

## Household Component Life Expectancy

A well-built home can last for hundreds of years, but many of its parts must be replaced or renovated regularly. Here's a sampling of life expectancies for different products and materials used in the home, as listed in a report titled "1997 Housing Facts, Figures and Trends" published by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) based in Washington, D.C.

<b>APPLIANCES</b>	<b>LIFE SPAN (in years)</b>
Compactor	10
Dishwasher	10
Garbage Disposal	10
Dryer	10
Microwave Oven	11
Range (freestanding and built-in, electric)	17
Range (freestanding and built-in, gas)	19
Range (high oven, gas)	14
Refrigerator (standard)	17
Washer (automatic and compact)	13
Exhaust Fan	20
<b>BATHROOMS</b>	
Cast Iron Bathtub	50
Fiberglass Bathtub and Shower	10-15
Shower Door (average quality)	25
Toilet	50
<b>CABINETS</b>	
Kitchen Cabinets	15-20
Medicine Cabinet/Bath Vanity	20
<b>COUNTERTOPS</b>	
Laminate	10-15
Ceramic Tile (high-grade installation)	Lifetime
Wood/Butcher Block	20+
Granite	20+
<b>DOORS</b>	
Screen	<30-life
Interior (not perfect hollow core)	30-life
Interior (solid corewood)	80-100
Exterior (protected by overhang)	25-30
Exterior (unprotected and exposed)	30-life
Folding	20-50
Garage Door	10
<b>FINISHES</b>	
Paint, plaster and stucco	3-5
Sealer, Silicone and Waxes	1-5
<b>FLOORS</b>	
Oak or Pine	Lifetime
Slate Flagstone	Lifetime
Vinyl Sheet Or Tile	20-30
Terrazzo	Lifetime
Carpeting	11
Marble	Lifetime
<b>FOOTINGS AND FOUNDATIONS</b>	
Poured footing and foundation	200
Concrete block	100
Cement	50
Waterproofing (bituminous coating)	10
Termite Proofing	5
Baseboard System	20
<b>HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR CONDITIONING</b>	
Air conditioning unit (central unit in combination with a forced air furnace or heat pump)	15
Air conditioning (window unit)	10

Humidifier (central automatic humidifier on a forced air system)	8
Water heater (electric)	14
Water heater (gas)	11-13
Forced air furnace, heat pump	15
Furnace, gas or oil fired	18
<b>HOME SECURITY APPLIANCES</b>	
Intrusion system	14
Smoke detector	12
Smoke/fire/intrusion system	10
<b>LANDSCAPING</b>	
Wooden deck	15
Brick and concrete patio	24
Tennis court	10
Concrete walk	24
Gravel walk	4
Asphalt driveway	10
Swimming pool (in-ground)	18
Sprinkler system	12
Fence	12
<b>PAINTS AND STAINS</b>	
Exterior paint on wood, brick and aluminum	7-10
Interior wall paint	5-10
Interior trim and door	5-10
Interior wallpaper	7
<b>PLUMBING</b>	
Waste pipe (concrete)	50-100
Waste pipe (cast iron)	75-100
Sinks (enamel steel sink)	5-10
Sinks (enamel cast iron sink)	25-30
Sinks (porcelain)	25-30
Faucets—low quality	13-15
Facets—high quality	15-20
<b>ROOFING</b>	
Asphalt and wood shingles and shakes	15-30
Tile	50
Slate	50-100
Sheet-metal	20-50
Built-up roofing (asphalt)	12-25
Built-up roofing (coat and tar)	12-30
Asphalt composition shingle	15-30
Asphalt overlaid	25-35
<b>SIDING</b>	
Gutters and downspouts	30
Siding (wood)	10-100
Siding (steel)	50-life
Siding (aluminum)	20-50
Siding (vinyl)	50
<b>WINDOWS</b>	
Window glazing	20
Wood casement	20-50
Aluminum casement	10-20
Screen	25-50



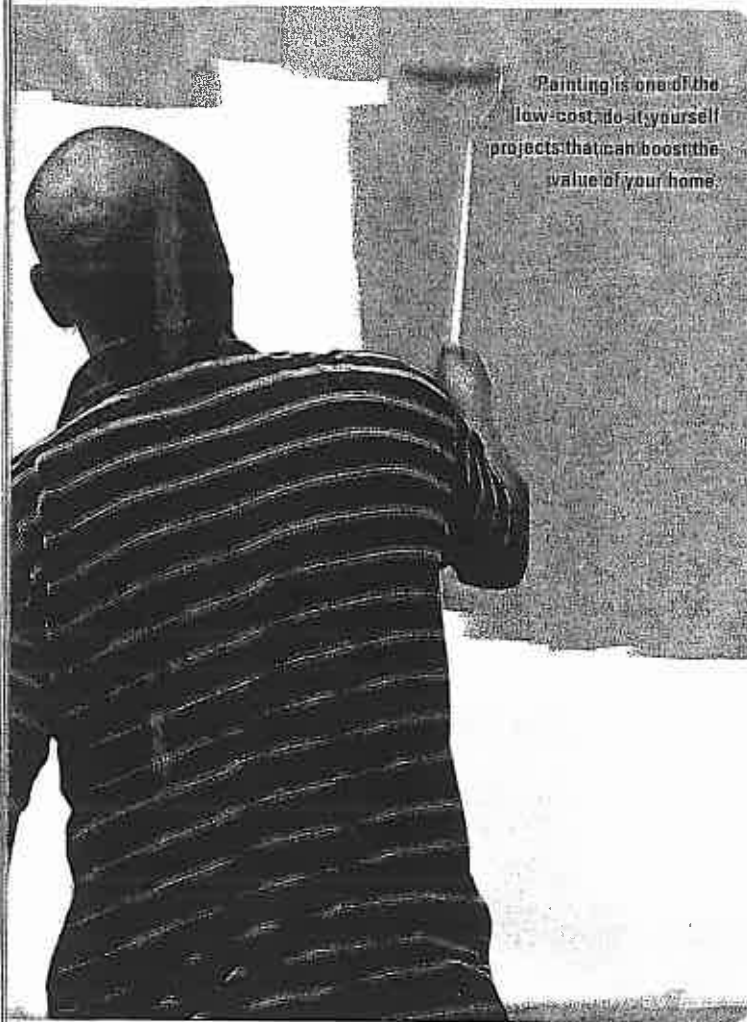
# HOME MOVES TO MAKE NOW

Regardless of the housing market, your home is still likely your largest financial asset. Whether you're staying or selling, the right steps can still pay off.

Now that the housing market has slowed, you may be considering a remodeling project or two to help your home sell in a tight market. Or maybe you've decided to stay put, and simply want to get the most enjoyment you can out of your home. Whichever route you take, there are right and wrong ways to go about feathering your nest.

**HANDS-ON HELP** Many homeowners are quite capable of taking on and completing do-it-yourself (DIY) remodeling projects.

Others, however, can get in over their heads. "My readers, who are all professional contractors, love do-it-yourself projects because most of them don't work out and then they get a phone call," says Sal Alfano, editorial director of *Remodeling* magazine. He says the many books, TV shows and in-



Painting is one of the low-cost, do-it-yourself projects that can boost the value of your home.

store demos out there are great motivators. Still, most weekend DIYers should exercise caution with projects that involve system changes—moving the location of wiring, plumbing or ductwork for heating and air-conditioning. “The simpler the project, the better,” Alfano says.

That still leaves plenty for the determined do-it-yourselfer to tackle—from painting to installing user-friendly floating flooring materials. And even with a major kitchen or bath project for which you’ve hired a contractor, you might still be able to save money by taking on some of the basic tear-out work, such as removing countertops and cabinets.

**PICK YOUR PROJECT** *Remodeling* magazine’s annual Cost vs. Value Report is a snapshot of how the market rewards home-improvement spending, and the 2007 update spots a continuing trend. “I think there’s a trend to more practical-minded projects,” Alfano says. “This is the second year running where a lot of what we would consider to be maintenance or replacement projects are high up in the top 10.” Those projects are usually relatively low-cost and many of them, such as replacing siding or windows, have the added advantages of boosting curb appeal and energy savings—both attractive draws to potential buyers.

Kitchen and bath remodels are still popular, but the scope and size of those projects has come down. Also know that today’s buyers are more fickle, so edgy color and materials choices might exclude you from the mainstream market. Most of all, make sure that you don’t over-improve relative to the housing values in your neighborhood.

But most remodeling projects aren’t done with resale value in mind. “People are motivated because they have an immediate need. They need new space, bigger space, better space,” Alfano says.

## Going Green: What’s the Payback?

It seems everyone is going green these days. But how long will it take to recoup the cost of an energy-wise home improvement like adding attic insulation or installing replacement windows?

That depends, says Jim Gunshinan, managing editor of *Home Energy* magazine.

And what it depends upon is the age and condition of your house. “That’s why I think it’s important that you hire a home-performance contractor (for an energy audit). The best thing is to get good information about what each retrofit will cost up front and how much it’s likely to save you, and then make your decision based on that. It’s going to be different for every house,” Gunshinan says.

Still, there are improvements you may want to consider even without a professional consultation that are likely to have a relatively short payback period. A few of the best: swapping incandescent bulbs for compact fluorescents, replacing or adding weatherstripping and, in cold climates, installing storm windows. “And if you have to buy a new appliance, get an ENERGY STAR appliance, which guarantees that it’s going to be among the most efficient,” Gunshinan says.

He also recommends a visit to the Home Energy Saver website (<http://hes.lbl.gov>). That’s where you can get an online energy audit based on your region of the country and the information you enter about your home. You’ll come away with a prioritized to-do list of improvements that have the potential to save the most energy.

**PAYING THE PIPER** For all but the most basic projects, you should draft a realistic budget and look carefully at financing options. Depending on what you come up with, getting the money you need could be as simple as pulling out the plastic.

**Your home's equity.** Not only are home equity loans and lines of credit (HELOCs) low in cost, but the interest you pay usually is deductible on your federal tax return. You'll pay a bit more with a HELOC than for a one-time home-equity loan, but this option is especially attractive for projects you'll do in stages over a longer period of time or that may involve unexpected costs. That's because you'll pay interest only on the amount you withdraw as you need the cash.

**Cash-out refinancing.** This avenue can make sense if you're already in the market to refinance your first mortgage, although qualifying is a bit tougher in this credit environment.

**Credit cards.** Because the interest rate is high if you carry a balance and the interest you pay isn't tax-deductible, this option is best only for projects that won't set you back more than a few hundred dollars.

Whichever financing route you take, Alfano is clear on one point: This is a prime time to remodel. "Even though materials and labor aren't getting any cheaper, contractors are a bit more flexible

## Remodeling's Top 10

Many factors influence the perceived value of a home remodeling project. *Remodeling* magazine's 2007 Cost vs. Value Report lists these home improvement projects as having the highest payback at resale among 10 remodeling improvements.

### Home Improvement Costs vs. Recoup

Project	Job Cost	Resale Value	Cost Recouped
Deck Addition-Wood	\$ 10,347	\$ 8,835	85.4%
Siding Replacement	\$ 9,910	\$ 8,245	83.2%
Minor Kitchen Remodel	\$ 21,185	\$ 17,576	83%
Window Replacement-Wood	\$ 11,384	\$ 9,241	81.2%
Window Replacement-Vinyl	\$ 10,448	\$ 8,290	79.3%
Bathroom Remodel	\$ 15,789	\$ 12,366	78.3%
Major Kitchen Remodel	\$ 55,503	\$ 43,363	78.1%
Attic Bedroom Remodel	\$ 46,691	\$ 35,771	76.6%
Basement Remodel	\$ 59,435	\$ 44,661	75.1%
Two-Story Addition	\$ 139,297	\$ 103,010	73.9%

SOURCE: Remodeling magazine 2007 Cost vs. Value Report

## Carb Enthusiasm

You never get the chance to make a second first impression, and that's no truer than with the folks who drive by homes with a "For Sale" sign out front. The National Association of Realtors suggests these strategies for making it clear from the curb that you've given your home lots of TLC.

**PAINT, PERK AND POLISH.** Repaint any areas that are peeling. If you have a front porch, park it up to look like an outdoor room with potted plants, cushy furniture and a new welcome mat. Don't forget to clean and polish all outdoor glass.

**BE YARD-SMART.** That means manicuring the lawn, pruning shrubs, edging flower beds or planting new in-season flowers and, if necessary, hiring a tree service to remove any dead limbs.

**DO THE DETAILS.** Add low voltage lighting along the front walkway and don't forget to make your front door the focal point of your facade.



Our calculators can help you make the right housing decisions. Go to [statefarm.com](http://statefarm.com) and type "mortgage calculators" into the search tool.

## Showing Smart

The aroma of baking bread is nice, but there's a lot more to making your home irresistible to potential buyers during the showing. Here's expert advice for securing a quicker sale in any kind of market:

**CLEAN IS KING.** Start by removing as much clutter as possible, not only in your living areas but also in the basement and attic (potential buyers will be looking there, too). Donate what you no longer need or have a garage sale; consider renting a storage unit for what you want to keep. Next, clean all interior walls, floors and trim, repainting where necessary and paying special attention to the kitchen and baths. Once all

that up-front work is done, think about hiring a cleaning service to keep things showing-ready on a moment's notice until your home sells.

**SHOW YOUR HOME IN ITS BEST LIGHT.** What's the point of having a spotless home if the lighting is too dim to notice? Open curtains so sunlight streams through your squeaky-clean glass. For evening showings, you may want to increase the wattage of bulbs in overhead fixtures and floor and table lamps.

**STAY SCARCE.** If a real estate agent will be showing your home, trust him or her to do their job without your being present. Potential buyers often are more open with questions when the homeowner isn't there. Of course, the same goes for children and pets.



in pricing and there's more competition. This is a much more hospitable environment for buyers of remodeling services than it has been for a number of years."

**UNDERSTAND YOUR HOME'S VALUE** A major home improvement project can have a big impact on the value of your home. But even if you undertake a small project or just some simple upkeep, it's crucial to make sure you know how to protect your investment.

To know the amount of homeowners insurance coverage you need, determine what it would cost to replace your home. Replacement cost is not the same as the market value of your home or its purchase price—both of which include the value of the land. Replacement cost is simply what it would cost to rebuild your home on that land.

A number of factors can influence the replacement cost of a home, including:

- Upgraded kitchens, bathrooms or other spaces
- Additions of rooms, porches or other space
- Custom woodwork, windows or other amenities
- Unique architectural features.

Keep in mind that replacement costs can also be influenced by market conditions in your area, including the supply and demand of labor and the cost of construction materials.

Experts recommend that your home be insured for at least 100% of its estimated replacement cost. A building contractor or professional replacement cost appraiser can give you an estimate for your home. If you're unable to obtain an estimate, ask your State Farm agent for help. ■

## FINDING THE RIGHT CONTRACTOR

Whether you're planning a whole-house makeover or a small spruce-up, hiring the right person for the job is the key to home-improvement success.

If flashbacks from the Tom Hanks movie *The Money Pit* have you frozen in fear about contracting that major remodeling project, relax. These tips from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) can help you steer clear of home-improvement scams:

Verify the name, address and phone number. Make sure the company is listed with your local Better

Business Bureau and is current with any trade associations for which you were shown credentials. Check that the contractor's licensing is up to date with any state licensing agency.

Don't be pressured to sign a contract or pay in full for the job up front. Beware of special prices that are available "today only" and discounts you're promised because the contractor will use your home in its advertising. Also be suspicious if

the contractor doesn't tell you that you can cancel your contract within three days of signing. This Right of Rescission grace period is the law.

Look for contractors who provide references and a presentation book of previous projects. Favor those who take the time to listen to your requests and needs and address them in detail.

## Contractor Q&A

- How long have you been in business?
- Who will be assigned as project supervisor for the job?
- Who will be working on the project? Are they employees or subcontractors?
- What is your approach to a project such as this?

- How many projects like mine have you completed in the past year?
- May I have a list of references from those projects?
- May I have a list of business referrals or suppliers?
- What percentage of your business is repeat or referral business?
- Are you a member of a national trade association?
- Find out if licensing is required in your state by checking with your state government department that handles labor issues. If licensing is required, ask if the contractor

is licensed and check with the licensing agency to verify.

- Have you or your employees been certified in remodeling or had any special training or education? Look for designations such as Certified Remodeler (CR), Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler (CKBR), Certified Remodeler Specialist (CRS) or Certified Lead Carpenter (CLC).

Source: National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI)

# Home Improvements Recaptured

Project	Estimated Cost	%Recoverable
Add a full bath: to a 1-1/2 Bath home	\$5,000 – \$10,000	80% 50%
Add a half bath: to a 1 1/2 Bath home	\$2,000 – \$3,000	60%
Add a bedroom: to a 3 bedroom house	\$6,000 – \$8,000+ (in existing space) \$10,000 – \$15,000+ ( Add on space)	75% - 85% 65%
to a 4 bedroom house		
Add a garage:	\$4,000 – \$8,000+	Up to 50%
Add a fireplace:	\$1,800 – \$3,500	Up to 75%
Turn a basement into a rec. room:	\$3,000 – \$6,500	Up to 15%
Enclose a porch:	\$5,000 – \$6,000	50% - 60%
Install central air: room units:	\$2,500 – \$4,500 \$500 – \$1,000	Up to 75% 0 – 50%
Repaint frame house:	\$1,500 – \$3,500	30% - 80%
Install new exterior siding:	\$3,000 – \$8,000	Up to 75%
Landscape:	\$500 – \$5,000+	40% - 60%
Add a patio:	\$2,000 – \$4,000	35% - 60%

Source: Institute of Real Estate Appraisers