

YOUR HOME

JANUARY
2012

TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS

ROI MATTERS



If you're looking to make some upgrades to your home this year, be sure to think about what makes sense for your lifestyle as well as what will offer the best return on investment. Start by checking out the results of *Remodeling* magazine's latest Cost vs. Value report.

If you have an attic, you could be using it for much more than just storing holiday decorations and boxes of mementos. According to the report, converting part of the attic into an extra bedroom — which, on average, costs just over \$50,000 — can recoup 72 percent of the cost when the home is sold.

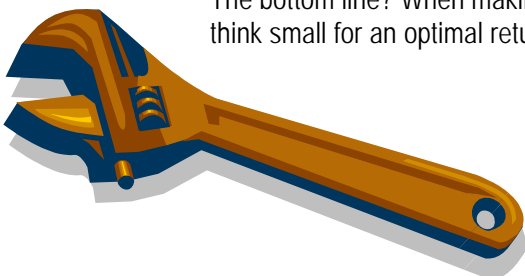
On the other hand, the addition of a deluxe master suite (an average cost of \$230,000) will only recoup just over half of the investment.

If you've been thinking about sprucing up your outdoor space, now might be the time to invest in a new backyard deck; at an average cost of just over \$10,000, this investment will recoup nearly 70 percent, the report says. When considering deck materials, choose wood over composite — it will recoup nearly 10 percent more on your investment.

Making over your garage can also be a good idea — replacing a garage door, which costs less than \$2,000, recoups just over 70 percent of the total cost. But if your home is up for sale without a garage, it's best to leave it alone. The addition of a garage costs about \$58,000 and only recoups about 57 percent during resale.

Some other minor projects that might be worth the investment include replacing windows with insulated vinyl or wood models (the cost, between \$7,600 and just over \$8,000, is recouped by almost 70 percent), and remodeling the bathroom (cost is about \$16,000 and the cost recouped is about 62 percent).

The bottom line? When making renovations, think small for an optimal return on investment.

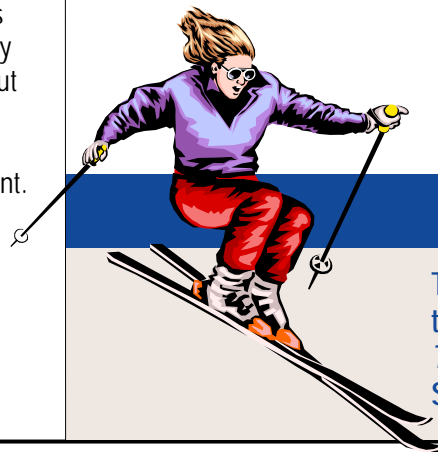


BRIGHT IDEA

Looking for a cost-effective way to increase security in your home and save energy at the same time? You could put some of the lamps in your house on a timer — or you could consider wireless lighting.

According to *Frontdoor.com*, wireless lighting enables you to replace switches in your home with receivers that respond to radio frequency signals from remote controls. It might sound complicated, but it's fairly simple: Disconnect the manual switches and replace them with dimmers. Freestanding lamps that must be plugged into an outlet can be plugged into wireless receptors connected to the outlet. You can even program one remote to operate multiple lights throughout your house, no matter the size.

Aside from the ability to turn off a light downstairs when you're already upstairs or turn on a light from anywhere in your home if you hear a suspicious noise, the main benefit of installing a wireless lighting system is reducing electricity and energy consumption. You can connect the system to a timer to set lights to turn on and off at specific times. Wireless systems can range in price, from as little as \$30 for a starter kit to hundreds of dollars to equip your entire home. Before installation, talk to a certified electrician to ensure the kit you purchase is the best for your home.



fast fact >> >>

The most popular U.S. winter travel destination, according to *Travel + Leisure* magazine, is Salt Lake City.



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CLEAN SWEEP

Have you made a New Year's resolution to downsize all the "stuff" you've accumulated in your home? You're not alone. Get started with these tips from TLC and *Real Simple* magazine for tackling clutter in prominent spaces.

Closet Consider installing a second rod underneath the primary clothing rod to hang skirts, shorts, scarves and bags; you can double your storage and eliminate the need for shelving. Keep only in-season items in your closet; box the rest and store underneath the bed or in a storage closet. To keep your closets from getting cluttered in the first place, implement a new rule: For each new item that comes in, two items must be thrown out or donated.

Kitchen Keep objects close to where they are used. For example, keep the dishes near the dishwasher, and the spices at arm's length of the stove. If the objects in question are easier to put

away after use, the kitchen is more likely to stay clean. Clear counters of unused small appliances and cookbooks and store them in cabinets or shelves instead. Use the insides of cabinets and pantry doors to organize knickknacks, such as chip clips or bottle openers that can hang, or trim down an over-the-door shoe organizer to fit the inside of the cabinet to house these items.

Home Office Establish a filing system that you can easily — and immediately — use to keep bills and loose papers from getting out of hand. Keep labeled manila folders at the ready; assign folders for tax records, utility bills and medical expenses, for example. Consider investing in a scanner to digitize important documents and save them on a hard drive for easy (and paper-free) access. Create a "shelf life" rule for magazines; for example, purge weeklies after a month and monthlies every few months.



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DID YOU KNOW?

When deicing your steps this winter, consider magnesium chloride over calcium or sodium chloride. The latter can damage concrete and metal steps.



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

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