

Spring Home Improvement

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PITCH IN AND SAVE MONEY

Do-it-yourself culture makes it easier than ever to complete home improvement projects on a budget



Home improvement projects can be expensive. While the size and complexity of a project will affect how expensive the project is, homeowners can expect to shell out a pretty penny when they renovate or remodel areas of their home.

According to HomeAdvisor, an online resource for homeowners looking to connect with home improvement, maintenance and repair professionals, the average bathroom remodeling project costs \$9,348, while the average home addition costs slightly less than \$41,000. But renovation-minded homeowners need not reconsider their commitment to remodeling, as there are various ways to cut the costs associated with home improvement projects.

One such way is for homeowners to pitch in and do some of the work themselves.

Calculating labor costs can be difficult, as such costs can vary greatly depending on the project, the contractor and the amount of hired help that contractor intends to employ. However, some estimates suggest labor will account for anywhere from 25 to 50 percent of the overall cost of the project. So it's no surprise that homeowners can save themselves substantial amounts of money by doing some of the work themselves.



COURTESY IMAGES

Homeowners capable of pitching in on home renovation projects can save substantial amounts of money on labor costs.

Homeowners who intend to do some of the labor themselves should discuss this plan with contractors during the vetting process. Before hiring a contractor, make sure homeowners' expected labor contributions are clearly defined in the contract.

While it's best to leave the most complicated parts of a project to the professionals, homeowners can pitch in during the following phases.

- **Demolition:** Demolition involves more than picking up a sledgehammer and swinging

away. Some demolition projects are best left to the pros. For example, any projects that involve exposure to hazardous materials are risky and therefore best left to experienced laborers. However, many homeowners are capable of safely and effectively pulling cabinets from walls, removing flooring or knocking down drywall. Homeowners unsure of how to approach demolition tasks can ask their contractors to demonstrate the proper technique so the demolition is done right and on time.

- **Salvage:** Removing debris and items that will no longer be needed once the renovation is complete is another way homeowners can pitch in. Homeowners remodeling their kitchens may be replacing their existing stoves and refrigerators and hoping to donate these items. In such instances, driving the items to the donation site or arranging for them to be picked up rather than taken off the premises by the contractor or his employees can cut labor costs, as it allows laborers to keep working toward the end goal rather than requiring them to leave the work site to drop unwanted items off.

- **Cleanup:** Homeowners also can save costs by cleaning up after the contractors at the end of each workday. Speak with the contractor about cleaning up the site each day, asking him or her what can be discarded and what must remain on-site.

Investigating resource websites might also help people realize small- or large-scale projects they are capable of doing on their own, such as painting walls or cabinets, switching light fixtures, ripping up carpet and more.

Home improvements are costly. But homeowners who are capable of pitching in can greatly reduce the overall cost of their next renovation project. — *Metro*

Tackle spring cleaning projects in a single weekend

Spring cleaning is an annual rite of passage in many households. Because winter weather tends to encourage people to stay indoors more than they would during other times of the year, clutter can accumulate in a home over the course of a typical winter. That makes spring cleaning a necessity.

Few homeowners likely enjoy spring cleaning. The warm weather associated with the arrival of spring makes many people who have spent the previous months indoors less than enthusiastic about spending a spring weekend indoors cleaning and clearing away a season's worth of clutter. But homeowners who organize their spring cleaning projects can ensure such efforts take just a weekend or less.

1. Enlist the whole family.

Chances are, everyone who lives in the home can lay claim to some of the dirt, grime and clutter that built up over the winter. So it only makes sense that everyone then pitches in to clean the home come spring-time. Parents and heads of household can delegate tasks to everyone, incentivizing cooperation with the promise of rewards if the cleaning is completed in a single weekend.

2. Clear your schedule.

Another way for homeowners to ensure their spring cleaning projects are started and fin-

ished in a single weekend is to clear their schedules for the entire weekend. Schedule projects for a weekend when you have no prior commitments or plan far enough in advance that you can avoid making plans on a given weekend. It will greatly increase your chances of getting everything cleaned and cleared.

3. Do your homework.

Homeowners should do their homework with regard to finding local recycling centers or charitable organizations to whom they intend to donate items. Many charitable organizations will come to private homes to pick up donations, but such pickups often must be

arranged in advance. In addition, if recycling will be a part of your spring cleaning efforts, familiarize yourself with the weekend hours of nearby recycling plants so you can drop items off on your cleaning weekend instead of leaving them lying around to be donated later. — *Metro*



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How to protect coastal property

Many people dream of owning coastal properties. Some aspire to have a home away from home for vacations or long weekends, while others move to the coast to be nearer to family or when they reach retirement age.

Living close to the water can be relaxing, and it's hard to beat the fresh air and the relaxing sound of the waves. However, coastal homes require some unique upkeep that prospective buyers should familiarize themselves with before buying a property.

SALT WATER

Salt buildup is one of the pitfalls of living close to the ocean. Salt is corrosive to metal components, so homeowners are advised to avoid metal parts in various areas of construction on their homes. Windows and doors are particularly at risk because they face the constant onslaught of Mother Nature. Fiberglass, vinyl and aluminum are less corrosive than other metal parts and should be considered in window framing. Homeowners may need to apply lubricant to moving parts, locks and fasteners to keep them moving smoothly.

Consult with a lawn and garden expert about which coastal plants thrive with high levels of salt in the air. Professionals can make recommendations on low-maintenance landscapes that will not be damaged by the sun and salt.

Humidity and salt concentrations also can cause concern indoors. Mold likes damp, dark conditions, so homeowners should do their best to keep their homes dry and well-ventilated. Rely on dehumidifiers to take moisture out of the air. Install more vents to draw air outside and create fresh air flow.

COASTAL FLOODING


Coastal flooding is another concern for homeowners who live close to the water. Prospective buyers should first determine if the house they want to buy is in a flood zone or an evacuation zone. This is information that may come up when applying for homeowner's insurance, as flood insurance is a separate policy.

Individuals may have to take special measures to protect their homes from incoming tides or high waters during storms. The National Flood Insurance Program provides a flood damage simulator to predict the total cost of flood repair based on the height of the water. For one to four inches of water, the estimated repair cost is \$7,800. For nine to 12 inches, the estimate is \$18,930. At 18 inches, the estimated cost is \$26,285. Homeowners may want to invest in lifting their homes or taking other preventative measures if coastal flooding is common.

PRIVACY AND SAFETY

Living by the ocean can be great, but coastal towns are often a magnet for tourists. Homeowners with seaside homes or homes in popular tourist areas may want to take extra steps to create privacy and security. Fencing and natural windblocks can block the view of backyards and other outdoor spaces. An alarm system can offer peace of mind in areas close to resort towns. Adequate lighting can deter trespassers as well.

Living by the ocean is a dream for many people. The increased upkeep required on a coastal home is often a small price to pay for such luxury, but it's something prospective buyers should consider before buying a home. — *Metro*



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