



MAXIMIZING RESALE VALUE: SMART RENOVATION STRATEGIES

By Merilee Kern

As the real estate market stabilizes, advising clients on strategic home improvements is more important than ever. Sellers are looking for guidance on which renovations will provide the highest return on investment and increase buyer appeal. With countless options available, it's easy for homeowners to feel overwhelmed about where to start.

To help your clients make informed decisions, Jon Grishpul, Co-CEO of GreatBuildz.com — a free service that connects homeowners with vetted general contractors — shares 10 smart, cost-effective renovation strategies that can enhance property value and attract serious buyers. From minor updates that boost curb appeal to targeted interior upgrades, these improvements can make a significant difference in resale potential. By equipping your clients with these insights, you position yourself as a trusted advisor who not only helps them sell but maximizes their return.

1. Outdoor Upgrades

Curb appeal cannot be understated, and buyers like to have a group area to come home to. This includes the front yard, backyard, any patio space and even the driveway. If any of these structures need serious renovation or repair, consider prioritizing this area to increase home value.

Driveways, in particular, can add a lot of value. This is particularly true if you have an unpaved driveway or can expand the driveway to be wider. These will not only add value, but they will also attract attention. Another addition that can make a huge difference is an outdoor living area, such as a deck or patio. Homeowners have found that they get nearly 100% back on this investment, so it can be a great way to enjoy the outdoors and then increase your resale value down the line.

When doing large landscaping and paving projects, however, you should not DIY these renovations unless you have experience with these

projects. Hiring a professional will be more expensive, but the results will be far more successful.

2. Outdoor Showers

Thanks to celebrities and popular architects, outdoor showers are having a moment this year as a major remodeling trend. They're practical outdoor remodeling projects that serve multiple purposes and add unique designs to traditional neighborhoods. You could use your shower to rinse off after swimming in your pool or mowing your lawn. Wash your dog in your outdoor shower to minimize the inevitable indoor mess. They're also great additions to coastal rental homes for guests who frequently jump into the waves.

If you're considering an outdoor shower, remember to select features like water-resistant tiles to make it last longer. It should also have complete privacy from any neighbors and drainage that directs water away from your home's foundation.

3. Built-In Bookshelves

Wobbly bookshelves and temporary furniture are old news. People are looking forward to installing built-in bookshelves this year instead. They add value to any property and give it instant character — built-in shelves are more of a bold statement than standing shelves. They're also a fun opportunity to create a secret doorway or an entertainment cabinet — talk about a fun remodeling trend!

4. Fireplace Addition

Many buyers are looking for homes that have charming and warm fireplaces in their homes, and they're not always a common feature. Depending on the layout of your home, it can cost just a few thousand dollars to do this renovation.

Even though the investment is small, the return that you might see when reselling is huge. Plus, it will help your home stand out from others that don't have comparable features. This is a definite must if comparable homes in your area all have fireplaces. Without one, you might miss out on great potential buyers.

5. Expansive Windows

Wider windows are popular for numerous reasons. They let more



sunlight into your home, decreasing the need for lamps and more electricity. Big windows can also make rooms appear bigger. Your home will feel brand new with a slightly more expansive view of your backyard or neighborhood.

6. Tankless Water Heaters

Instead of consuming electricity to continuously heat a large tank of water for small usages, tankless heaters warm water only when you need it. They're more cost-efficient for long-term use than water tanks because you'll use much less daily electricity.

7. Hidden TV Centers

People don't want to get rid of their televisions, but sometimes it's nice to hide TVs away for more family time and a cleaner aesthetic. Building a built-in bookshelf that spans a living room wall or an alcove with hidden doors above a fireplace has great appeal. Whether you have a large flatscreen that prioritizes the environment or a vintage television, you can build an entertainment center that tucks it out of sight whenever you want to unplug.

8. Jetted Bathtub

Going to the spa is always a treat, but people might not schedule appointments as often as they'd like. That's one reason homeowners are installing jetted bathtubs in their bathrooms. You can relax in luxury without leaving your home when you remodel your bathroom to fit your preferred jetted model. The simple element will help relieve your daily stress if you love to soak in a bubble bath.

9. Walk-In Closets

Bigger closets give buyers more room to store their belongings, but they're so much more than storage space. They also add luxury to any home and create new opportunities for personalization. Advise clients to consider remodeling their closet this year to include features such as cabinets, built-in lighting, display shelves and seating. It will add value to the home and make it feel like a mansion. Plus, it's always helpful to have extra storage.

10. Kitchen Refresh

When buyers are browsing real estate listings, many seek stunning kitchens with amazing details. If your listing doesn't have this yet, upgrading the

kitchen is one of the best renovations that you can recommend. Note that kitchen remodels can be incredibly expensive — but the return on investment can be huge. Some sellers who renovated their kitchen before selling found that their home resale value rose by more than \$80,000 after a kitchen remodel, and they even got multiple offers.

If comparable properties in your area have renovated kitchens, this will be a must if you want to increase the listing price. If properties do not have renovated kitchens, this might be a great time to stand out. To cut back on costs, consider only renovating part of the kitchen, especially if the kitchen is already partially updated.

A client can spend less than \$20,000 on renovations if they only update one or two of the following:

- Cabinetry
- Appliances
- Countertops
- Flooring
- Lighting and fixtures.

Of course, consider your budget when choosing between these enhancements. It's OK if your client cannot take on a huge renovation project. Even small investments can double back the money they earn at resale, so think logically as you help them plan your next steps.

