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fall HOME IMPROVEMENT & Contractors Guide



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Republican

October 27, 2021 | Page 1B-40B



PHOTOS BY DAVE MARNER

Local house rehabbed over summer

New Again Construction owner Scott Griffith, a lieutenant with the Owensville police department, tosses supplies to Jimmy Hance (front page) as they and Josh Smith, a city police patrolman, rehabilitate a house at the corner of Cuba and Highway 28 this past summer. Griffith and his wife, Tanya, are owners of the venture which has branched out to build additions for clients and smaller remodeling projects when they're between complete rehabilitation house projects. Griffith's mother, Elaine Griffith (above), handles painting duties on windows and door trim, and cabinets. Hance's son, Jo Hance, works part-time along with Smith. Griffith said they're booked into February with side projects while they're between having an entire house to rehab. New Again Construction has been working primarily in the Owensville area since 2018

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Local home businesses: order early to avoid long waits

Local furniture and construction businesses are warning their customers to purchase products from the sales floor or in advance because of interrupted supply runs and product shortages.

Paige Lasserty, co-owner of Becker Millwork in Freeburg said it best.

“We have extended lead times (the amount of time it takes to bring product in) and there is more cost to everything,” Lasserty said. “It is difficult.”

Kay Carpet in Owensville sells furniture and flooring. Michele Lowder, owner, said they have been working around the shortages and slow supply chains.

“We have just been ordering ahead — six months in advance for custom companies,” she said.

The business is also adding an addition to their warehouse to keep more products on hand.

“We haven’t experienced a whole lot of trouble ordering ahead, but it is taking twice as long to receive the product,” Lowder said. “A lot of times it comes in damaged.”

Kay Carpets already has a lot on the showroom floor and will sell the product it has in stock.

“Flooring hasn’t been an issue for us, mainly just the furniture,” Lowder said.

Stephen Thompson, owner of Winter’s Home Furnishings in Owensville, agreed.

“We haven’t had any monumental changes (in the

way we have run the business) since the shutdowns last spring,” Thompson said. “Everything in our supply chain has been disrupted. Product availability is at an all-time low.”

Thompson said the timeline to receive the product is “astronomically different than two years ago and production dates are off the charts.

“Everything in our supply chain has been disrupted. Product availability is at an all-time low.”

“Everyone blames it on the fact that no one wants to work anymore,” Thompson said. “People are having trouble finding truck drivers. The COVID card is used heavily and no one wants to come back to work. It has a huge effect on moving products from start to finish.”

Winter’s Home Furnishings doesn’t stock any flooring so they have no choice but to order. If a customer is interested in furniture, they could pick off the floor or order, but they are looking at a three to six months wait time.

“It is like that with everything and everybody — lumber yards, electricians, plumbers, drywallers,” Thompson said. “Every aspect of construction can’t get anything and it trickles from every corner of the spectrum. Everybody is affected and they seem to think the way to come back to recover is to raise prices. They are losing money

‘cause they can’t get products and as a result raise prices.”

In Gerald, Ottis Schulte with Gerald Home Center, agrees that some things are just getting hard to get.

“We have one supplier we buy cabinets through and their plant is 200 people short,” Schulte said. “Things are getting hard to get because people don’t want to work.”

Schulte said there is one product that seems to be more impossible to get than most.

“Windows was a three to four week wait time and is now 12 to 15 weeks out,” Schulte said. “People are ordering windows before they even dig a hole for their basement.”

Schulte said he knows of several home builders who have plastic covering window holes while they are hanging drywall.

“I tell my customers if they decide to build a house they need to order windows first,” Schulte said. “There is trouble getting plumbing pipe, electrical wire — this country needs to stop relying on other countries to make this stuff.”

Schulte said he has the same amount of customers this year as he did last year. He attributes the shortage to workers and not the pandemic.

“People need to get back to work,” Schulte said. “If this keeps up, 10 years from now there won’t be anything left.”

If there is one thing they all can agree on, it’s that potential builders should order early.

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How to maintain hardwood floors

Hardwood floors have long been sought after by home buyers. In its 2019 “Remodeling Impact Report,” the National Association of Realtors® revealed that new wood flooring was the fourth most popular project to attract buyers.

Of course, hardwood floors aren’t just for buyers. Homeowners who already have hardwood floors know just how impressive these floors can be, especially when they’re well maintained. Maintaining wood floors is not necessarily as straightforward as it may seem, and homeowners may benefit from a tutorial on how to keep the floors under their feet looking good.

To polish or not to polish?

Polishing floors is an inexpensive way to keep them looking good. But the home improvement experts at BobVila.com note that not all floors can be polished, and determining which ones can depends on the finish. Floors with waterproof barriers such as urethane will benefit from routine polishing. However, floors with penetrating finishes like tung oil will need to be waxed rather than polished.

What finish is on the floor?

The Hardwood Distributor’s Association recommends a simple way for homeowners to determine which type of finish is on their hardwood floors. Homeowners are advised to rub a finger across the floor. If no smudge appears, then the floor is surface sealed. If a smudge is created, then the floor has been treated with a penetrating seal. The HDA also notes

that recently installed wood floors are likely surface sealed.

How often should floors be polished or waxed?

Wood flooring professionals recommend polishing floors that can be polished once every few months. Waxing wood floors does not need to be done as frequently, and most can benefit from a fresh coat of wax every 12 to 18 months.

What can I do on a daily basis?

Some simple tricks and daily maintenance can help wood floors maintain their impressive look.

- Utilize floor mats. The HDA notes that floor mats near entryways can reduce the time it takes to clean hardwood floors and reduce the wear and tear they endure. For example, tiny particles like dirt can scratch the floor and contribute to the kind of minor damage that adds up to significant scarring over time. Floor mats near entryways ensures that most of that dirt never makes it to the wood floors.

- Vacuum without a beater bar. Some vacuums contain beater bars, which are designed to pick up human hair, dog hair and other things that conventional vacuums may not be able to pick up. The HDA advises vacuuming without the beater bar, as it can contribute to small scratches in the floor. Sweeping with a

Floors - continued on page 7B

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Safety first when clearing land

New homeowners often see their homes as blank canvases. Looking at a home as a blank canvas is typically associated with its interior, but it also can apply to landscaping.

Homes are empty of furniture and decorative items like photos and art on the walls when new homeowners move in. That makes it easy to see the interior of a home as a blank canvas. But that's not always so easy in the garden or the yard, where brush, overgrown plants or trees and other eyesores might have been left behind by the previous owners. A landscape must be cleared out before it can be seen as a blank canvas. Though clearing land may seem like a straightforward process, no one knows what lies beneath overgrowth or neglected areas of a yard or garden. Do-it-yourselfers can typically clear land on their own, but some safety strategies should be kept in mind to ensure the process goes smoothly.

- Wear appropriate PPE. Personal protective equipment should be worn

when clearing land. The appropriate PPE when clearing land includes attire and other gear that many homeowners likely already have on hand. A long-sleeve shirt, puncture proof pants and gloves and slip-resistant work boots should be worn when clearing land. Homeowners also may want to invest in a hard hat if they will be cutting branches off of trees or cutting trees down. A face shield also may be a good bet depending on the scale and potential dangers of the project.

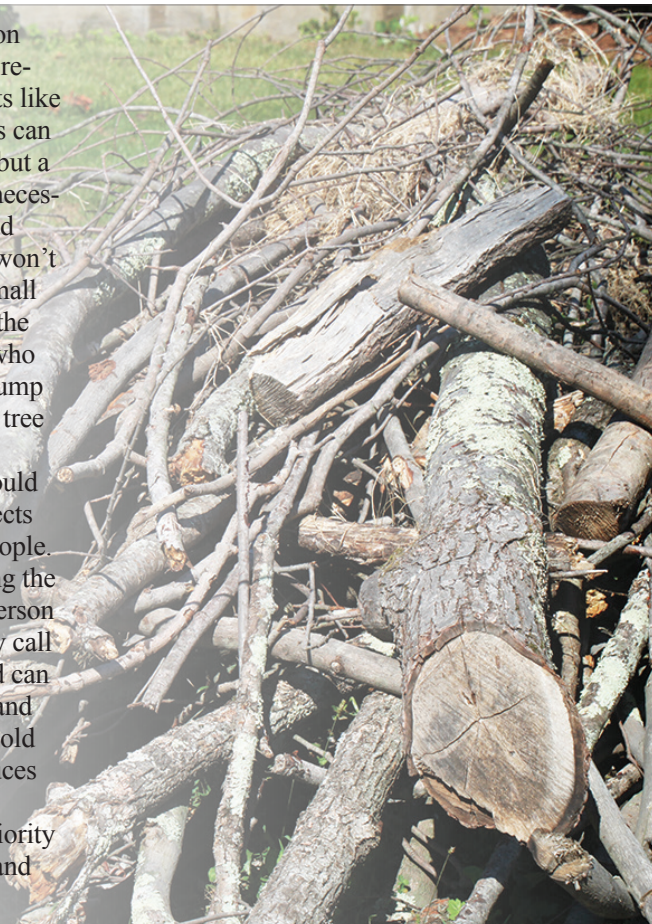
- Contact your utility company. Overhead power and telephone lines are visible to the naked eye, and homeowners should be conscious of those lines as they cut any high branches. But underground lines are not visible, and that can make clearing land dangerous. Homeowners are urged to contact their utility companies before they begin to clear any land so they can determine if any underground lines are beneath areas they intend to clear out.

- Get a lay of the land. Carefully inspect the area to be cleared prior to starting the project. Inspections can

reveal the density of any vegetation that may need to be removed and reveal if there are any harmful plants like poison ivy growing. Many DIYers can remove small trees on their own, but a professional tree service may be necessary for large trees or those located close to the house. Homeowners won't want to cut down a tree, even a small one, if it can potentially fall onto the house. In addition, homeowners who are unfamiliar with chippers or stump grinders may be better off hiring a tree service to clear trees.

- Don't go it alone. No one should clear land alone. Even small projects are best tackled by at least two people. Should someone get injured during the project, the presence of another person ensures someone can immediately call for help. In addition, clearing land can be more difficult than it appears, and having at least two people to pull old shrubs or carry tree branches reduces the risk of injury.

Safety should be the utmost priority as homeowners prepare to clear land on their properties.



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Exterior lighting can add ambiance to a property



The value of the right lighting in a home is undeniable. Lighting can instantly transform a room and create the ambiance homeowners are looking to establish. Though it might be mostly seen as a way to create mood inside a home, lighting also can do much for lawns and gardens.

Backyards have come a long way over the last several decades. Once reserved as play areas for children and stomping grounds for the family dog, backyards have become oases for homeowners and their families. Outdoor living areas are wildly popular, and no such area is complete without exterior lighting. In fact, a recent report from the National Association of Home Builders found that 85 percent of home buyers want exterior lighting, making it the second most desired outdoor feature (patios topped that list).

Exterior lighting can have a dramatic effect on landscaping, and estimates from the online financial resource Kiplinger.com suggest such lighting is inexpensive, with installation averaging roughly \$67 per fixture.

When installing exterior lighting around their landscapes, homeowners can keep various tips in mind to create a relaxing, awe-inspiring mood on their properties at night.

- Consider uplights. Uplights are installed in the ground and direct light up at a tree, focusing on its trunk or canopy. This creates a dramatic effect that makes it possible to enjoy majestic trees at night just like you might when spending time in the yard during the day.

Lighting - continued on page 7B

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Lighting — continued from page 6B

• Focus on trees. Many homeowners already have exterior lighting lining their walkways and patios, but focusing on trees can create an entirely different look. Though it's possible to install exterior tree lighting on your own, landscaping professionals with lighting experience know which fixtures will pair most effectively with the trees around your property and how to arrange them for maximum effect.

• Opt for warm light. Warm white light creates an inviting feel around the property. The exterior lighting experts at Utah Lights acknowledge that choice of lighting is up to homeowners but also note that, in situations with lower levels of ambient light, such as in exterior lights

around a property, people typically prefer warmer light. That's because warm light tends to be easier on the eyes and directs attention to the features of the landscape, which is many homeowners' goal when installing exterior lighting in their yards.

• Utilize a timer. Modern exterior lighting timers make it easier than ever to control the lights outside a home. Many such timers even adjust for the changing seasons and the shifting hours of daylight. That means homeowners shouldn't have to tinker with the timer once it's set.

Exterior lighting can add significant appeal to a property without breaking the bank.

Floors — continued from page 4B

high-quality broom or microfiber cloth is another way to pick up dirt without damaging floors.

• Use manufacturer-recommended cleaning products. Local home improvement stores sell a host of hardwood floor cleaning products, but the HDA notes that many flooring manufacturers now sell their own hardwood floor cleaners designed specifically for their floors. These products are likely homeowners' best bets. Homeowners who can't find them can seek recommendations from a local flooring retailer.

Hardwood floors are attractive for many reasons. And they look even more stunning, and last much longer, when homeowners make an effort to maintain them.

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Design ideas to give your home a farmhouse feel



Farmhouse style homes are having a moment. A 2020 survey from Homes.com asked more than 5,000 adults across the United States about their favorite house style from a list that included bohemian craftsman, mid-century modern ranch, French chateau, and Tudor, among others. Modern farmhouse was the runaway winner, as participants in 42 of the 50 states indicated this simple, cozy style was their favorite.

Home renovation projects can help homeowners put their own unique stamp on their homes, and such projects can be both aesthetic and functional in nature. The following are some farmhouse design elements homeowners can consider as they look to transform their home interiors with this popular style in mind.

- **Exposed beams:** Exposed beams instantly evoke images of a farmhouse. The home improvement experts at BobVila.com note that this rustic renovation project can utilize real wood or faux beams that look like the real thing. Decorative beams that have nothing to do with a home's structural integrity can be installed by skilled do-it-yourselfers. However, even faux beams are heavy, and BobVila.com recommends homeowners have an engineer assess their existing structure prior to installation.

- **Distressed wood finishes:** Distressing is designed to make something look less than perfect. Distressed wood finishes can be found throughout many farmhouse style homes. Furniture and picture frames can provide the distressed look farmhouse fans are looking for. This is a relatively inexpensive project that many homeowners can tackle on their own after watching some online tutorials that recommend the right tools and techniques to get the job done right.

Farmhouse - continued on page 9B

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Budget-friendly dining room renovation ideas

If the kitchen is the heart of the home, then the dining room may be akin to one of its arteries. The mood created in the kitchen spreads to the dining space where family and friends gather to eat and enjoy one another's company.

Dining rooms can get lost in the home renovation shuffle, as many homeowners tend to focus on renovating kitchens and bathrooms instead. Homeowners do not have to invest a lot of money in renovations to give their dining spaces awe-inspiring makeovers. Here's how to do so on a budget.

- **Lighten and brighten.** Dining rooms were once very formal spaces. Dark woods, large pieces of furniture, over-the-top chandeliers, and other details could be found in many homes. But now that houses are being built with open floor plans, dining rooms can blend with other spaces, which have moved to lighter colored walls, flooring and furniture. A fresh coat of vibrant paint can work wonders and it doesn't cost much. If you can't remove a floor, cover it with a brightly colored area rug.

- **Switch things up with slipcovers.** Slipcovers can be changed each season to dramatically alter the look of a dining room for little investment. Slip covers also protect chairs and can be easily laundered after spills.

- **Add floating shelving.** Floating shelves provide much-needed storage or display space without the need to invest

in another piece of furniture. Depending on the shelving, they can work in modern design schemes or even farmhouse dining spaces.

- **Clear out the clutter.** It might be time to say "so long" to that large curio cabinet and the knickknacks within it. Curio and china cabinets used to be de rigueur, but plenty of people now prefer more open and airy dining rooms. For those who want to keep the cabinet, try decluttering inside to only include the very best display pieces and see if the cabinet can be refinished with paint or a lightly colored stain.

- **Improve lighting.** Make the chandelier the statement piece of the space. Go for a bold color or an innovative design. Then add accessories throughout the space that coordinate with the chandelier.

- **Add bench seating.** Those who need additional seating may not have to get entirely new furniture. Swap out some chairs for benches, which can fit a couple more guests than chairs.

- **Create depth with color.** HGTV says that using various shades of the same color in a space can add depth. Coordinate drapes, walls, seat fabrics, and accessories for a cohesive design.

Renovating a dining room doesn't require a large investment of time and money. A few simple steps can give dining spaces a whole new feel without busting homeowners' budgets.

Farmhouse — continued from page 8B

- **Kitchen sink:** Many components combine to create a truly classic farmhouse kitchen. But perhaps no component is more essential than the classic farmhouse sink. The renovation experts at HGTV note that a classic farmhouse sink features a deep, wide basin. Farmhouse sinks are large enough to handle all the dishes that come after a big family meal. Old-fashioned porcelain sinks are worth consideration by homeowners who want their kitchen sinks to evoke a traditional farmhouse feel.

- **Countertops:** HGTV recommends butcher block countertops for homeowners who favor European farmhouse style. Homeowners overhauling their kitchens to create a farmhouse feel should consider installing a large island with a walnut butcher block countertop for an authentic farmhouse feel.

Farmhouse style homes are wildly popular. Some simple renovations can help homeowners with a fondness for farmhouse style bring this classic look into their homes.

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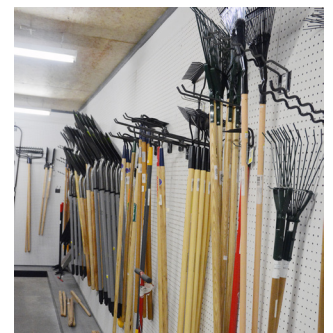
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The average timelines for popular renovations

Home renovation projects are significant undertakings. Working with skilled and experienced contractors can ensure projects go smoothly and are completed promptly. Timing is a big consideration for homeowners as they begin renovating their homes, and the home improvement experts at HomeAdvisor note that the following are some general timelines for popular renovation projects.



- Home addition: Short of a full-scale demolition and rebuild, home additions are the most time-consuming projects homeowners can undertake. HomeAdvisor notes that its survey of customers who recently completed home addition projects reported that the average time from start to finish was between three and four months. Certain variables, including the scale of the project and the local permits process, can extend the time it takes to complete a home addition.

- Kitchen remodel: Scale is a big factor to consider when estimating the time it takes to complete various home improvement projects, and kitchen remodels are no exception. Some HomeAdvisor users reported projects taking as long as four months, though the average time reported was roughly six weeks. Projects that require major overhauls like rearranging the plumbing

and moving walls will likely take longer than more cosmetic projects that are limited to replacing cabinets and countertops.

- Bathroom remodel: More than 1,000 homeowners surveyed by HomeAdvisor reported that bathroom remodels took about 4.5 weeks from start to finish. Small-scale remodels that focus on painting the walls a fresh color and replacing existing tiles can be completed in less than two weeks. But like with kitchen remodels, bathroom remodels that involve replacing plumbing fixtures and removing walls figure to take much longer than that.

- Siding installation: HomeAdvisor users report that new siding projects take roughly two weeks from start to finish. That estimate is the same regardless of which materials homeowners are replacing and installing.
- Replacement windows: Homeowners who want to replace all the windows in their home can expect such a project to take roughly three weeks. HomeAdvisor notes that such a timeline need not concern homeowners worried that they will be forced to brave the elements during the length of the project. Much of a contractor's time during a window replacement project will be spent on upfront measuring and then ensuring a tight fit once the windows have been installed.

Signs of septic system malfunction

Homeowners recognize that their work is never done. Homes require maintenance that runs the gamut from daily tasks like cleaning kitchen countertops to more significant undertakings like replacing roofs. For many homeowners, keeping their homes running smoothly involves tending to septic systems.

Estimates from various sources indicate that roughly one in five homes in the United States has a septic system. Homeowners who live in areas with regional sewage systems may not give much thought to the operation and maintenance of their wastewater and disposal system. But that responsibility typically rests squarely on the shoulders of homeowners whose homes have septic systems. Learning to maintain septic

Septic - continued on page 11B

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Septic — continued from page 10B

systems so they operate safely and efficiently is essential. Homeowners should know that recognizing signs of septic system malfunction is vital to avoiding potentially costly, messy accidents that can put the health of humans and local wildlife in jeopardy.

What happens when a septic system malfunctions?

The Washington State Department of Health notes that a malfunctioning septic system is a threat to the health of both humans and animals as well as the environment. When a septic system is malfunctioning, untreated sewage can be released and end up in places where it shouldn't be, such as groundwater, surface water and marine water. That's true even if it's not visible to the naked eye. Humans and animals are in danger when septic systems malfunction because untreated sewage contains pathogens and other contaminants that can make them sick.

What are the signs of a malfunctioning septic system?

The DOH of Washington State notes that properly maintained septic systems should provide reliable service for many years. Part of that maintenance is keeping an eye out for these signs that suggest a system is malfunctioning or failing:

- Water and sewage from toilets, drains and sinks is backing up into the home
 - Bathrooms, showers, and sinks drain very slowly
 - Gurgling sounds are coming from the plumbing system
 - Standing water or damp spots near the septic tank or drain field
 - Bad odors around the septic tank or drain field
 - Bright green, spongy lush grass over the septic tank or drain field, even during dry weather
 - Algal blooms in nearby ponds or lakes
 - High levels of nitrates or coliform bacteria in water wells
- Homeowners with septic systems should make tending to those systems part of their routine home maintenance.

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Must-have features in your bathroom remodel

Veteran homeowners recognize the value of remodeling their kitchens and bathrooms. Kitchens and baths tend to appear dated more quickly than other spaces, such as living rooms and bedrooms, which can always be revamped with some fresh paint and new furnishings.

The home improvement pricing resource Home Guide indicates an average bathroom remodel costs anywhere from \$5,500 to \$15,000 depending on the size and scope of the renovation. However, a bath redo can increase a home's resale value and can return as much as 68 percent of homeowners' investments. As homeowners plan their bathroom renovations, it's a good time to consider improvements that will improve function and add design appeal for years to come.

- **Floating vanity:** Add an airy feeling to the room by creating space between the vanity and the floor. A floating vanity can be a counter with a vessel sink or even have cabinets, as long as the vanity doesn't extend to the floor.
- **Freestanding traditional sink or tub:** There's something elegant about a freestanding tub or pedestal sink. Such features can lend a classic vibe to a space. However, freestanding fixtures also come in modern or eclectic forms, so there are

options for any design style.

- **Frameless showers:** Switch to a walk-in shower option, which improves aesthetics and makes it easier to "age in place" in a home. Pair that frameless shower with clear glass shower doors so sightline in the space remains unencumbered.

- **Natural textures:** Create a calm and serene sanctuary in the bathroom with light, natural hues and materials. Nature-inspired colors on tiles, walls and vanities can add to the spa vibe.

- **Dual sinks and vanities:** With a double vanity, two people can share the space and easily use the bathroom without getting in each other's way. One vanity with two sinks works, but homeowners can create even more personal space by dividing vanities and mirrors.

- **Small textured tile on shower floors:** Small textures are appealing and add safety. The added texture and grouting will keep feet from slipping on wet floors. Also, opt for mold-resistant grout to make cleanup even easier.

- **Special shower heads:** Invest in shower heads that can run the gamut from creating steam showers to rainfall effects. Some showers will have multiple shower jets to offer an invigorating experience.

Bathroom - continued on page 13B

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This childproofing checklist can help keep kids safe

It's not long before newborns who need their parents to cater to their every need become toddlers who can't wait to go exploring on their own. The curiosity can come quickly, which underscores how important it is for parents to childproof their homes.

Childproofing is essential in the nursery where children tend to spend much of their time, but it's necessary elsewhere in the house as well. The Children's Hospital of Los Angeles says fractures are the most common injuries among infants and toddlers as they develop a sense of curiosity and gain mobility. Head and mouth/tooth injuries are some additional injuries curious kids may suffer during this period in their lives. This childproofing checklist can help reduce the risk of injury.

- Follow United States Consumer Product Safety Commission crib safety regulations, which include fixed sides, a firm mattress and slats that are no more than 23/8 inches apart.
 - Install UL-listed carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors on every story of the house and check batteries in detectors frequently.
 - Install a temperature guard on the water heater and never set it above 120 F.
 - Cover all sharp furniture edges and corners with safety padding or specialty bumpers.
 - Block all open outlets with outlet covers or safety plugs.
 - Place lockable covers on the garbage.
 - Install stove knob covers.
 - Use latches on any drawers, toilets, doors, or cabinets within the child's reach.
 - Anchor heavy furniture, such as televisions, bookshelves and dressers, to the walls.
 - Install safety guards on windows.
 - Pull the crib away from other furniture.
 - Use cordless window blinds.
 - Place gates at the top and bottom of stairs and use them to prevent access to rooms that are off limits.
 - Store cleaning supplies, tools and breakable items out of reach or in a locked cabinet.
 - When the child reaches 35 inches in height or can climb out of the crib, it's time to transition to a toddler bed.
 - Choose toy chests or other furniture with spring-loaded hinges.
 - Do not hang heavy wall art or shelving over cribs.
 - Cover radiators, hot pipes, etc., with protective materials.
 - Remove flaking paint and be sure to have paint tested for lead.
 - Inspect the home for protruding nails, bolts or other hardware that can cause injury.
- These are some childproofing measures parents can implement to keep kids safe. Parents can customize childproofing plans based on their needs and the designs of their homes. Consult with a pediatrician for other tips on making a home safe for young children.

Bathroom — continued from page 12B

- Improve drainage: Increase the diameter of the drain pipe in the bathroom from the standard to a two-inch drain pipe. This will reduce the risk of clogs and overflow leaks.
 - Install a window: Natural light and air flow can reduce the risk for mold and mildew growth, and windows add some aesthetic appeal to a space. Just be sure to choose frosted privacy glass.
- Additional considerations for a bath remodel include heated floors, well-placed and attractive storage options and a toilet enclosure (water closet) for added privacy. These and other bathroom renovation ideas can add value and improve the appeal of the room.



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Don't miss a beat during a power outage

Short-term power outages can be a minor inconvenience. A long-term power outage can cause a major disruption to daily life.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration's Annual Electric Power Industry Report says interruptions in electric service vary by frequency and duration across the many electric distribution systems that serve the country. In 2016, the most recent year for data, customers experienced an average of 1.3 interruptions and went without power for around four hours.

When a storm strikes or an accident knocks out electric power lines or other infrastructure, it may take much longer for power to be restored. During Superstorm Sandy in 2012, more than eight million people lost power and outages lasted for days in some major cities. Outlying areas were without power for weeks, according to National Geographic. It's important to know how to handle a power outage to keep everyone safe and comfortable until power can be restored.

Invest in a generator



If you live in an area that is affected by frequent power outages, a power generator may prove a worthwhile investment. Generators come in two basic types. A portable generator can be rolled into place and uses gasoline as fuel. Plug in a set number of household items, depending on the amount of power the appliance can accommodate. A whole-house generator can be hard-wired to a home's electrical system and automatically engage should a power outage occur.

Prepare in advance

In anticipation of a power outage, stock up on battery-powered devices like flashlights, lanterns and radios. Charge mobile phones and other devices so they're at 100 percent power.

Keep a cache of nonperishable food available and plan to use any perishable items that are in the refrigerator first. A refrigerator can keep food cold for about four hours after power has ceased, states Ready.gov, while a freezer can keep the

temperature for about 48 hours if full. Packing these appliances with ice or frozen bottles of water can help.

Purchase books, board games and puzzles to have activities to pass the time until power resumes.

During a power outage

Report the power outage to the power company if it seems localized; otherwise, wait for updates to see who is affected.

Try to remain cool or warm if the HVAC system is not functioning. Pool resources by having everyone in the family gather in one room of the house. Older adults and children are especially vulnerable to extreme temperatures.

Maintain food supplies that do not require refrigeration, including two gallons of bottled water per individual. People who take refrigerated medications should only ingest drugs that have been at room temperature until a new supply is available, advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Power outages routinely occur and require planning and safety precautions until power is restored.



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DIY strategies to deep-clean carpeting

What's underfoot in a home can go a long way toward making residences comfortable and aesthetically appealing.

A study of home buyer preferences using data from the National Association of Realtors® found that 54 percent of home buyers were willing to pay more for a home with hardwood flooring. But that doesn't mean that carpeting doesn't still have its devotees. In 2019, the real estate firm Opendoor installed nearly one million yards of carpeting in its homes. Houzz reports that, in 2018, 17 percent of renovating homeowners purchased carpets and 50 percent purchased indoor rugs.



Carpeting and rugs can offset some of the shortcomings of hardwood, providing a softer texture that makes for a better landing spot for active young children. However, carpets will require more maintenance than hardwood floors. Learning how to deep clean carpets can help homeowners, as vacuuming is not enough to keep carpets in top form.

Spot clean stains

Stores sell a bevy of carpet cleaning solutions. When applying such solutions, do so in an inconspicuous area of the room to ensure colorfastness of the carpet and that the solution does not adversely affect the fibers. If the spot is clean and the carpet is not adversely affected, you can then apply the solution to more visible areas.

Homeowners who prefer all-natural cleaning solutions rather than chemicals can use a solution of white vinegar, baking soda and salt to make a safe cleanser, according to The Spruce. Soak the stain, use a scrub brush to work in the cleanser and then blot up the liquid with a clean cloth. According to the lifestyle resource First for Women, club soda also works as a cleanser when it is sprayed on a stain.

Deep cleaning

Carpets periodically need to be revitalized, and that can be accomplished with a specialized cleaning machine. Many are available for purchase (a good investment for homeowners with kids and/or pets), while others can be rented as needed.

Remove all of the furniture from a room and vacuum to clean dust, dander and any other debris. Address any darker stains first by pretreating with a cleaning solution. Let sit for around 20 minutes. While waiting, learn how to operate the machine, fill it and clean out the soiled water. Never allow the machine to oversaturate the carpet with water, as it can get into the padding and subfloor, causing problems like mold or wood damage. Spray the water-detergent solutions, and then pass the carpet cleaner over spots repeatedly until the carpet feels only slightly damp. DoItYourself.com advises running the machine at the pace of one foot per second.

Removing shoes when entering the home can keep carpets clean and reduce wear and tear.

With frequent deep cleaning, carpets can maintain a like-new appearance for years.

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Real estate financing options

The decision to buy a home is significant. Real estate is the biggest investment the average person will make in his or her lifetime, which underscores just how significant the home buying decision can be.

The real estate experts at Zillow recently reported that the national median price of a home in the United States is \$272,446. However, since the National Association of Realtors reported a record low housing inventory late in 2020, the average house price has been rising rapidly nationwide. The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis estimates the median home sales price at \$374,900, and certain states have much higher prices. WOWA, a real estate and finance technology company, says the average sale price of a home in Canada was \$679,051 in July 2021.

Most people do not have \$300,000 to \$600,000 in savings on hand to purchase a home in cash. That means they'll need to rely on financing to pay for their dream



a home purchase. Personal credit score as well as credit history help determine eligibility and interest rates for conventional loans. Availability of assets as well as income level are some additional determining factors. Conventional loans are traditionally 10-, 15- or 30-year notes and will require a certain percentage as the down payment to secure the loan. The bank will determine the down payment requirement, which is typically somewhere between 3 and 20 percent.

FHA loan

A Federal Housing Administration loan is issued by an FHA-approved lender. These loans are designed for low-to-

moderate-income borrowers, according to the financial guide Investopedia. FHA loans require lower minimum down payments and lower credit scores than many conventional loans. FHA loans also require mortgage insur-

homes.

Conventional lending

Conventional lending refers to when a bank or another financial institution loans a home buyer money to buy a home. This is one of the most common ways to fund

Financing - continued on page 17B



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Financing — continued from page 16B

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HELOC

A Home Equity Line of Credit, commonly called a HELOC loan, borrows against the available equity in your home to create a line of credit, much like a credit card. These funds can be used for large expenses or to consolidate higher-interest rate debt on other loans, according to Bank of America. It may be possible to use a HELOC to secure funding to make improvements to a home for those who want to flip it as an investment property.

Private money lenders

Individuals investing in real estate who do not intend to use a property as a primary residence may turn to private money lenders. These investors can tap into capital from personal connections and lend at specified interest rates and payback periods, according to Fortune Builders, a real estate investing resource. Keep in mind the interest rate will likely be higher with a private lender than through a conventional lender. The repayment term also will be shorter.

VA-backed loan

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has a program for acquiring loans through conventional lenders that will be partially guaranteed against loss through the VA. This enables a lender to give better loan terms, such as the option to pay no down payment. Interested parties need to qualify for a Certificate of Eligibility and then work with qualified lenders.

People have several options to finance the purchase of a home. These loans can help make the dream of home ownership a reality. Potential buyers are urged to speak with mortgage professionals or financial planners to consider their options.

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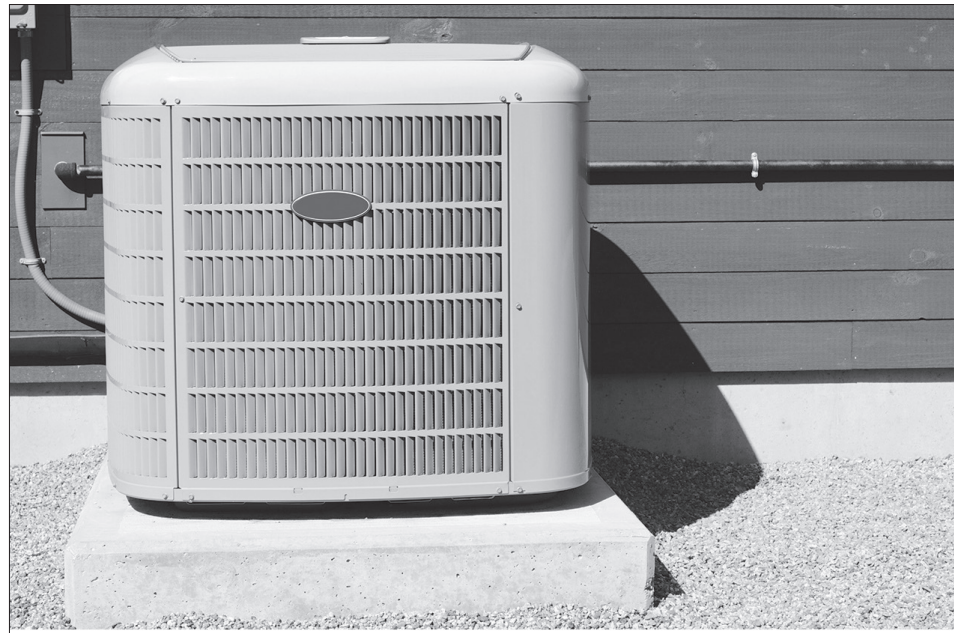
Signs your HVAC unit could be fading

A day outdoors soaking up the sun's rays is many people's idea of the perfect way to spend a summer afternoon. On such days, a periodic retreat indoors into an air conditioned home can offer some much-needed relief from the heat.

HVAC systems are worth their weight in gold during the dog days of summer. Of course, such systems must be replaced from time to time. Learning to recognize the signs of a fading HVAC system can help homeowners replace their units before they cease working, saving everyone the uncomfortable ordeal of being stuck at home without cool air on hot summer days.

Weak air flow

An HVAC unit operating at peak capacity produces a strong flow of air through the vents of a home. The experts at Select Home Warranty note that when the air flow from the vent is weak, this could be a warning sign of a damaged AC compressor or blocked or damaged vents. Damaged vents might be replaceable, but issues with the AC unit might require a



the unit

replacement. That's especially so if the unit is old. Repairs might be possible, but it might be more cost-effective to replace an aging unit rather than commit to costly repairs.

Excessive moisture around

Excessive moisture around the unit may indicate that its refrigerant is leaking. In addition, Home Select Warranty notes that large pools of water around the unit could contribute to mold growth and floor damage. Homeowners are urged

to contact a qualified HVAC technician immediately if they notice any leakage or moisture issues around their units.

Interior temperature

If your home is not quite the respite from summer heat that it once was, despite the AC being on and running, then this could be indicative of a fading system that may need to be replaced. However, the home warranty firm American Home Shield® notes that hot interior temperatures also may be indicative of clogged ductwork. Qualified HVAC technicians may be able to fix clogged ductwork without replacing the AC unit. If the issue persists even after ducts have been cleaned and unclogged, then a new unit might be homeowners' best bet.

Foul odor

Sometimes the nose knows best when an AC unit needs to be replaced. Unusual odors emanating from the vents when the AC is on suggest that the unit is distributing mold or mildew throughout the

HAVC - continued on page 19B

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Did you know?

Though new flooring and ceiling tiles might not offer the wow factor of a remodeled kitchen, a 2019 study from researchers at the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University found that replacing floors and ceilings was the most popular home improvement project in the United States in 2017, the most recent year for which data was available at the time of the study. More than five million homeowners replaced carpeting, flooring, paneling, or ceiling tiles in their homes in 2017. The popularity of such projects may have something to do with the relatively low cost associated with them, as the experts at BobVila.com note that overhauling surfaces underfoot and overhead costs an average of \$3,283. That places floor and ceiling tile replacement projects among the least expensive home improvement projects homeowners can undertake, even though such renovations can immediately and dramatically transform the look of a room.

HAVC - Continued from page 19B

home. The Florida-based heating, cooling, plumbing, and electrical experts at Cool Today note that a moldy or mildew-like smell coming from the vents could indicate a host of issues, including a dirty evaporator coil, a clogged drain line or leaky air ducts. Each of these issues can be fixed, but homeowners must weigh the cost of fixing them versus the cost of

replacing an aging unit.

Come the dog days of summer, homeowners want a reliable AC unit to cool their homes. Recognizing signs of a malfunctioning AC unit is a good first step toward ensuring homes remain cool, relaxing respites from the heat this summer.



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Popular renovation projects during the pandemic

Spending so much time at home during the pandemic led many homeowners to spruce up their homes. According to HomeAdvisor's 2021 State of Home Spending report, spending on home improvements increased by an average of \$745 per household in 2020.

In the face of travel restrictions and social distancing guidelines, many homeowners pivoted in 2020 and spent money they initially intended to use for vacations on home improvements. Though many such projects required the services of a professional contractor, others, including the most popular project among the 5,000 homeowners who participated in the HomeAdvisor report, were do-it-yourself endeavors. That not only gave homeowners' homes a new look, but also gave them something to do during quarantine. The following are the five most popular home improvement projects of 2020 according to the HomeAdvisor report.

1. Interior painting

Just under 35 percent of participants reported taking on an interior painting project in 2020. Interior painting projects can be perfect for DIYers, but homeowners also can trust this task to skilled professionals.

Renovation - continued on page 21B

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Renovation — continued from page 20B

2. Bathroom renovations

Real estate professionals routinely report how much prospective buyers love updated bathrooms, so it's no surprise that roughly 31 percent of homeowners who took part in the HomeAdvisor report indicated they renovated their bathrooms in 2020.

3. Flooring

Floors took on a lot of extra traffic during the pandemic, so it shouldn't be too surprising that flooring projects were popular in 2020. More than one-fourth of participants told HomeAdvisor their homes were updated with a new floor during the pandemic.

4. Landscaping

With nowhere else to go to escape the daily grind in 2020, many homeowners took to their yards. Twenty-four percent of those homeowners reported making their backyard retreats more appealing by repairing or upgrading the landscaping outside their homes. In fact, the average homeowner reported completing 3.4 landscaping projects in 2020.

5. Kitchen

Another project that makes sense given the circumstances, kitchen renovations were the fifth most popular home improvement project in 2020. Restaurant closures and social distancing guidelines led many people to dine in more often than they otherwise would, and just under 23 percent of homeowners reported renovating their kitchens in 2020.

As the world gradually emerges from the pandemic, many homeowners who caught the renovation bug while in quarantine also will be emerging with what feels like an entirely new home.



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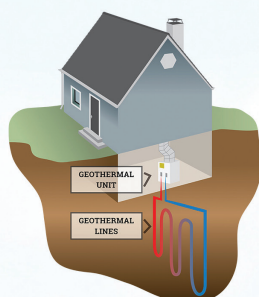
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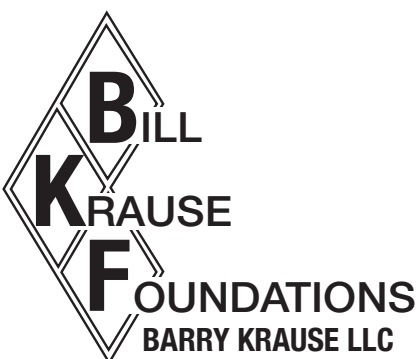
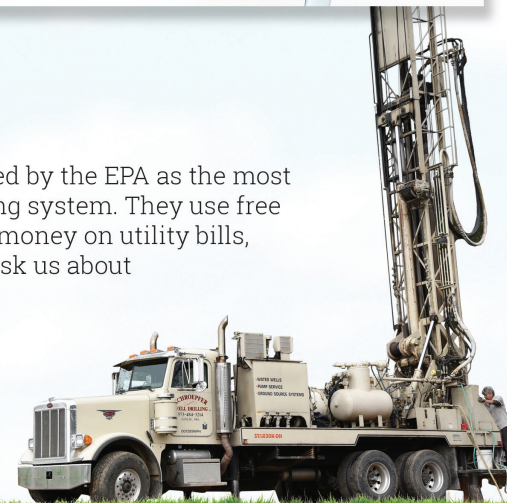


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Exploring different backyard structures

Designing an ideal backyard space requires forethought and an eye for style. Knowing which features to include in a yard often boils down to what homeowners want to achieve in the space. Will it be a relaxing oasis or a central entertaining focal point?

People often look to various structures to add height and visual interest to outdoor spaces. Homeowners will likely come across structures like arbors, gazebos, pergolas, and even trellises as they wade through the variety of features they can incorporate into backyard plans. Each of these structures can add appeal,

Backyard - continued on page 23B



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Backyard - Continued from page 22B

but they also can offer shelter from the sun and privacy when enjoying the yard. There are significant differences between each structure, so here's an in-depth look at what sets them apart.

• **Arbor:** An arbor is one of the more simple garden structures. It is usually a frame that is arched or square-cornered. Most homeowners use it as an entryway to a garden or even the front of the home. Those with green thumbs may cover the arbor with climbing and trailing plants. The Spruce says arbors date back to early Egyptian and Roman gardens and were used throughout Europe by the late 16th century.

• **Pergola:** The words arbor and pergola are often used interchangeably, but to suggest the two structures are the same would not be accurate. Pergola comes from the Italian word "pergola," which means "projection." Pergolas were once projected from exterior walls and supported on one side by pillars or columns. Today, arbors are usually freestanding units with two or four posts. Pergolas may be connected on one side to a home or

another structure. Some are freestanding units supported by four posts. Pergolas tend to be larger and offer more privacy and shade than arbors.

• **Gazebo:** Gazebos are more defined garden buildings, states the contractor referral site Network. Gazebos are freestanding units that can be built in various shapes. Some are octagonal, others are square. Like a pergola, a gazebo is supported by columns and may have low railings or built-in benches. Gazebos also may have a more solid roof than arbors or pergolas, providing sun and other weather protection. The roof may have added architectural appeal, like a cupola.

• **Trellis:** A trellis is a simple, geometrically-shaped structure that provides a surface for climbing plants. A trellis also may support fruit-bearing trees. Trellis work may be used in conjunction with an arbor or pergola, or be installed on fencing.

Incorporating structures into backyard designs can provide functionality and appeal.



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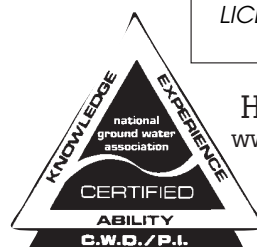
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Why excavation is best left to the professionals

When shopping for a home, buyers often try to envision themselves living in a given property. Images of family gatherings and holidays may instantly come to mind, but prospective homeowners also may begin to envision changes they would make to a property if they were eventually to call it home.

Changing an existing structure or building an entirely new home on an empty plot of land can be exciting. Such changes typically require excavation, which is a complicated process that may be necessary for projects big or small.

What is excavation?

Excavation is the process of extracting material from the ground by digging. Earth, rock and other materials may be moved during the excavation process.

Can do-it-yourselfers excavate?

Skilled DIYers who have participated in excavation projects in the past may be able to handle a project on their own. However, it's important that homeowners recognize that excavation is about more than just digging in the ground. It's a complicated process that requires the use of specialized tools and equipment. In addition, a strong understanding of the land that will be excavated is required for the project to be safe and go smoothly.



Why hire an excavation professional?

Even the most skilled DIYer might be better off hiring an excavation professional than going it alone. That's true for a number of reasons.

- **Liability:** Homeowners who hire a fully licensed and insured professional excavation firm can rest easy knowing that they will not be responsible for any damages or injuries that may occur during the project.

- **Permits/requirements:** A professional excavation firm typically files all the necessary paperwork for work permits or can advise which permits homeowners will need to go forward with the project. In addition, professionals will know the local laws regarding building and excavation. For example, homeowners may be unfamiliar with the concept of lateral support, which refers to landowners' right to have their land physically supported in its natural state by adjoining land and underground structures. This is an important concept to understand during an excavation project, and professionals can advise homeowners if a project they want to undertake will violate lateral support laws.

- **Experience:** Perhaps the best reason to work with excavation professionals is their experience. A lack of excavation experience can result in damage to a homeowner's property and surrounding properties, which can prove costly. DIYers may not know the type of soil they have on their property nor recognize the different types of challenges each type of soil can present during an excavation project. Such knowledge comes with experience and is often invaluable.

Skilled DIYers can tackle many home improvement projects on their own. However, the complex nature of excavation makes these types of projects the kind that are best left to skilled professionals.

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How to add shade to a deck or patio

Homeowners eagerly await the arrival of the warm weather so they can cast off the remnants of cabin fever and bask in the sunshine. However, as summer nears its dog days, the same sun homeowners once coveted can contribute to uncomfortable conditions in outdoor entertaining spaces.

Meteorologists at WHAS11 in Kentucky took to their neighborhoods in July 2020 to test just how hot surfaces can get in the sun during peak daytime temperatures. Concrete sitting in the sun almost all day reached a temperature of 134.7 F, while the same concrete in the shade clocked in at just under 80 F. When air temperatures are around 90 F, unshaded concrete and asphalt can be 125 F and 140 F, respectively. While wood decking may not be as hot as asphalt and concrete, it still can get steamy underfoot.

Homeowners who want to be able to enjoy their outdoor spaces in an array of temperatures can think about investing in shade solutions. Sun-blocking ideas like awnings, shade trees and large umbrellas can help people enjoy their yards all day long.

- **Canopy:** A patio canopy is typically a freestanding unit that can be installed over a patio or a deck. Some people prefer to bolt it down so it will not be knocked over in windy conditions. The fabric on the canopy can be removed during the offseason, helping to improve its longevity.

- **Awning:** Awnings may be stationary or retractable. Many are installed directly onto a home and can cast shade on specific areas of outdoor entertaining spaces.

- **Shade sail:** Similar to an awning but a bit less structurally rigid, shade sails are large pieces of triangular fabric installed over areas of a patio, pool or landscape, according to The Family Handyman. Shade sails are light and airy and can be customized.

- **Trees:** A natural way to increase shade in a yard is to plant more shade trees. If sun glare is an issue all year long, and it's not just the heat of the sun that is troublesome, think about planting evergreen trees. Deciduous cousins will drop their leaves in fall and only be effective during the warm weather.

- **Patio umbrellas:** Many umbrellas start at around \$25. Umbrellas can be paired with patio tables, while stationary cantilever umbrellas sit out of the way on their own heavy-duty stands. A cantilever umbrella tends to provide more shade than patio table umbrellas.

- **Curtains:** Homeowners can block sunlight outdoors the way they do inside, offers MSN. Hang curtains from the sides of canopies or between posts on a deck to provide shade and cozy spaces.

Shade is in high demand when the sun is hot. Options abound for making outdoor areas more comfortable.

Advertiser Index on Page 38

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Tips to keep pests out of crawl spaces

Crawl spaces tend to be no-go zones in many homes. With little room to maneuver and no heating or cooling, it's no wonder people avoid crawl spaces. But pests may see crawl spaces in a wholly different light.

Rodents and insects that find their way into crawl spaces can do significant damage. According to the pest control experts at Terminix®, pests can destroy insulation, gnaw through wiring and air ducts and damage the wooden substructures of a home. Though many homeowners may go months if not years between trips to their crawl spaces, periodic visits to inspect for the presence of pests can help uncover any issues before they escalate into significant problems.

The discovery of pest problems in a crawl space can be unsettling. Some homeowners may wonder how long they've been hosting these uninvited guests, while others may wonder what

they can do to evict them once and for all. Fortunately, homeowners can employ various strategies to keep



pests from taking over their crawl spaces.

- Seal cracks and openings. Pests may enter a crawl space through small cracks or openings, much like cold or warm air can enter through similar cracks around windows and doors. Terminix® notes that homeowners can apply caulk or foam insulation around cracks or openings in their crawl spaces. No crack is too small to seal, as small insects like termites and ants don't need much room to maneuver their way into a home.

- Encapsulate the crawl space. Crawl spaces are dark and damp. Wet, humid

condi-
tions at-

tract
rodents and
insects, increas-
ing the risk
of infestation.

Encap-
and secures a crawl space with a thick
vapor barrier that lines the floor and walls
of the crawl space. Vapor barriers can
keep moisture from condensing on wood,
making the area less likely to attract pests.

- Run a dehumidifier in the crawl
space. Dehumidifiers can help homeown-
ers control moisture in a crawl space. In
fact, many companies that install vapor
barriers recommend running dehumidifi-
ers after a barrier has been installed.

- Examine the perimeter of your home,
particularly the exterior walls. Periodic

examinations of a home's exterior may
reveal brush that can make for ideal shel-
ters for pests. Pests sheltering along the
exterior walls of a home will eventually
try to enter the home, likely through the
crawl space. Remove piles of brush dur-
ing routine walk-arounds of the home and
trim any bushes or shrubs that also may
be providing shelter to pests.

- Keep an eye on the crawl space.
Though crawl spaces can be difficult to
access, homeowners should visit these
spaces periodically. Inspections can help
homeowners determine if dehumidifiers
are still running and allow them to check
for pests or other issues, such as cracks,
that may be inviting unwanted guests into
their homes.

Crawl spaces can become homes and
breeding grounds for pests if homeown-
ers don't take measures to prevent such
issues.

Advertiser Index on Page 38 To be contacted for next year's Home Improvement edition call 573-437-2323

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Safety first with DIY electrical work

Home improvement projects can help homeowners transform their homes. Such projects are costly, but many homeowners save money by doing some, if not all, of the work themselves.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting electrical safety, recommends that homeowners leave electrical work to the professionals. Licensed electricians are well-trained, whereas homeowners may not be skilled enough to avoid accidents or injuries, which can prove fatal when working with electricity.

Homeowners who take the do-it-yourself route with electrical work should consider these safety tips, courtesy of the ESFI, before beginning a home electrical project.

- Learn your home electrical system. Home electrical systems may include power lines, electric meters, service panels, subpanels, wiring, and more. These systems are complex, and homeowners who intend to do some DIY electrical work should familiarize themselves with their home electrical systems prior to beginning any work. The ESFI notes that knowledge of their home electrical systems can help homeowners more safely navigate them and make maintenance easier.

- Honestly assess your skills. An honest assessment of skills is absolutely necessary prior to working on an electrical system. According to the National Safety Council, injuries relating to electrical incidents typically fall into one of four categories: electrical shock, electrocution, falls, and burns. Each of these injuries is significant. For example, electric shock, which occurs when electrical current passes over or through a person's body, involves burns, abnormal heart rhythm and unconsciousness. Given the potential for serious injury, the ESFI urges homeowners to make an honest assessment of their skills before they begin working on their home's electrical systems. Little or no experience working with electrical systems should be considered a significant hurdle to any DIY project.

- Turn the power off. It's essential that the power to the circuit that will be worked on be turned off prior to starting any work. This can be accomplished by switching off the circuit breaker in the main service panel. Similarly, when working on appliances or lamps, make sure the products are unplugged prior to working on them.

- Do not touch plumbing or gas pipes when doing electrical work. The experts at the Indiana Electric Cooperative note that the risk for electrocution is significant when water comes in contact with electricity. It's imperative that homeowners do not touch plumbing and gas pipes when performing a DIY electrical project. Professionals know how to work around such pipes while minimizing their risk for electric shock or worse, and homeowners must familiarize themselves with the techniques professionals rely on to stay safe if they intend to begin DIY electrical projects.

Homeowners are best served by leaving electrical work to the professionals. However, those who insist on doing such work themselves should do their homework and get to know their systems and safety protocols prior to beginning a project.



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Should I DIY?: Three questions to determine if it's best to renovate on your own

A do-it-yourself mentality has taken hold in millions of households across the globe. Popular television channels like HGTV and DIY Network as well as accessible home improvement content on apps like YouTube has inspired many homeowners to tackle renovation projects around their homes. Taking such initiative is admirable, though it also can prove costly if homeowners end up biting off more than they can chew.

Home improvement videos and television shows have a tendency to oversimplify renovation projects, potentially giving homeowners a false sense of confidence in their DIY abilities. A concerted effort on the part of homeowners to determine if it's best to renovate on their own or hire a professional should always be the first step of any renovation project. No two homeowners are the same, but the following three questions can help homeowners determine if DIY is their best option.

1. Can I afford to DIY?

Professional home improvement projects are costly for a variety of reasons. Materi-

DIY - continued on page 29B

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DIY - Continued from page 28B

als can be costly, but so are the tools and labor necessary to do the job right. Homeowners may not have the tools necessary to complete complicated projects. Specialty tools can be expensive to purchase or even rent, and the cost of acquiring such tools should be included in any DIY project cost estimates. Labor also factors heavily into professional projects, and for good reason. Talented contractors have unique skills that have been developed and perfected over many years. Those skills can ensure projects are completed quickly and correctly. Labor may seem costly, but such costs may ultimately prove to be a bargain compared to the cost of fixing DIY mistakes. Projects that are minor in scope and don't require the use of potentially costly specialty tools may be better suited for weekend warriors than more complicated renovations.

2. Do I have the time?

Homeowners must determine how much time they have to complete a project before deciding to do it themselves. No one wants to spend months staring at an unfinished renovation project. Home-

owners who are already pressed for time may not be able to complete projects in a timely fashion, which can make homes less comfortable and even less safe.

3. Can I pull this off?

DIY projects can instill homeowners with a sense of pride in their homes, but it's imperative that homeowners considering the DIY option conduct an honest assessment of their skills. A lack of renovation experience does not necessarily mean a homeowner cannot successfully complete a DIY project. But in such instances, it may be best to start with small, straightforward projects and then gradually move up to bigger, more complicated projects as skills are fine tuned. And homeowners who have never been at their best with a hammer in hand should not be ashamed to leave the work to the professionals.

Television shows and online tutorials can make renovations appear easier than they actually are. Homeowners considering DIY renovations can ask themselves a handful of questions to determine if they're ready for the challenge of renovating their homes on their own.



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What to know before installing built-ins

After purchasing a new home, buyers often want to put their own fingerprint on the property. Homeowners anticipate the day when their homes are transformed into spaces that reflect their style and not the preferences of previous owners.

When deciding how to renovate interior spaces, homeowners will make some relatively temporary changes, but they also may consider some permanent adjustments. Built-ins fall into the category of permanent adjustments, and while realty professionals note that built-ins tend to provide a good return on investment, homeowners can learn more about built-ins before deciding if they want to install them in their homes.

What are built-ins?

Realtor.com defines built-ins as any feature that is built into the interior of a home. The term “built-ins” may immediately conjure up images of bookshelves, but built-ins also include benches and entertainment centers.

Why install built-ins?



Built-ins can be both utilitarian and aesthetically appealing. Built-ins are functional because they provide storage space that homeowners may otherwise find hard

to create. Built-ins are embedded in walls that may otherwise be useful only to hang artwork. This can provide much-needed storage space in homes with limited

square footage. Professionally installed built-ins also can transform rooms, making them appear more organized. Customized built-ins also can give homes their own unique character, though it’s important to note that prospective buyers may or may not appreciate that uniqueness.

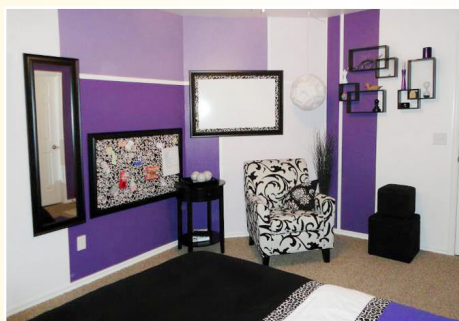
Are there disadvantages to built-ins?

The permanence of built-ins may not appeal to some buyers. If buyers don’t like built-ins at all or are not fond of the look of customized built-ins, that may be enough to convince them to walk away from a property. However, Realtor.com notes that functional built-ins, like built-in bench seats with storage capacity, appeal to modern buyers and their preference for as much storage space as possible.

Permanent built-ins also can be costly. The home remodeling resource Fixr.com notes that built-in entertainment center installations can cost between \$8,000 and \$9,500. Built-in seating and bookshelves

Built-ins - continued on page 31B

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Making the best of a small dining space

Some homeowners may aspire to have expansive dining rooms replete with seating for 12 beneath a stunning chandelier. That kind of space certainly makes hosting dinner parties easier. However, modern homes typically have small dining rooms that require homeowners or renters to be resourceful when entertaining guests.

Hosts may not be able to expand their dining spaces, but there are some clever ways to maximize every inch of a small dining room and even some smart solutions for those who don't have dining rooms at all.

- Create the illusion of more space. Eating areas can be made to feel larger with a few tricks. A mirror on the wall will reflect light and make the room appear larger. In addition, a large-scale patterned floor or oversized artwork on the wall may make the room appear more spacious.

- Maximize seating. Chairs can take up a lot of room in a dining space. To maximize seating availability in smaller dining rooms — or in spaces where you need to create a seating area — look to built-in banquettes or bench seating. These ideas can help create an instant cozy nook and save on space in the process.

- Let space lead furniture choices. Depending on the size and shape of the

room, select a table that will fit comfortably. A round, pedestal table may take up less real estate in a smaller room than an oblong or rectangular one. Also, if you have a narrow, galley-type dining space, select a narrow table and low-profile chairs. Again, benches may work well in narrow spaces.

- Utilize the kitchen island. Many modern homes have no dedicated dining rooms but kitchens that open up to living rooms. Homeowners with kitchen islands can utilize large islands as dining areas, and they're easy places to enjoy casual meals when stools are pulled up to the island.

- Install a drop-leaf table. Drop-leaf tables do for dining spaces what Murphy beds do for guest rooms. A wall-mounted drop-leaf table can be dropped down for entertaining and folded back up when the space needs to be repurposed.

- Lighten up the color palette. Make dining spaces seem larger with brighter colors. Brightly colored decor, furniture and flooring can do the trick.

- Invest in storage pieces. A simple buffet can store silverware, table cloths, wine glasses, and more, but also serve double-duty as a bar or server for a buffet.

Petite dining spaces can be functional when space is maximized and design tricks are called into action.

Built-ins - Continued from page 30B

are not as costly, but such projects still cost more than simply buying premade furniture.

Some buyers also may see built-ins as limiting what they can do with a space. That can be a major disadvantage as more professionals work from home and seek multi-functional spaces in their homes.

Built-ins can dramatically change the look of a room and provide some much-needed storage space. But it's imperative that homeowners give ample thought to built-ins before deciding to install them in their homes.

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Shade trees that can make yards more comfortable

Various factors motivate the decisions homeowners make when designing their landscapes. Some may be motivated by the ways additions will affect the resale value of their homes, while others may be guided by a love for a particular type of plant. Comfort is yet another motivator, and shade trees can make yards more comfortable as the mercury rises. According to the Arbor Day Foundation, the following are some popular shade trees that can add beauty to a landscape and make it more comfortable come the dog days of summer.

- **Quaking aspen:** The quaking aspen has the widest natural range of any tree in North America, spanning 47 degrees of latitude, 110 degrees of longitude (nine time zones) and elevations from sea level to timberline. That impressive range is no doubt why the United States Forest Service notes that the quaking aspen can grow in greatly diverse regions, environments and communities.

- **Northern catalpa:** The Arbor Day Foundation notes that the northern catalpa is easily identifiable thanks to its heart-shaped leaves and twisting trunks and



branches. Nature enthusiasts, and particularly those who enjoy birdwatching, may be happy to learn that the flowers of the catalpa are frequently visited by hummingbirds.

- **Red sunset maple:** Its name alone

makes many people think of lazy summer days spent lounging in the yard. The red sunset maple provides ample shade and comes with the added benefit of producing an awe-inspiring blend of red and orange leaves come the fall. Red sunset

maples can survive in a range of habitats and their adaptable roots means they can thrive in various soil types.

- **Northern red oak:** The state tree of New Jersey, the northern red oak is, according to the Arbor Day Foundation, both beloved for its aesthetic appeal and valued for its adaptability and usefulness. Northern red oaks can tolerate urban conditions, but they do not do well in hot climates.

- **Sawtooth oak:** Another tree that produces some awe-inspiring color, the sawtooth oak is a durable, adaptable shade tree. Golden yellow leaves in the spring will give way to dark green in summer, only to turn yellow and golden brown in the fall. The Tree Center Plant Supply Co. notes that the sawtooth oak can thrive in warmer climates where shade trees that can coexist with high temperatures can be hard to find.

Shade trees can add beauty to a property and make a yard more comfortable. Homeowners are urged to discuss shade trees with a local lawn and garden professional prior to planting.

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How to create a sunroom

As fall inches closer to winter, it's not uncommon for people to look to the coming cold with a degree of lament. Spring, summer and fall provide ample opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors, but such chances are few and far between once the winter freeze settles in. Though winter might compel the masses to huddle up inside, there's still a way to take in the great outdoors on cold winter days and nights.

It might not prove an exact substitute for summer nights around the firepit, but a sunroom affords homeowners a chance to marvel at snowy winter landscapes without venturing out into the cold. Sometimes referred to as "all-season rooms," sunrooms can make for a great retreat on quiet summer mornings or crisp autumn afternoons. Sunrooms can be treated as blank canvasses, which makes decorating them more fun. But a few tricks of the trade can help homeowners turn their blank canvasses into welcoming spaces to take in all that nature has to offer throughout the year.

- Define the purpose. The experts at Better Homes & Gardens recommend homeowners decide how they want to use the sunroom before they begin decorating it. When the weather gets too chilly to dine outside, will the sunroom serve as an alternative dining space in the same way patios and decks do during the warm weather? Or do homeowners want

to turn their sunrooms into reading rooms? Though it's possible to make sunrooms multipurpose spaces, it may be hard to create a relaxing vibe in rooms that are too crowded with furnishings or too busy. Defining how the space will be used also makes it easier when shopping for furnishings.

- Define when the room will be used. In addition to defining how the room will be used, homeowners should give ample consideration to when the room will be used. A year-round sunroom will need to be heated, while a three-season sunroom likely won't require heating. Cooling might be a concern on hot summer afternoons, but many homeowners will likely spend such days outside anyway, so cooling the room may be as simple as installing a ceiling fan and ensuring windows can be opened to let fresh air in. Homeowners who want a year-round sunroom should install insulated glass to keep the room even warmer when the mercury dips.

- Opt for bright colors. Bright colors can make sunrooms feel all the more inviting and make for a perfect match with all the natural light already in the room. The renovation experts at HGTV note that white walls and ceilings can maximize the warm illumination of the natural light that will be pouring in from the floor-to-ceiling windows. Better Homes & Gardens adds that brightly colored cushions, pillows and area rugs with similarly hued colors and pat-



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Tips before deciding to do a DIY demolition

Home improvement projects can range from relatively inexpensive undertakings to complex endeavors that cost homeowners thousands of dollars. In an effort to make expensive projects more affordable, homeowners may look for ways to pitch in, and do-it-yourself demolition is a common way to cut costs.

Due to geographical fluctuations in price as well as the scale of a project, it's hard to pinpoint just how much homeowners can save by doing demolition work themselves. HomeAdvisor estimates that the average small interior demolition project costs just over \$3,000, though more significant demolition projects can cost considerably more than that. Given the cost, it's no surprise that so many homeowners volunteer to do demolition on their own. Though it's possible to do so safely, homeowners can take steps to determine if it's in their best interest to take on a DIY demolition or leave it to the professionals.

- Conduct a cost analysis. Demolition projects seem simple, but they often require the use of equipment most homeowners don't have on hand.

Rentals can be considered in such instances, but the cost of renting equipment can reduce the amount of money homeowners are saving by going it alone. For example, homeowners may be able to pull up vinyl or tile flooring on their own, but not all floors are installed the same. Some floors may have been glued more effectively than others, making it hard and/or time-consuming to pull them up by hand. A walk-behind floor scraper can make it easier to remove such floors, but that equipment must be rented. A cost analysis comparing the contractors' demolition cost estimate and the cost of DIY, complete with equipment rental projections, can give a more accurate picture of how much money homeowners will save by going it alone. If the savings of DIY are negligible, homeowners should probably let the contractor handle the demo.

- Speak with your contractor. Prior to saying they'll do the demo work on their own, homeowners should speak with their contractors to get an ac-

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Did you know?

When remodeling a home with the ultimate goal of making it more attractive to prospective buyers, homeowners can benefit from taking stock of current trends, including the style of home that's most popular. According to a 2020 Homes.com survey of more than 5,000 adults across the United States, modern farmhouse is the most favored house style. The survey asked participants to choose from a selection of styles, including mid-century modern ranch, Spanish colonial/southwest, bohemian craftsman, Italianate, French chateau, and Tudor. The modern farmhouse style was the most popular choice in 42 of the 50 states, proving that home style preference is not beholden to geography. Respondents gave a host of reasons for favoring the modern farmhouse look, including that the style is "aesthetically appealing but not boring" and that it looks "simple, cozy, and not too busy."

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curate idea of what the project will entail. Demolition projects may seem simple enough, but contractors can illustrate the correct way to do things so as to minimize potentially costly damage. Some contractors may offer to help homeowners start the demo project and then leave them to their own devices once they get a knack for what to do. Once homeowners see what it will take, they can then decide if DIY is best for them.

- Enlist help. No DIY demo should

ever be done alone. The risk for accident and injury is simply too great for homeowners to go it alone. Homeowners who can't enlist some volunteers to pitch in should leave the job to the professionals.

DIY demolition can save homeowners a lot of money. But such projects are not necessarily as simple as they seem. Homeowners should take steps to see exactly what they're getting into before they volunteer to take on demo duty.

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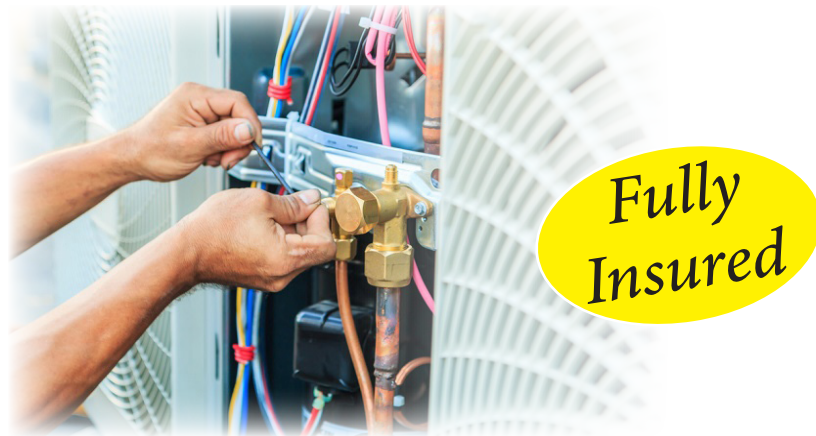
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Craftsman home renovation ideas

Craftsman homes trace their roots to the late 19th century. An architectural style inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement that flourished in Europe and North America for roughly 40 years between 1880 and 1920, the American Craftsman home has endured into the 21st century thanks to its beauty and the unique feel its homes inspire.

Many craftsman homes were built nearly a century ago if not even earlier. That means these homes may be in need of some renovations that make them more functional in modern times without sacrificing their historic beauty.

- **Siding:** Craftsman homes are instantly recognizable from the street. Homeowners who want to maintain that authentic craftsman feel must carefully consider their choice of material when replacing the siding on their homes. The siding manufacturer Allura notes that fiber cement siding can be a great option for homeowners who want to replicate the original design of craftsman homes built with sported board-and-batten siding. Fiber cement siding gives the appearance of wood when installed and does not fade quickly or require significant maintenance.

- **Exterior color:** Homeowners need not feel beholden to certain colors when replacing siding or repainting their homes' exteriors. Nautical color schemes featuring navy blue exteriors with white accents can highlight features that are unique to craftsman homes, but more understated colors and tones can work

just as well.

- **Porches:** An expansive, welcoming front porch that makes for the perfect place to relax and read when the outdoors beckons is a telltale feature of craftsman homes. Furniture options abound when homeowners are looking to upgrade the living spaces just outside the front door of their craftsman homes. Adirondack chairs can make a porch a relaxing place to enjoy a morning coffee or post-dinner digestif, while wicker furniture can help homeowners establish a relaxing vibe for summer. A porch swing or hammock can make that relaxing vibe resonate even more.

- **Real wood cabinets:** Cabinets are a popular avenue homeowners look to when they want to give their kitchens a new look without breaking the bank. When upgrading cabinets in a craftsman home, the home renovation experts at HGTV note that craftsman-style kitchen cabinets often feature straight lines and minimal ornamentation. Cabinets are typically made from heavy woods like quartersawn oak, hickory, cherry, or maple. HGTV notes that updating the cabinets in a craftsman home often requires custom cabinetmakers, so the project may be more expensive than it would be if replacing the cabinets in a different style of home.

Craftsman homes are instantly recognizable thanks to many of their unique features. There are various ways to renovate craftsman homes yet still maintain their authentic feel.

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Signs it is time to overhaul your kitchen

Remodeling a kitchen adds value to a home. Remodeling Magazine's "Cost vs. Value Report" indicates mid-range kitchen remodels cost about \$66,000, and homeowners can expect to recover about 60 to 80 percent of that cost at resale.

Homeowners may wonder if remodeling their kitchens is worth the investment. But homeowners should not just consider cost, but also the current conditions of their kitchens when deciding if a renovation project is the right move to make. These signs indicate it may be time to renovate a kitchen.

- **Breakers are triggered:** If the lights go dark from a tripped circuit breaker every time you try to microwave and run the toaster oven at the same time, your wiring is likely not up to the task of handling the workload and could be out of date. A kitchen remodel will assess wiring load needs and an electric overhaul may be necessary.

- **Lack of storage:** One of the biggest hassles homeowners encounter in their kitchens is a lack of storage space. If making a meal involves a Jenga-like stacking



and rearranging of kitchen tools, or if an avalanche occurs whenever you search for an item, you might need more storage. A carefully planned redesign can achieve this, even in a smaller kitchen.

- **Outdated appliances:** Even if your appliances are not avocado green or mustard yellow relics of the 1970s, they might still need to be replaced. According to CRD Design, appliances are only expected to last around 10 to 15 years. If appliances have become unsafe or energy hogs, it could be time for a remodel.

- **Family is expanding (or shrinking):** Kitchens often are the heart of a home.

They need to meet the needs of the family that resides in that home. A remodel can add space as needed. On the flip side, when a couple becomes empty nesters, kitchens can be redesigned and downsized to reflect their new needs and desires, such as the addition of a wine chiller or espresso station.

- **Poor lighting:** Task lighting is essential in a kitchen, but older homes may not be equipped with lighting where it's most needed. A carefully designed remodel can improve lighting with under-cabinet lights, pendants, overhead lighting, and even natural light to make the space attractive and more functional.

- **Frequent run-ins:** The notion that you can have too many cooks in the kitchen refers to having too many people trying to pitch in or offer their opinions. However, it also can apply to when too many people are gathering in a small space. Redesigning a kitchen can improve the efficiency of a space and make the room feel larger.

- **Aesthetic appeal:** Many kitchen remodels have been inspired by unsightly kitchens. Cosmetic changes can lead to big improvements.

Kitchen renovations can add instant appeal and help address issues that tend to plague outdated rooms.

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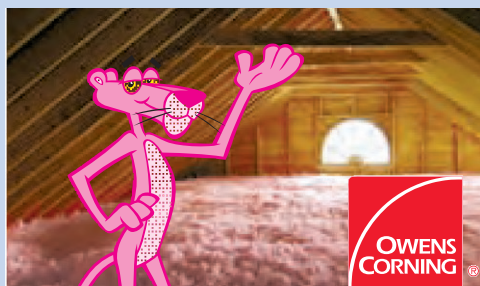
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