

Home Sellers: Cut to the Chase in Home Repairs and Enhancements

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2011 opens as a strong buyer's market so home sellers must be on their toes to give their homes maximum appeal. Not only should sellers complete the home repairs they know must be made, they should also hire a certified home inspector to thoroughly and impartially evaluate their properties.

If this inspection results in a fix-it list, review the list with your real estate professional to establish necessities and priorities. Depending on your budget and objectives, you may want to repair only items that could cause significant deterioration to your property, such as a leaky roof. Ideally, the closer you can get your home to "move-in-ready" status, the more likely you are to attract today's cautious and discerning buyers.

Among the most common repairs and enhancements yielding immediate buyer appeal include:

- Paint inside and outside in neutral colors
- Steam clean or replace carpets
- Polish or replace hardwood floors
- Clean or re-grout kitchen and bathrooms
- Replace light fixtures
- Change light bulbs throughout and replace wall-switch covers
- Repair dripping faucets
- Fix sticking doors
- Repair broken fencing

Home sellers wanting to do more should consider the findings of Remodeling magazine's 2010-'11 Cost vs. Value Report, released in December 2010. The survey used input from REALTORS in 80 cities to rank home remodeling projects according to those that bring the greatest cost recovered at sale.

Many of the top projects focus on exterior replacements, as replacements are generally less expensive than other types of projects and they add all-important curb appeal – essential for today's competitive market or any other.

The Top Five projects in the Cost vs. Value Report include:

No. 1 – Entry door replacement (steel)

No. 2 – Garage door replacement (four-section door, reuse existing motorized opener)

No. 3 – Siding replacement (fiber-cement siding)

No. 4 – Kitchen remodel (minor: new cabinet doors, drawers and hardware, plus new energy-efficient appliances, flooring, counters, sink and faucet)

No. 5 – Deck addition (wood)

When the dust clears and projects are complete, be sure that you and your real estate professional document your repairs and enhancements, and share the report with prospective buyers. Walk prospects through the enhancements and include their costs.

A home in good condition demonstrates pride of ownership. Taking the time to make enhancements helps ensure your home is presented in its best-possible light, primed for sale.

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