



5 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME'S VALUE *RIGHT NOW!*



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By Erin McGinnis

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People often ask my advice on how they can make their homes more appealing to buyers should they decide to sell.

I have staged more than 200 homes over the past 10 years, and every week I guide homeowners through the process of preparing their homes for sale. The key is to make high impact choices that get a high return on investment.

Here are the top 5 on my list of Greatest Hits that will help to improve the overall value of your home. (Pro tip: don't wait to make these improvements until you're ready to sell. Do them NOW, so you can enjoy the fruits of your labor!)



1. Lighten the Look



Are your main living areas dominated by whites, creams and pale paint colors? If not, then read on!

Home design color trends last about ten years, and right now we are in the third of fourth year of the black and white trend. Everybody seems to want white walls, white exteriors and just an overall fresher look.

Because being on-trend is a huge selling point, lightening the walls in your house is a winning move, and the return on the investment is very high!

Prior to this obsession with white was the gray trend (roughly 2010-2016), and before that the brown or Tuscan trend (2000-2010). If your home was built or remodeled in the early 2000s, you likely have some of the following elements: dark brown cabinets, earthy granite counter tops, travertine floors, and all shades of beige and gold in paint and decor.

When people got tired of browns, they sought cleaner, less muddy colors, and that's when gray was ushered in as the new go-to neutral that replaced beige and was the perfect backdrop to brighter colors.

The gray, "Parisian" trend was interrupted in the 20-teens by an infatuation with white. This was thanks in no small part to HGTV design star Joanna Gaines, whose modern farmhouse aesthetic captured viewers' hearts across North America.

Not every house is a good candidate for white walls though. White needs lots of natural light to look good, and it requires a lot of white in your decorating. You don't have to adopt the modern farmhouse trend to enjoy a beautiful and current home. Here's my color advice regardless of your decorating style:



Kitchen in the black and white trend

The right paint choice for many homes is a pale neutral, a 'barely there' gray or beige that gives you a fresher and updated look but isn't too stark.



Don't forget the cabinets

If your wood cabinets are 15+ years old, it's probably time to paint them if you want an updated look.

Updated look = higher resale value!

Painting your kitchen and bathroom cabinets is a good way to increase your home's value, and it's much less expensive than cabinet replacement. But what color is best? There are a lot of choices, but a shade of white (or a pale neutral) is classic and timeless.

NOTE: There is no one-size-fits-all color for cabinets or walls! The fixed elements in your home, plus any large upholstered furniture, will dictate the right color choice. Think of this advice as a starting point.



Cabinets painted Benjamin Moore Revere Pewter to relate to the green-gray in the granite counter tops. The result is a light "putty" color

Things to consider when choosing the right white:

- The paint color must relate to your fixed elements like countertops and flooring. If your home's tile, carpet and countertops have earth tones like beige, cream and brown, then you should select a creamier white (not stark white). Consider Benjamin Moore White Down OC-131 or a complex cream like Benjamin Moore Feather Down OC-6
- If your carpet, tile and countertops are primarily grey, white or black, lean toward a true white (Benjamin Moore Chantilly Lace OC-65) or off-white (Benjamin Moore Simply White OC-117 or White Dove OC-17)
- If you decide to paint cabinets white, your trim color (baseboards, etc.) should match your cabinets
- Always test colors with big samples and don't rely on small paint chips to see color



True white
BM Chantilly Lace
OC-65



Off white
BM Simply White
OC-117



Off white
BM White Dove
OC-17



Cream
BM White Down
OC-131



Complex cream
BM Feather Down
OC-6



2.

Update Lighting



A great way to make your home look more 'designer' and thus more expensive is to upgrade your lighting. Light fixtures from the 70s and 80s aren't the only ones to swap out. There are plenty of newer, builder grade fixtures that have a generic feel. Replacing them provides an instant update.

The key to improving your home's value with lighting is to replace *all* of the dated fixtures in your home, not just a few.

There are a lot of choices out there and at all price points. I suggest going for the most style you can afford. Websites like Wayfair.com and Houzz.com have a lot of affordable choices.

Other possible sources are West Elm, Pottery Barn, Restoration Hardware, Build.com and Rejuvenation.com.

It's best for your lighting choices to relate to your style of house. If your cabinetry and overall vibe is traditional, it can look out of place to install a modern fixture. Stick with transitional (the happy place between modern and traditional.)

Here are some ideas categorized by two common fixture types: flush/semi-flush mount and bathroom vanity.



Flush mount & semi-flush mount fixtures

Instead of this:



Try this:



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[Shop](#)



[Shop](#)



[Shop](#)

Bathroom vanity fixtures

Instead of this:



Try this:



[Shop](#)



[Shop](#)



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3. Update Flooring



Luxury vinyl plank was installed successfully over old and stained engineered wood in Hamilton

How's your flooring? Up-to-date floor coverings are a great investment and go a long way toward adding value to your home.

Consider replacing worn out carpet with hardwood, engineered wood, or even (gasp!) laminate flooring! Today's plank laminate is not your father's Pergo! A lot of laminate flooring is beautiful, durable and very often mimics the look of hardwood flooring for a lot less money.

I see a lot of people installing wood-look LVP, or luxury vinyl plank. It is a floating floor and can be installed over existing floors, so using it avoids demolition and therefore saves time and money.

Generally, I would not recommend LVP for high-end homes because buyers expect engineered or solid wood.

If you already have hardwood in your home, and want to replace carpet in the bedrooms (or any other room), don't install anything but hardwood. Lots of flooring transitions create a mish-mash look and this hurts your home's value.

Replacing old tile floors changes the entire feel of the home and greatly improves the value. If your tile is 15+ years old and builder grade material, I would seriously consider replacing it if you want to boost what your home is worth.

What's the best wood floor color?

I believe that pale natural (oak or maple) or medium neutral brown (like oak or hickory) are the most timeless color options for wood or wood-look floors. They are natural, versatile and generally won't scream which decade they were installed in or limit your decorating options.



4.

Love On Your Yard



Thoughtful landscaping elevates a home. If you don't have a knack for plants and landscape design, I highly recommend hiring a local landscape designer to create a plan. Spending a few hundred dollars for an expert's advice makes all the difference. You can then hire a gardener to carry out the plantings, or do it yourself.

Invest in creating PRIVACY!

One of the best ways to dramatically improve your home's value is to maximize backyard privacy. A lack of privacy can seriously hurt your home's value and we've seen it happen many times, especially in newer neighborhoods where the homes are close together.

I think many people don't fix this problem because it's expensive to plant trees, especially mature trees. But if you have money to spend on cosmetic home improvement, this is where I would put the money first.

Whatever you spend on screening you will get back many times over when you sell. An evergreen Laurel tree in a 24-inch box is around \$350. And it can take 5 years for trees to fill in. So start now if you are fortunate enough to do so!



I find when most homeowners take on planting their yards themselves, it is not cohesive and there are never enough plants! No surprise! It takes years of experience to know how to design a pretty yard that is well balanced and has year-round interest.

In addition to adding to your home's beauty, the landscaping you choose can greatly affect how much water your home requires. Let's face it, drought and other water-related challenges are likely a fact of life that's here to stay. Address it now, so that you can crow about your drought-resistant landscaping. Buyers will love that they can purchase a home with this "green" feature.

One tip: even though we are in a drought, buyers still love backyard lawns. So, invest in a quality artificial grass or leave the lawn area alone for now. Whatever you do don't pave it over! Yards with all hard surfaces are a turn off to many buyers.



5. Winterize



While we don't live in a particularly harsh climate, wind and rain can cause significant damage to homes in our area. If you don't fix problems, your home's value suffers.

Make sure your roof is in good shape and there's no debris up there to cause pooling of water, which can create leaks. Clean your gutters and make sure there are no obstructions to your downspouts.

You want to make sure doors and windows aren't leaking either, allowing rainwater to come inside, or worse, to get into the walls. If you're fortunate enough to have landscape lighting, make sure it's in good working order now, so that you're not knee-deep in mud trying to fix it later.

Lastly, if you have a crawl space under your home, make sure there's no standing water underneath during the rainy season. If water is a problem down there, reach out to me so I can recommend a professional who can fix it. Poor drainage is an ongoing issue that can get worse over time, leading to mildew and floor joist rot.

