



Creating Order, Relieving Stress, Improving Your Life...

Getting The Most For Your Dollar When Preparing Your Home For Sale

by Nancy Peham, HelpingHandsPS.com
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Whether you plan to put your house on the market soon or you're going to stay put for the foreseeable future, it's never too early to consider which fixes, upgrades or remodeling projects will pay you back with the greatest return on your investment.

When a potential homebuyer visits your property, unless they're looking for a fixer upper, they expect to see that all the basics are in working order. These include heating, air conditioning, plumbing, roofing, foundation, and electrical systems.

If you've lived in your home for any length of time, there are probably several small, inexpensive fixes that have gone undone. Although you may not regard them as important or even notice them anymore, a potential buyer will. Here are some of them:

- Doors that stick (the buyer will wonder about the home's foundation)
- Entry door hardware that is difficult to lock or unlock
- Wooden fences with missing slats, rotting or weather

beaten wood, and gates that won't close properly

- Illegible, broken or faded address numbers
- Dilapidated mailbox
- Clogged gutters
- Cracked window panes
- Torn screens
- Window treatment control mechanisms that don't work
- Leaky faucets
- Sink or bathtub plugs that don't function
- Noisy exhaust fans
- Clogged fireplace flu
- Broken, cracked or discolored lighting fixtures
- Light bulbs that are missing or burnt out
- Cracked tiles
- Discolored or chipped grout
- Warped or damaged wood flooring

By taking care of these fairly simple and inexpensive problems, you are showing potential buyers that you care about your home's appearance and functionality.

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If you want to take your house to the next level consider upgrades such as new, updated lighting fixtures throughout the house. These can make an older home shine when compared to other homes in the neighborhood, making yours more desirable in comparison.

Trade your old on/off light switches with dimmers. According to Robert Irwin, author of 'Improve The Value Of Your Home Up to \$100,000' they indicate your home is modern, rather than outdated. To learn more about his book and others like it, go to the following web address: Books - Home Improvement Ideas

If your carpets are more than a few years old, look worn, contain pet odors or are no longer rejuvenated by a good quality cleaning, you'd be better off replacing them. A bad looking carpet will drag down the entire feel of a house.

Consider upgrading vinyl flooring with wood, tile, or laminate. Refinish wood floors that are scratched or damaged, or replace dated tile floors using more popular colors and tile sizes.

Replace cabinet and drawer hardware in kitchen and bathrooms with attractive, updated pulls or knobs. This minor change can make a huge difference and bring the look of these rooms up to date.

Give your walls a fresh coat of paint! Stay away from bold and bright colors. Use neutral tones instead, otherwise you'll lose every potential buyer who doesn't share your aesthetic sensibilities, thus limiting your pool of interested shoppers.

If your wallpaper is dated, get rid of it.

Cracked, uneven or crumbling sidewalks and driveways can be a hazard. They also make your home look run down and neglected. If repairing them isn't possible you may need to have them replaced. Because they're one of the first things the buyer sees, it can ruin your chances to make a favorable impression.

If you own a fence that's beyond repair invest in a new one.

Don't underestimate the value of closet and garage organizing systems...and of course, having a clutter free home with lots of available storage space!

Beyond the realm of simple fixes and upgrades, is partial or full scale remodeling.

This would include room additions, kitchen and bath remodels, expanding or changing the functionality of a space, like an attic, basement or garage, or simply replacing older appliances with more modern, energy efficient options.

To see what the experts say about payback on these projects check the following websites:

Remodeling Online This website will provide a link to the 2003 Cost vs. Value Report which provides statistics on remodeling projects that will provide the greatest return on your investment.

NARI is the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. If you click on the 'Homeowners' button you will find several helpful articles to choose from.

Because there are so many variables, it's impossible to determine just how much each fix, upgrade or remodel will pay you back. Some things to consider are the price other homes in your neighborhood are selling for, how your house compares to others in your price range, and where your home is located.

To view the latest trends and find out what's popular in kitchens, baths and decorating, visit new homebuilders' showrooms. Then see if any of those ideas can be incorporated into your home improvement plans.

Another way to determine your spending priorities might be to visit open houses in your neighborhood to see what your competition has that you don't.

As a rule of thumb, you shouldn't spend so much on upgrades that your house is no longer comparable to others in the area. Although yours might be the best on the block, buyers will probably not pay that much more for it.

Finally, don't forget that having your home professionally staged allows you access to someone who will be honest with you about your home's trouble spots and help you overcome them, to show your home to its greatest selling potential!

Nancy Peham, owner of Helping Hands Personal Services is a professional organizer and home stager in the Dallas area. Nancy is also available as a speaker and to the media as an organizing expert. For more information, visit her website www.HelpingHandsPS.com