



# Extension News Column

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It is the season of home improvements. Many of us are taking advantage of the warmer weather to upgrade our homes. If you are considering making major improvements in your home, realize that you may not recover the full cost of the work when you sell your property. Some add value, some do not, and some may even make it harder to sell.

Unless money is no object, most experts recommend that the amount you spend shouldn't exceed 30 percent of your home's current value. It is easy to go overboard on remodeling costs, but that may not translate into a greater value in your home. Comparable sales of homes in your area will have more to do with the final value of the home than any improvements you make to it.

It doesn't mean that upgrading your home wouldn't make sense. An improved kitchen or an extra room could pay off in usage, enjoyment or even a greater sense of pride in your home. These things should be your primary consideration, the effect on the value of the home should be secondary.

There is no way of knowing for sure how much of your investment you could get back. That depends on the kind of project, the quality of the work, whether it is financed or paid for in cash, whether you do the work yourself, the area you live in, and the state of the housing market when you decide to sell.

Current figures listed in Remodeling magazine give a good idea of what you might recover in your remodeling project. These numbers are for the Pacific region (Alaska, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon and California).

Project	Cost recouped
Minor kitchen remodel	84.1%
Major kitchen remodel (upscale)	66.0%
Master suite addition (upscale)	56.8%

Window Replacement (wood)	83.3%
Garage addition	60.3%
Bathroom addition	63.2%
Sunroom addition	53.3%

I've chosen some popular remodeling project for our area, but many more are listed on the web at [www.remodeling.hw.net/2010/costvsvalue](http://www.remodeling.hw.net/2010/costvsvalue).

What surprised me about these figures is that some of the simplest and least expensive projects have the greatest payback. Replace your entry door with a steel door and you may recoup as much as 112 percent of the investment. Replace your garage door and recoup 96.4 percent of the investment.

So what can we do inexpensively to update our homes? Here are the top five remodeling projects that can be done on a budget.

1. **Paint** — A little paint or varnish can go a long way toward improving your home's value. One fresh coat (along with a little sanding and caulking) wipes out the scuffs, chips, cracks and other damage that clearly convey wear and tear. Make your first priority the front door, where everyone waits for you to answer the door.

2. **Basic maintenance** — Aim to complete a few small maintenance projects each year, like fixing that creaky floorboard or replacing a cracked light switch plate. This summer at my house, the project is reworking the front porch and back deck — paint and screws will make a big difference in the appearance of my home.

3. **Energy-efficiency upgrades** — Not only will such improvements cut your energy bills, but they'll also be more attractive should you decide to sell your home. With energy prices so high, it can make a big difference. Federal tax incentives are available for 2011 for insulation, windows, heating systems, and high efficiency refrigerators, clothes washers and dishwashers.

4. **Install new fixtures** — Giving a room a more modern look requires little more than a screwdriver and some new fixtures. Replace faucets or light fixtures. New drawer handles or knobs can be had for as little as \$2 each. What about replacing doorknobs? All these can make your house look new at a bargain price.

5. **Landscaping** — A good first impression is crucial. Savings can be had as well, as long as you plant wisely. Drought-resistant shrubs require less water, while perennials won't require replanting next years. Leafy deciduous trees shade your home from the summer sun, and allow that winter sun to come in during our cold winters.

The bottom line is that you should go into any home improvement project with the mindset that you're doing this for your own enjoyment, and not as a way to make money.

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