

10 Ways to improve the value of your home

I often have clients ask me what they should do to improve the value of their home. So, this month I have compiled a list of 10 ways to achieve this goal. The first five items listed are lower in costs and can, for the most part, be completed by you, the home owner. The last five are more expensive and may require the use of professionals.

1. Curb Appeal. Take a walk across the street and look back at your house. Is the yard in good shape? The number one way to improve the value of your house is to have a nice yard. How is the house looking? Be honest, are the gutters peeling? How about a new front door? After your yard, the front door is the next thing people notice. It is worth every bit of elbow grease to get the yard and exterior in good shape.

2. Freshen Up. Paint and clean up the walls. Pick up a few magazines and use some new stylish colors. Start at the front door and do one room at a time. Finish each room before moving on to the next. Refinish those hardwood floors and spring for some new carpet. You don't want someone to walk into your house and feel like they have been transported back to the 1960s.

3. Keep it clean. Now that you have taken the time to freshen up, keep it clean. Don't let dirt build up on the walls and floor boards. Try to vacuum, dust, and wipe things down once a week. Those dust bunnies in the corner and dirty hand prints on the walls can really make a house seem tired and poorly maintained.

4. Update Electrical Fixtures. Take a look at your switches, outlets, and lights. Do they look dated or worn out? Replacing the switches with new rocker type switches in bright white gives the appearance of a more contemporary up to date house. How about those lights? If they look dated they need to go.

5. Get a Home Inspection. Hire a local home inspector to go through your house. If the inspector is good they will give you a binder with notes and pictures identifying deficiencies. Fix them all.

6. Update the Kitchen. Take a good look at the kitchen. Will a coat of paint and some new knobs do the trick? Or is a gut job needed? The kitchen can be a big project with a big budget. I suggest you do a lot of planning, set a budget, and hire professionals to complete this project.

7. Update the bathrooms. Bathrooms can also be expensive. So, the same goes here plan, budget, and professionals. Bathrooms are different than kitchens in many ways. They are easier to freshen up with new paint, lights, and plumbing fixtures. If you can accomplish your goals without a complete gut, you will get more value for your dollar spent.

8. Replacement Windows. If you are living in a house with single pane windows, this is a must for you. Believe it or not, on average people get a 100% return on their window investment. You eventually get your money back when you sell, and you will greatly reduce your heating/cooling costs. This is a must.

9. Replace the Roof. The roof can be a deal breaker when you go to sell. Most roofs last about 25 years. If you have a home inspection completed, the inspector will be able to tell you the state of your roof. A new roof looks good, improves curb appeal, and gives prospective buyers the appearance of a well maintained house.

10. Replace the Heating and Cooling System. Do you have a dinosaur in your basement? If so, it has to go. Replacing a system more than 30 years old will reduce

your energy bills and increase what a buyer is willing to pay for your house. If you stay in your house more than 10 years, it should also pay for itself in savings. Bonus!

So, that's it. A house that looks good, is in good condition, and is well maintained is worth a lot more money than its' counterpart. Good luck!