you could use a few more pieces. Whatever money you carefully spend on obtaining furniture will pay off when the home sells.

Much of the time, some renting is required to really create the effect you want, and even staging experts hired by homeowner's resort to renting when in need of furniture.

#### How does one rent furniture?

- **Furniture rental companies.** We don't often hear about these types of companies unless we're looking for them

These companies normally provide the furniture, the trucks, and the manpower to get it to its destination.

The only downside is that they also normally require a three-month minimum rental period.

Of course, if you happen to sell your home sooner, you're not out any extra money for returning the furniture early.

- **Thrift shops or antique shops.** If you have any of these in your area, you might consider asking to rent larger pieces of furniture.

You will not always be successful at this, but if you find something that would fit your needs, it doesn't hurt to ask.

Instead of renting furniture, some experts suggest using pop-up cardboard furniture for a comparatively lower cost. You can dress it up as standard furniture without anyone necessarily seeing the difference.

A lot of this furniture is durable enough to be sat upon, so that's a plus. Whichever furniture option you choose, make sure that it is indeed the best for your situation and that it will bring you the greatest return on investment by either selling the house more quickly than expected, or selling for a higher price.

## **Affordable Options**

Let's talk a bit about the budget. When exploring staging options, it's possible to become overwhelmed by the price tag of renting furniture.

The great news is that by taking the time to re-evaluate and rearrange your current possessions, you will find that you may not have to rent much furniture at all. This can save you money.

What else can save money and help make the sale? Here are a few tips:

- **Re-establish boundaries.** If your living room is also the playroom, the toys need to go into hibernation. No one enjoys seeing colorful dolls and cars all over the floor.

Do you golf in your hallway? Pack up the putting green.

- **Polishing.** Do a deep and thorough cleaning of every single room and pay attention to the smallest details. When was the last time that you polished the wood or washed the windows?

It's time to do it now. Even the toilet should shine. Don't forget the ceiling fans with their dusty blades.

- **Put away memories.** It might be difficult to do if you are staying in the house until it sells, but it is now time to take down all your family photos, certificates, sports banners, and anything else that has a personal touch.

You want the potential buyers to see the house as an immediate home for them, not to have them subconsciously weighed down with the need to clear the house of all your belongings.

- **Fresh air.** There are those people who love to open the windows every morning to let the breeze rush through, and then there are those people who couldn't be paid to open the windows.

If you never allow fresh air to blow through your home, then it has most likely developed an unappealing odor. Open up!

Step back and look at your house with the eyes of a potential buyer who has never entered through the door. Do a walk-around on the outside, and then go slowly through the house to see what can be cleared away or scrubbed down.

All of this might take some time, but it will save you money whether you are hiring a staging expert or doing it yourself.

## DIY

Pinterest has become a great online resource for learning how to improve your living space through creative projects.

If you find out that you have enough furniture but just need to embellish your home a bit more, here are some ideas:

- **Brighten it up.** Do you have a sad paint color in any or all rooms? Is the house monochromatic?

Consider re-painting rooms according to their purpose, such as using soft neutrals that set off a glow when the sun shines in the dining room

Add an accent wall in the living room by choosing a complementary color. Whatever you do, make the home welcoming.

- **New clothes.** What would happen if you wore the same shirt without washing it every day for a week? It's time to re-dress the windows and sofas.

Updating the window coverings to compliment the paint color and re-covering or purchasing new accent sofa pillows that pop can create a quick upgrade to your home.

Also, make sure to update your bathroom collection with clean and bright towels and bathmats.

- **Bring it to life.** Consider strategically adding a fresh plant or vase of flowers to the different rooms throughout the home.

The keyword is *strategically*. This does not mean adding a floor plant in every corner and putting a vase of flowers on every surface.

Also, be smart! You want to be careful to avoid flowers with heavy pollen such as lilies to discourage any allergic reactions among potential buyers.

- **Slow things down.** Adding lightly scented candles here and there and lighting them when showing the home will create a calmer atmosphere.

Again, be careful to avoid heavy scents that encourage sneezing or instant headaches. Recommended scents are cinnamon, vanilla, pine, and citrus.

- **Play music.** Have you ever taken the time to notice the varying differences in music choices among the stores that you visit?

A very low background hum of classical music will add a level of sophistication to your home, releasing extra endorphins within the bodies of your potential buyers, and providing them with a sense of wealth as they stroll through the beautifully arranged home.

### **Hiring a Professional vs. Doing It Yourself**

Time is the most common denominator among homeowners during the home-selling process.

To conserve as much time for yourself as possible, you will want to delegate as many tasks as you can so that you will be free to focus on other important aspects of your move.

A professional home stager could be a real lifesaver. Staging experts often have acquired valuable experience that they can pass on to your home to increase its salability.

The staging professional or firm will create a theme in each room to compliment the layout, bring in the furniture and home decor needed to complete the themes throughout the house, and give you tips to use when showing the house such as what kind of fresh flowers to buy or scented candles to burn.

You might also consider that a staging expert or firm will make sure to provide the manpower needed to do the heavy lifting and moving of furniture throughout the house, and if any damage happens in the process, the stager covers the cost of repairs.

On the other hand, staging the home yourself could not only save you money, but could also allow you to put more of your own personality into the theme.

Having lived in the home yourself, you are more familiar with its pros and cons indoors and outdoors. Like the need for more light in a certain room or making sure that the lawn is treated for weeds to keep them from sprouting up overnight.

Your goal is to gain the highest return on investment when your house sells. If you believe you can achieve this by staging on your own, then go for it, otherwise, spend the little extra on a professional up front to reap the benefits at the sale.

### **What to Expect with a Pro**

True staging pros run a very smooth operation. Of course, anyone can make mistakes. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Ask around.** Don't just select a random name from online and hire the stager. Ask your agent, and friends about their experiences and ask for a referral.

Then, interview several pros and select the one who could provide the best value to you.

- **You get what you pay for.** If the price tag is low, it's probable that the quality of service offered will match that price.

If your stager is a well-known expert in the field, your price tag will be considerably higher than someone running a summer gig,

Can your potential stager provide references and photos of successful past projects?

- **They ask you many questions.** Just like a doctor, the staging pro wants as much information from you about your needs as possible.

On your part, you also need to ask many questions during the initial consultation to make sure that this is the stage for you.

Ask questions like how they work out their rates, how long they will take, what you could do on your end to keep the costs down, have they staged homes in the past and how many, and whether or not they'll expect anything from you during the process.

- **They are staging pros.** Not agents. Not bankers. However, they do need to know enough about real estate to ensure that they know what they're aiming for in increasing a home's salability.

Their job is to make your home as appealing as possible to potential buyers, so they will not (and should not) talk to you about negotiating pricing with those buyers.

- Be prepared to change your ways. The stager will want you to follow certain guidelines if you will be living in the staged house.

This will help keep the rooms in order and ready for viewing. If you won't be living in the house, it's going to be much easier to keep the home clean and ready to show. However, make sure to get it dusted regularly.

Real staging pros should make you feel confident about the quality of their work.

If you have any negative internal reaction during your initial consultation, run in the other direction and find someone you can trust. If you want to sell your home, it's ultimately your responsibility to make it happen.

# What is Your Home Truly Worth?

To Get a Quick Estimate of Your Home's Value  
Go To:

<https://rickbrown1.officialpropertyvalue.com/analysis>

It's more accurate than Zillow because we source the valuation from local real estate experts. But it is a quick non-visual computer-generated estimate of the approximate value of your home.

If you would like an all-inclusive, in-depth comprehensive market evaluation that will provide you the actual value of your property in today's market give me or email me and we can set up a time for myself and my wife Tara to do an in person visual property and area inspection.

**This is all 100% FREE with No Obligation.** An appraiser would charge between \$300 and \$500, but I will provide you with this at no cost. I look forward to helping you!

If you have any Real Estate related questions at all please give me a call and I will answer all your questions for FREE. Contact me today.

Best Regards,

Richard C. Brown

## **About Richard C. Brown**

*Richard is a long- time resident of beautiful Las Vegas that has been an active full time licensed REALTOR® for over 40 years. He has been a licensed Real Estate Broker in Nevada, California, and Hawaii since 1989.*

*Richard is a verified top fundraiser for the MAKE-A-WISH Foundation, St. Jude Children's Hospital, Shriners Children's Hospital, No Kid Hungry, and the Wounded Warrior Project.*

*Together with his wife Tara and their highly experienced Tech-Savvy Power Team are helping Buyers, Sellers and Experienced Investors achieve success with all their Real Estate wants and needs.*

*Richard has over 40 years' helping 1,000's of families, individuals and real estate investors successfully buy and sell their homes and investment properties.*

*Let him help you achieve all your real estate goals.*

*He will get you the Great Results you're looking for.*

*Use the QR code on the back cover to download your Free copy of my book Home Improvements that add value to your Home.*

**Richard C. Brown Direct Line: (760) 419-9004**

**Email: [Rick@DoGreat.com](mailto:Rick@DoGreat.com)**

**Nevada** Broker – Salesperson Lic. # BS.0146877

**Hawaii** Real Estate Broker Lic. # RB-14933

**California** Real Estate Lic. # 01937688

**Realtor, NAR, CAR, CCIM, CRS, SRES, ABR and Author**

**“Voted One of the Best Realtor's in America”**

## ***About Tara M. Brown***

*Tara and her husband Richard Brown along with their highly experienced Tech Savvy Power Team are helping buyers, sellers and investors throughout Clark County successfully achieve their real estate goals. Tara and her husband Richard Brown have become Las Vegas's "Go to" Realtors.*

*Tara is a licensed Realtor and is a true leader with uncompromising integrity. Tara heads up the most important areas of our company, the property research and marketing departments. She's a sharp high tech savvy woman that acts and gets things done right.*

*She'll make sure your property gets Listed and Ranked on the 1st page of Google for maximum exposure and Great Results!*

*Tara also oversees our Transaction Coordinators and double checks to make sure all paperwork, contracts and documents are done correctly. Tara makes sure every phase of your home sale, purchase or investment goes smoothly and your transaction is successfully completed.*

*If you are considering selling or buying real estate in the Las Vegas area Tara, her husband Richard and their Tech Savvy Team will provide you with the Highest Quality of Performance and Professional Service.*

*Make the Smart Choice, act and call Tara today! She will get you the results you're looking for in the shortest period of time with the least inconvenience to you!*

***Our FREE Gift For You.*** Use the QR code on the back cover to download your Free copy of our book ***“Home Improvements that Add Value to your Home.”***

*Tara M. Brown - Partner*

***Cell (858) 922-9620***

***Email: Tara@DoGreat.com***



---

# HOME IMPROVEMENTS

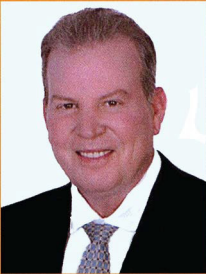
---

## THAT IMPROVE VALUES

Thinking about making additions and improvements to your home? Too many times owners spend money they won't get back when they sell. Find out what improvements to make to maximize the value of your home and which ones to avoid that will never get your money back when you sell.

This Book Contains:

- Upgrading Flooring, Walls and Lighting
- Cooking Up a New Kitchen
- Living Room Upgrades and Renovations
- Bedroom and Attic Renovations
- Bathrooms: Renovations and their ROI
- Remodeling Additions, and ROI



Richard C. Brown is your 1# Las Vegas Real Estate Expert with over 40 years of Experience. Richard holds the following Licenses in the United States of America.

Nevada Broker - Salesperson Lic. # BS.0146877

Hawaii Real Estate Broker Lic. # RB-14933

California Real Estate Lic. # 01937688

He has laid out the best upgrades for a return on your investment and the worst. The Guidelines in this book will help you make the right move. If you don't have time to implement them, you can hire him to implement them for you.

**To contact Richard, email [Rick@DoGreat.com](mailto:Rick@DoGreat.com)  
or call 760-419-9004**

U.S.A. \$19.99  
CANADA \$26.39