

Home Updates That Pay

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Redesigner

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▼ Minor Bathroom Remodel

Cost Recovery: 168.7% San Francisco
Average: 102.2%

In our neighborhoods bathrooms may be small and outdated. Remodel in keeping with the style or era of your home. Replace old sinks and toilets, cheap flooring. Pedestal sinks are popular and give the appearance of openness and a larger floor area. Install good lighting and fixtures.

▼ Minor Kitchen Remodel

Cost Recovery: 152.7% San Francisco
Average: 98.5%

It's very easy to overspend remodeling a kitchen, but don't go too low end, or it will look cheap. Buy stainless steel appliances for an updated look but don't spend thousands for professional appliances, unless you're in a high-end property. Reface cabinets with new doors and drawers, update old flooring, countertops and finish with neutral or muted wall paint.

▼ Exterior Paint/Siding

Cost Recovery: 166.6% Birmingham
Average: 103.6%

Painting the exterior is like buying a new outfit; it gives an important first impression. Choose colors in keeping with the locale and the neighborhood. If the home exterior is old and deteriorating, this update will boost value dramatically.

▼ Attic Bedroom

Cost Recovery: 151.6% San Francisco
Average: 93.5%

Turning an unfinished attic into a 15x15 3rd or 4th bedroom with a 5x7 bath really pays off in hot housing markets where older, close-in neighborhoods like ours offer homes with easy commutes but smaller square footage. The payoff for remodeling this existing space is higher than the payback for adding new space. Putting on even a modestly priced master suite addition costs typically about twice as much as finishing an attic and the return (82.4%) is lower.

Home Updates To Avoid

▼ Home Office Remodel

Typical Cost: \$13,000

It may be good for you, but not for everyone else, and it's a room that's not considered essential.

▼ Family Room Addition

Typical Cost: \$50,000

Not a good idea if you have to add footprint to your home. Spend the money remodeling existing unfinished space in your basement or attic, or add a full size bath.

▼ Upscale Master Suite

Typical Cost: \$137,000

A dream suite will only pay back if you're in a luxury home in a hot market. Don't overimprove for the neighborhood.

▼ Upscale Kitchen Remodel

Typical Cost: \$80,000

See above. Plus, be careful not to go too high style, which might only appeal to one in a hundred buyers.

Economical Fixes

Paint • Improve the Front Yard • Get Down to Hardwood • Improve Lighting