

your home

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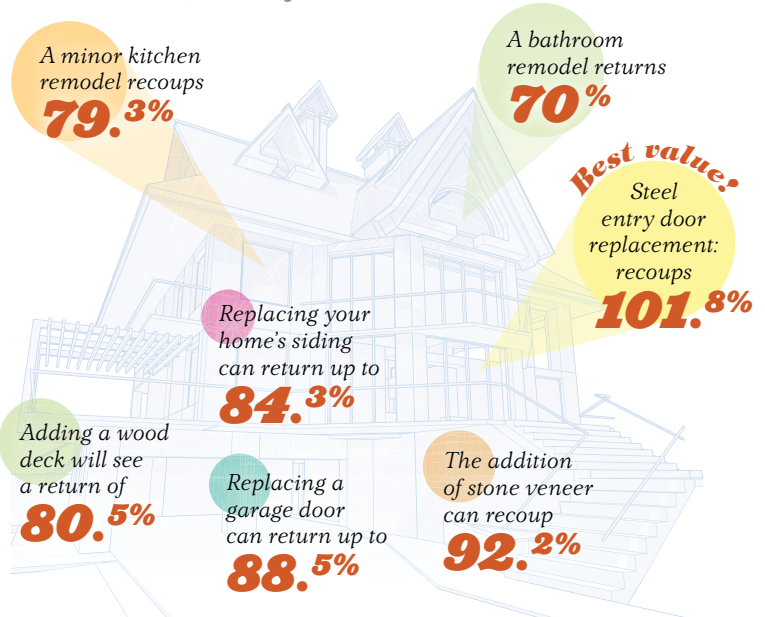
Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

RETURN ON investment

Remodeling and replacement projects can add value to your home, but some projects recoup their costs better than others. According to *Remodeling Magazine's* 2015 Remodeling Cost vs. Value Report, small and exterior projects return the most value for your money.

The project that offered the best value overall was a steel entry door replacement, which recouped 101.8 percent of its costs when the home was sold. The steel entry door is consistently the least expensive project named in the report, costing about \$1,200 on average. The second best value is the addition of a manufactured stone veneer, which can recoup 92.2 percent of its original cost, but be prepared to invest at least \$7,000 for the improvement.

Replacing a garage door can return 82.5 percent for an upscale project and 88.5 percent for a midrange project. Replacing your home's siding with fiber cement will return 84.3 percent of the costs, while replacing vinyl siding recoups 80.7 percent. Adding a wood deck will return 80.5 percent and replacing wood windows earns 78.8 percent.



A minor kitchen remodel is a strong bet to add value to your home. An investment of \$19,226 can return 79.3 percent of its costs. A major kitchen remodel recoups 67.8 percent and a bathroom remodel returns 70 percent.

To find out which home improvement projects bring the most value, talk to a CRS REALTOR® who knows the local market, housing inventory, and what buyers want in a home.

PICTURE THIS

According to the National Association of REALTORS®, 92 percent of homebuyers use the Internet in their home search process. When marketing your home online, professional-quality photos can help prospective buyers see your home in the best possible light. Here are a few tips from Quicken Loans and AOL.com to make your photos stand out.

Before taking any photos, tidy up the rooms to avoid clutter in your pictures. Make the beds, remove all visible clothing and personal items, and shut the closet doors.

While you want to include as much of the room as possible in your photos, avoid using wide-angle lenses, which can make rooms appear distorted and larger than they really are. If it's too difficult to include the whole room in a single shot, try shooting from one corner of the room facing the entry.

When taking exterior photos, make sure the sun is behind you and shoot exterior photos in the morning or early evening.

Most importantly, show off the house, not what's in it. Focus on the architectural details, like the bay windows, the ornate wood mantle above a wood-burning fireplace or the spacious backyard.

Taking extra time to create quality photos of your home can make a positive impression and encourage prospective buyers to see it in person.



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home designs

FOR BUSY FAMILIES

With their calendars crammed with things to do and places to go, today's busy families want to spend as little time as possible handling mundane household chores. To help families stay organized, newer homes are being built with customized floor plans to allow for more flexibility and better use of space. Here are a few examples of these home design trends.



Mudrooms

While mudrooms have been around for at least a decade, they have evolved into a larger, more centralized area for each member of the family, complete with individual cubbies for books and backpacks, drawers for hats and gloves, and a bench for removing wet shoes and boots.

Most mudrooms are 6 feet by 8 feet, although some can be as large as 8 feet by 12 feet, and some include USB outlets, walk-in closets and windows with natural light. These rooms once shared space with washers and dryers, but laundry machines have moved closer to the bedrooms where most dirty laundry collects, builders say.

Study/Computer Stations

Parents want to keep a close eye on their kids as they do their homework, but where that study space is located differs among households. In many homes, kitchen islands double as a study area as well as an area for cooking and eating. Other homes are built with study nooks on the upper floor, a separate study in the lower level or a pocket office located off the kitchen.

Self-Serve Kitchens

Newer homes are designed with the kitchen or pantry set up so family members can grab their own meals while on the go. These self-serve areas are located away from the main food prep area and are equipped with a mini refrigerator or refrigerator drawer to hold fruit and snacks, and a microwave at child-sized height for easy access.

Home design features like these can help today's families stay organized as they go through their busy lives.

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