

Selling Your Home

A checklist

Compliments of . . .

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Preparing your house for sale

Remove all clutter from the house

Are countertops free and clear?

Have you removed unnecessary furniture throughout the house?

Remove the art gallery and coupon collection from the refrigerator.

Check the bathrooms.

Are the surfaces clean and clear?

Are shower curtains and doors hung properly?

Is the flooring clean and fresh?

Are towels neatly hung?

Check the walls

Is paint and wallpaper fresh and clean?

Are the walls free from holes?

Are there any colors or objects on the walls that need to be removed?

Check the floors

Is the carpet clean and free from stains?

Are hard surface floors clean and free from stains?

Check windows and window coverings.

Are all the windows clean?

Are draperies and blinds clean?

Pet check

Are there any signs that this is a pet's home? Be sure to clean and

Remove kitty litter, pet toys and bedding.

Check the aroma

Try to air out the home prior to showings.

If air freshener is necessary, use well before showings as a consideration to those with allergies.

Set the mood prior to showings

Open draperies and blinds.

Turn on the radio to a classical music station, set the volume on low.

If you have time, cook a batch of cookies to have the warm, welcoming aroma permeating the home.

Improvements that pay

If you're thinking about remodeling your kitchen, or finishing your basement, you probably want to get your investment back when you sell your home. But when it comes to payback value of home improvements, some are definitely more profitable than others. As a general rule, kitchen and bathroom projects usually get

a nice return on investment, typically 90% or more. Things like adding rooms or finishing basements tend to pay back the least. Finishing a basement usually returns less than 50%, so it's not a project likely to show profit at selling time.

There are a number of factors that go into determining how well a project will pay back. Payback value depends a lot on the current market conditions in your area. If the market is hot and homes are selling fast, you can expect a higher payback value than you would get in a slow market.

The type of project you do and how it fits in with other homes in the area can have a big influence on payback too. If you put your money into the wrong type of improvement, you won't get your money back. But if you're smart about what you do, you can make money. The payback will be better on improvements that are in demand and conform to neighborhood standards. Adding a second bathroom in a neighborhood where most homes have two bathrooms will give a high return on investment. Building a large addition that makes your home twice as big as the other homes on the block probably won't pay back very well. Likewise, the popularity of a project will factor into how much it pays back. An improvement heavily customized to your wants and needs won't pay back as well as something more common to other homes in the neighborhood.

Another factor to consider is the cost of the improvements. If you can do the work yourself, you can save significantly on the cost of the project and greatly improve the chances of getting a good return on the investment.

The list below is compiled from several published surveys and shows typical payback for some popular remodeling projects:

- Kitchen remodeling — 90%
- Add a bathroom — 90%
- Bathroom remodeling — 80%
- Install central heating — 90%
- Install central air — 75%
- Add a deck — 70%
- Replace windows — 70%
- Add a room — 55%
- Build a pool — 45%
- Finish a basement — 40%

Curb appeal checklist

Inspect the outside ground. Remove any building materials, scrap wood, discarded household items, etc. from the property. Store garbage cans in the garage.

Check the home from the roof line down.

Is the roof free and clear from obstructions and moss? Are the gutters clear and neatly hung? Are the windows clean and free from obstructions (such as overgrown bushes or trees)? Are bushes, trees and shrubs neatly pruned?

Inspect the condition of the paint or siding?

Is it time to power wash the siding? Is touch up paint needed? Is the front door in good shape?

Do flower beds need an upgrade?

Are plants neatly pruned? Is the bed free and clear of weeds? Is the bed properly mulched? Are flowers in bloom?

Keep the lawn neatly groomed.

Is the lawn free from weeds? Is the lawn free from grass clippings? Is the lawn neatly edged?