



Improvements to boost your home's value and enjoyment

FAMILY FEATURES

A home is often a family's single largest asset, so making investments with upgrades and home improvements is almost always a good idea. However, knowing when and where to make those improvements isn't necessarily a simple decision. Budget and space most often dictate the direction, but keeping function and your lifestyle needs in mind can help create a space that makes for an all-around smart investment.

Add technology in unexpected places.

With the surge in smart devices, it's becoming increasingly common to add technology throughout the house, and the bathroom is no exception. From heated floors to mirrors with embedded TV screens, the options are plentiful. A bathroom outfitted with the latest technology can bring function and a whole new level of style and elegance to your home. When choosing your upgrades, set a budget and then let your imagination soar to create a spa-like retreat you can experience without ever leaving home. Keep in mind that not all smart devices integrate seamlessly, so do your research before buying to ensure a convenient connected setup.

Go green for the earth and savings.

Appliances and climate control systems are often the first features homeowners consider when it comes to environmentally friendly upgrades, but windows and window treatments are another way to make a big impact. In a similar vein, skylights are a surprisingly affordable upgrade for the functionality and aesthetic benefits they provide, especially in the bathroom and kitchen where ventilation is as important as ample lighting. You can give your lighting and home value a boost with an Energy Star-qualified option such as Velux solar-powered fresh-air skylights, which open for air flow, reducing dependence on electrical lights and fans, with the touch of a programmable remote control.

For expanded control over the amount of light and warmth that enters or leaves your rooms, solar-powered skylight blinds are available in more than 100 designer colors and patterns. Like the skylights, Velux solar-powered blinds are operated with the remote. The solar products and installation costs are also eligible for a 30-percent federal tax credit. Learn more at whyskylights.com.

Finish the basement.

Adding finished square footage to your home is nearly always a way to increase its value. For many homes, the basement is the most practical place to gain that space. Instead of using it as a collection ground for dust bunnies and storage, converting it into usable space can bring meaningful value, not only in dollars and cents, but in overall enjoyment of your home.

A basement is the perfect location for expanded room to live and entertain, and if you have egress or other windows, adding extra bedrooms may also be an option. When making plans for finishing a basement, keep function first. Adding features like bathrooms can be costly if the plumbing isn't already in place, but having ready access to those facilities may pay off if you plan to spend lots of time downstairs. Also keep climate in mind; in many parts of the country basements tend to be damp, so be sure to use materials that can withstand the conditions during the rainy season.

Create outdoor living space for all year long.

If a basement renovation or addition isn't practical for your location or budget, you may be able to create additional living space in an area you already have – outdoors. Even small patio spaces can become cozy gathering spots with the right furnishings and decor. For a larger yard, create destinations that make it comfy to congregate, such as a fire pit or grouping of chairs with overstuffed cushions.

This is another area where climate will play an important role in your plans; adding a well-constructed enclosure to a patio can make it usable during all but the coldest months, while a pergola or other shading can lend necessary relief to an area that bakes in the summer sun. Aside from the hardscaping, look at other ways to soften your outdoor space and enhance livability, such as functional shade trees and flowering vegetation that attract birds and butterflies.

Add curb appeal.

While you're considering the upgrade options outdoors, don't forget to think about your home's overall exterior appearance. Not only is it the first impression guests have of your home, it's your own view every time you pull into the drive and it's one that should make you proud. Reworking the landscaping to highlight architectural features and freshening up the paint can make a big impact. Adding decorative elements like shutters or new lighting or doors can also update a tired exterior.

Home Upgrades that Make 'Cents'



Choose the Right Skylight

Skylights can serve multiple functions, depending on your home and needs. Understanding the different types of skylights can help you choose the right fit.

Fresh Air

Solar-powered fresh-air skylights rely on the sun's energy to open and bring air and natural light into your home. Some models, such as those offered by Velux, feature a rain sensor that automatically closes the skylight at the first sign of precipitation.

Fixed

An economical choice, these static skylights are intended to fill a room with natural light.

Energy Performance

Adding a solar blind to a skylight can result in more savings via potential tax credits, as well as reduced energy usage. The blind blocks heat, but when open allows warm rays to supplement the home's heating system.

