RE/MAX Properties

Home Improvements for Resale

Choose projects that fit your home, market, and sale timeline

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Preparing to sell does not always require a remodel. The goal is to address condition, help buyers see the home's strengths, and make sensible use of your budget. Improved appeal does not guarantee that a project will repay its full cost.

1 Start with a local resale assessment

Review competing listings and recent comparable sales with your broker. Identify what buyers expect in your price range and which shortcomings matter most. Compare selling in current condition with making targeted updates before deciding how much to spend.

2 Put necessary repairs ahead of cosmetics

Investigate active leaks, moisture concerns, unsafe conditions, and malfunctioning systems with qualified professionals. Repair the underlying cause rather than covering the symptom. Keep invoices and warranties, and discuss property disclosures with your broker. A cosmetic update does not resolve a hidden defect.

3 Improve the first impression

Tidy landscaping, trim overgrowth, clean walkways, and refresh the entry. Check exterior lighting, the front door, and visible maintenance issues. Repair what is damaged; replacement is not always necessary. Favor manageable improvements over elaborate landscaping installed only for the sale.

4 Clean, declutter, and paint selectively

Deep-clean kitchens, bathrooms, windows, and surfaces. Address odor sources and reduce clutter so rooms feel usable. Repaint worn or strongly personalized areas with coordinated, broadly appealing colors when worthwhile. A well-prepared existing room may need less work than you initially expect.

5 Make flooring look clean and consistent

Repair damaged areas, clean carpets, and consider refinishing existing wood when appropriate. Replace flooring selectively if condition is likely to distract buyers. Compare the cost of a cohesive update with the rest of the home; installing premium floors everywhere may not be justified.

Marketability and cost recovery are different

NAR and NARI's 2025 Remodeling Impact Report distinguishes enjoyment of a renovation from estimated resale cost recovery. National findings are a starting point, not a prediction for your home. Base your spending on local evidence, actual bids, and your intended sale date.

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Target the updates and protect your expected net proceeds

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Keep improvements proportional to the property. Choose a defined scope, obtain written pricing, and leave time to finish the work, clean up, and prepare for listing photos.

6 Refresh kitchens and baths before replacing them

Consider cleaning, repairing fixtures, updating hardware, improving lighting, or refreshing suitable cabinets. Replace appliances or surfaces when their condition and local expectations support the cost. A complete renovation may add expense and delays without a matching increase in sale price.

7 Improve light, storage, and usability

Replace failed bulbs and consider simple fixture updates where they improve presentation. Organize closets and storage areas, and arrange furniture to show circulation and room function. Focus on usable space; adding custom storage or smart devices is not automatically a resale necessity.

8 Evaluate efficiency upgrades realistically

Address obvious comfort or maintenance problems, but do not assume new windows, insulation, or technology will recover their full cost at resale. Weigh the expense, remaining time in the home, and buyer expectations. Gather existing system information and explain any transferable equipment or subscriptions clearly.

9 Be cautious with major additions and conversions

Finishing a basement or attic, changing a layout, or adding a bathroom can involve structural, mechanical, and permitting work. Obtain feasibility advice and confirm local approvals and how the space can be represented. Avoid over-improving for the neighborhood or beginning a large project without a clear financial case.

10 Budget around the sale, not the wish list

Compare written bids, define materials and labor, and allow for surprises and delays. Consider carrying costs and the possible effect on your listing date. Discuss whether an as-is sale, pricing adjustment, or negotiated credit may be more practical than doing the work. No approach guarantees a particular result.

A simple cost check - illustration only

If a $5,000 update increases the sale price by only $3,000, it leaves $2,000 unrecovered before other selling or carrying costs. A project may still help the home compete, but increased price is not the same as increased profit. Ask for a realistic comparison before authorizing work.

Ask Doug Petersen to help prioritize improvements using his real estate and homebuilding experience. Adapted from the supplied outline. Research: NAR/NARI 2025 Remodeling Impact Report. Educational guidance; costs and buyer preferences vary by property and market.

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