



**Renovations:** Learn how to update or renovate your bathroom to increase home value.

### **Home improvements and home makeovers: do it yourself, or hire a professional?**

While some home improvements such as updating a kitchen or bathroom may require a trained professional, there are a number of do-it-yourself projects that are likely to increase a home's resale value. Simpler tasks such as painting walls, changing cupboard knobs or laying new flooring will make a house not only more appealing to buyers, but also offer a great return on investment.

A buyer walking into a home with wood-panelled walls and shag rugs may add up the cost of replacement and price their offer to reflect that. In Toronto's competitive real estate market, renovations offer a relatively affordable means to boost the value of a home.

Before picking up a sledgehammer, however, it's worthwhile to know the cost of updating your decades-old décor, and the degree to which those costs will be recouped when it comes time to sell.

### **Reasonable and radical renovations**

From simple aesthetics to washroom overhauls, Royal LePage has identified the top renovations that will increase the equity of a home. This list is ranked in ascending order of cost of project:

- 1. Freshen up:** Adding a new coat of paint can freshen up a house and make the interior look like new, not to mention more spacious. For homeowners looking to sell quickly, neutral colours are recommended.
- 2. Floors galore:** Today, hard surfaces are all the rage. If genuine hardwood exceeds budgets, laminate works well. Buyers like to see hard floors throughout, so if possible, be sure to lay down laminate in dining rooms and living rooms, and even in bathrooms and bedrooms. While a range of hardwood qualities, textures and colours exists, it's best to opt for a neutral wood colour to accommodate the widest possible array of tastes and décor.
- 3. Lighten up:** Old or standard-grade light fixtures, electrical and light cover plates can easily date a house. To modernize and add distinct flair to the interior, consider installing new light fixtures. Remember to go green and use compact fluorescent light bulbs, where possible.
- 4. Pebble beach? Well, close:** The old adage, "you never get a second chance to make a first impression" is extremely true when it comes to selling a home. To increase curb appeal and entice buyers, ensure front lawns are tidy and gardening is minimal. While there is no need to go overboard and plant an expensive Japanese maple tree, adding some standard shrubs and flowers will make a home more inviting.

5. **Stylishly steel:** Similar to the issue with old light fixtures, knobs, fume hoods and backsplashes can make a kitchen seem outdated. Sleek, stainless steel hardware designs have the biggest and most positive impact on people looking to buy a home.

6. **White picket fence?:** Building a fence and a deck instantly boosts a home's appeal. Keeping kids and pets in the yard and nosy neighbours out, fences provide the back and side yards with a sense of privacy.

7. **Occupied no more:** A bathroom situated on the main floor is increasingly seen by homebuyers as an essential fixture in their next purchase. While many older houses were built with bathrooms only on the second floor, many homeowners are resorting to transforming closets or adding new rooms to accommodate two-piece powder rooms.

8. **Exquisite ensuite:** Today's homebuyer prefers bathrooms that have spa-style tubs and modern faucets. Granite and marble tiles are now readily available and can be purchased at relatively affordable prices.

9. **Everything, and the kitchen sink:** While prices can vary when renovating a kitchen, one thing is certain: kitchen makeovers bring one of the highest returns on investment. With homeowners spending more time in the kitchen than any other room, it's no surprise they want the best possible style and functionality. Stainless steel appliances, ceramic sinks and clean lines on cupboards rank as the more preferred finish options. Since kitchens and baths can be such a personal space, it's wise not to select a dramatic style or colour scheme, since your tastes may not be the same as the next owner's.