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GENERAL MANAGER
Serena Bowman • serena.bowman@mtairynews.com

PUBLICATIONS MANAGER
Holly Lamm • hlamm@elkintribune.com

MULTI-MEDIA ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES
Bob Ward • bward@mtairynews.com
Dawn Bagale • dbagale@elkintribune.com
Kathy Swaney • kathy.swaney@mtairynews.com
Kimberly Cagle • kcagle@mtairynews.com
Samantha Turner • sturner@mtairynews.com
Caysee Schmidt • caysee.schmidt@thecarrollnews.com

CONTENT PROVIDED BY
Metro Creative Services

MOUNT AIRY MEDIA GROUP
319 N. Renfro Street • Mount Airy, NC 27030
336.786.4141 • mtairynews.com

APG DESIGN DIRECTOR
Sandra Hurley • shurley@mtairynews.com

DESIGN & LAYOUT
Darla Allen



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Build your gift list for DIY *enthusiasts*

Rising prices have pushed people to look for new ways to save money. The do-it-yourself approach to home repairs has long been seen as a potential avenue to save money, and holiday shoppers can consider DIY when shopping for loved ones this year.

A recent survey by the remodeling company Allstar Home reported that 70 percent of Americans have recently engaged in DIY home improvement projects. Similarly, a new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of the DIY Network found that 73 percent of Canadian homeowners have done a renovation project themselves in the past. With so many homeowners tackling projects around the home on their own, DIY-related products may be just what's needed to hammer down the perfect gift. The following are some potential home improvement presents for DIY enthusiasts.

- **Magnetic wristband:** Keeping items close at hand takes on new meaning when one utilizes a magnetic wristband. The BinyaTools Magnetic Wristband is just one of the versions of this handy tool that's ideal for wrangling screws, nails, washers, and any other ferrous items. It's also a great option for crafters and jewelry makers.

- **Painting essentials kit:** Painting is an easy and effective way to transform a room. For those DIYers who have yet to compile all of their painting gear, local home improvement retailers often package kits that include a dropcloth, assorted roller sizes, brushes, a paint tray, and even painter's tape to get started on projects.

- **Rolling work bench:** People serious about projects will need a place to store all the tools they have collected.



A rolling work bench, such as the Gladiator nine-drawer work bench, has drawers to store tools and a wooden top on which smaller tasks can be tackled. Roll it where needed.

- **Hearing protection:** Drills, sanders and other power tools can be noisy. DIYers will want to protect their hearing, and a set of workshop earmuffs can be a thoughtful gift. Some, like the 3M WorkTunes headphones, even come with Bluetooth technology to offer both

hearing protection and the ability to listen to tunes while working.

- **Headlamp:** DIYers need both hands to tackle jobs effectively, which can make holding a flashlight to illuminate the area challenging. Hands-free lighting is possible with an LED headlamp. The light is easily focused where the user is looking.

- **Laser measuring tape:** A smart measuring tape utilizes a laser to increase measuring size, calculate

distances and ensure that every home improvement project lines up.

- **Sawhorse:** DIYers working on large projects can benefit from an adjustable saw horse to support materials and ensure safer cuts. The ToughBuilt C700 is an option to consider since it has support pegs that fold out of the legs to allow for greater ease of use.

The list of gifts for DIYers is endless. Tools and additional gear can help people nail holiday shopping this year.

Senior-friendly INTERIOR renovations

Home is where the heart is. That sentiment may be especially true for seniors who have spent decades living in their homes. A lot of hard work goes into home ownership, and seniors who have lived in the same space for a while undoubtedly have countless memories within the walls of their homes.

A lifetime of experiences in a home can make it hard to leave, but many seniors experience diminished mobility as they age. Mobility issues can make it hard for seniors to traverse their homes, but aging homeowners can make various renovations to make a home more accessible.

- Revamp entryways and staircases. A 2020 study of 1,000 adults in the United Kingdom found that 28 percent of individuals age 65 and older who don't exercise regularly struggle with activities like walking up stairs. The study, commissioned by Total Fitness, also found that 14 percent of men and women over 65 who regularly engage in moderate exercise still find it challenging to climb up and down a flight of stairs. Seniors facing similar challenges can install a ramp at their home's entryway so they can comfortably go in and out. Inside, a chair lift can ensure seniors are not struggling to move from one floor to another.

- Raise the outlets throughout the home. They're easily overlooked, but outlets, particularly those outside the kitchen, tend to be close to the floor. AARP notes that's no accident, as outlets are generally placed at a height equal to the length of a hammer to save time with measuring when buildings are being constructed. Outlets close to the floor can be difficult for seniors with mobility issues to reach. Relocating the

outlets a little higher off the floor is not an expensive renovation, but it can make a home more accessible for seniors who have difficulty bending down or getting down on one knee.

- Install door knob extensions. Verywell Health notes that nearly half of all people age 65 and older have arthritis or another rheumatic condition. Arthritis can make it difficult for seniors to grip and turn door knobs. Door knob extensions can make it easier for seniors with arthritis to open the doors in their homes. Such extensions are roughly five-inch levers that can be installed over

an existing door knob, making it easier to grab and pull down. Extensions save seniors the hassle of turning the knob, which some may find painful and almost impossible.

- Renovate the bathroom. Bathroom renovation projects can be costly, but seniors with mobility issues should know that bathrooms can pose a particularly dangerous threat. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that roughly three million older adults are treated for fall injuries in emergency departments each year. A 2019 analysis published in The

Journals of Gerontology noted that 22 percent of in-home falls resulted in a change in the person's walking ability. Replacing a step-over shower with a zero-step alternative can make it easier for seniors with mobility issues to get in and out of the shower, thus reducing their risk for falls. Grab bars along shower walls and a chair inside the shower can make it easier to bathe and towel off safely.

Seniors with mobility issues can make their homes more accommodating through an assortment of simple, yet effective renovations.



How to make a HOME *more cozy*

The meaning of the term “cozy” varies as it pertains to home decor. For some, cozy may mean intimate spaces with lots of quilts and throws. For others, cozy could indicate bright and airy spaces enhanced by plenty of fresh foliage.

Regardless of how they define cozy, homeowners typically want their homes to be inviting and comfortable. With that in mind, the following are some ways to impart a cozy vibe to any living space.

- Make use of a fireplace. Flames lapping wood (or faux wood in the event of gas-powered fireplaces) can put anyone in a tranquil state of mind. Fireplaces add instant ambiance and make great places for people to congregate and engage in conversation. During warmer months when the fire isn't blazing, decorative candles can be lit to mimic the same feel.

- Add texture in the design. Texture can be anything from a raised pattern on wallpaper to a knotty area rug to a mosaic piece of artwork. A home with texture tends to create cozier impressions than one with all sleek and smooth surfaces.

- Enjoy a soft rug. Although many design experts say hardwood floors or laminate options are easier for allergies and keeping a home clean, a soft rug underfoot can be welcoming. Rather than wall-to-wall carpeting, place area rugs in spots that can use some cozying up, such as beneath beds and even under the dining table.

- Light candles. The warm, flickering light of candles adds cozy vibes in spades. According to The Spruce and Paula Boston, a visual merchandiser for Festive

Lights, candles can be used throughout a home to create instant atmosphere. Exercise

caution with candles and fully extinguish them before retiring for the evening.

- Update bedding for the season. Crisp and light cotton and linen are cozy materials when the weather is warm. But when the temperature starts to dip, flannel or jersey bedding makes a bed that much more inviting, says Real Simple.

- Invest in lots of pillows. Pillows can instantly make a spot more cozy, whether it's the living room sofa or an outdoor lounging nook. Look for materials that are durable for the space in which they're being used.

- Think about warm lighting. The transition from incandescent light bulbs to halogen and LED is beneficial from an environmental standpoint. However, LEDs illuminate with a more stark, blue light that can seem clinical in home spaces. Look for bulbs where the “temperature” can be customized. The more the color spectrum leans toward warm light, the more cozy a space will feel. This can be enhanced by putting some lights on dimmer switches, and toning down the brightness as needed.

- Install a bookshelf. Even for those who are strict devotees of e-readers, a shelf full of actual books interspersed with some well-placed knickknacks can make a room feel more cozy. Books add texture, the feel of hallowed halls and libraries, and visual appeal.

Making a home more cozy doesn't have to be complicated. A few easy modifications can improve interior spaces.



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Projected timelines for popular RENOVATION *projects*

Renovations help homeowners customize their homes to align with their needs and wants. Remodeling may be necessary to replace outdated fixtures and features, address mistakes previous homeowners may have made, or to make a home more functional.

Homeowners often find it beneficial to hire professional contractors when they have work to be done around the house to ensure the job gets done to code and to their satisfaction. Timelines for home remodeling projects vary depending on a number of variables, including the size of a crew as well as the scope of the project.

Once a project commences, the timeline can feel endless. The following are estimates of timelines for top remodeling projects to give homeowners an idea of how long their renovation projects may last, courtesy of Renofi, a company that provides a lending platform leveraged by credit unions nationwide to offer loans to consumers.

- **Kitchen:** There are a lot of moving parts to a kitchen renovation, involving the services of electricians, plumbers,

structural experts, and even interior design professionals. Not to mention the needs of craftspeople who can make custom cabinetry and countertops. Kitchen remodels can take anywhere from six to 12 weeks.

- **Bathroom:** The process of a bathroom renovation typically involves demolishing the old bathroom, removing old fixtures and starting from the ground up. As with a kitchen remodel, bathroom jobs require the services of different professionals. That is why homeowners can expect three to 10 weeks for a bathroom, depending on the scope of the project.

- **Finishing a basement:** Finishing a basement can add valuable living space to a home. Establishing a home theater space or man cave may require installing framing, insulation, utilities, drywall, flooring, and any additional needs if the finished basement will have a bathroom or necessitate additional plumbing. A finished basement project can last one to two months. But the good news is that typically the rest of the house is livable while the work is being done, so residents will not be disrupted.



- **Whole home remodel:** Hogan Design & Construction says that a whole house remodeling project can take anywhere from 16 weeks to 24 weeks. More involved projects can take longer.

Remodeling a home often involves a considerable investment of time and money. Knowing how long a homeowner will be inconvenienced by the work can help the household plan accordingly.



FAQ about GARAGE remodels



Homeowners tend to want to maximize all of the space they have in their homes. For some this may involve turning a garage from a utilitarian space into one that serves multiple purposes.

According to The Mortgage Reports, a home-buying and improvement resource, garage renovations can increase the value of a home and add living space. Garage remodels can create additional storage space, provide an area for a home gym or even create room for a home office. Prior to beginning a garage remodel, homeowners may have some common questions about the process.

How much does the renovation cost?

Several factors will ultimately determine the final price of a garage remodel, but HomeAdvisor says the national average for a garage remodel falls between \$6,000 and \$26,000. Most homeowners come in at around \$15,000 for a total garage conversion.

Will I recoup the investment?

A garage conversion adds value to a home if it creates new and usable living space. The firm Cottage, which pulled together a team of builders, architects and technologists, advises the average garage conversion provides an 80 percent return on investment. That ROI varies depending on location.

How can I upgrade the flooring?

Garages traditionally feature concrete floors. Although durable, concrete floors can feel damp, hard and cold underfoot. Both vinyl plank and epoxy flooring options can elevate the design and functionality of the garage.

Can I have the best of both worlds?

Sometimes a garage needs to serve many purposes. Lofting the garage means a homeowner can still park cars or utilize the lower space as a living area, all the while items are stored overhead. Some flip this design scenario and have the loft area as a bedroom or finished living space, while the lower portion remains a traditional garage area. Another thought is to finish only a portion of the garage. This works well for two- or three-car garages where there will be room to park a car and the remainder will serve another purpose.

What are other ways to improve the garage?

Installing more windows or improving on the lighting in the garage can be important. The garage improvement experts at Danley's say window installation enables people to circulate air in the garage without having to open the garage door. Improving the lighting means the garage can still be enjoyed or utilized after dark. Spread out lighting in the garage, and use a combination of overhead and task lighting just as one would in the home itself.

How do I deter bugs or other pests from entering?

Insects often want to hunker down in garages, and they may find it easy to get inside a garage. Keeping the garage clean and organized is the best way to deter pests and to spot infestations before they become problematic, indicates Mosquito Joe pest control company. Reducing water and humidity in the space, weatherproofing at the base of the garage door and other entry spots and utilizing insect repellents to make the garage less hospitable also can

decrease the risk of insect infestation.

Remodeling a garage can add value and plenty of usable space to a home. Whether a garage houses cars or hosts neighborhood game night, a garage renovation can be well worth the investment.



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How to make RENOVATION PROJECTS *go smoothly*

Homeowners are spending big bucks on home renovations. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, home improvement project spending continues to increase. It's predicted to go from \$472 billion spent in 2022 to \$485 billion in 2024.

Those targeting a specific home renovation likely know there is much that goes into the process from start to finish. Patience is a requisite virtue with any remodel, as even a thoroughly conceptualized plan can encounter a few bumps along the way. Although there is no way to completely remove renovation-related obstacles, there are ways to make projects go more smoothly.

- Establish a clear plan from the beginning. Now is not the time to be on the fence about details. A vision for the renovation is essential, and should include details about layout, materials, colors, and design.

- Manage your expectations. Again, this speaks to a need for patience with a project but also involves flexibility. Being too rigid when choosing materials can require waiting for

back-ordered supplies to come in. Wanting contractors to bend to your schedule can delay the project even further. Creativity and flexibility are key.

- Establish a budget. It can be easy to spend beyond one's means, especially when issues crop up. Black House Real Estate stresses the importance of creating a budget before starting a renovation, which may involve working with a local professional to help. Houzz advises preparing for worst-case scenarios by adding anywhere from 1 percent to 20 percent to the budget. Commit to sticking to the budget no matter what comes down the pike.

- Assemble a good team. Thoroughly research all contractors who will be involved with the renovation. These include designers, architects, builders, and more. Be sure they come highly recommended and research online reviews. A good team removes some stress from the project



because you'll know the work is in experienced hands.

- Prepare the space for the remodel. Any work you can do will help save on labor costs and make it easier for the team to get started on the project. Clear out clutter and personal items. Ask if it would be helpful for you to handle some demolition, whether that's pulling up old tile, removing drywall or another task.

- Have an escape hatch at the ready. Home renovations can cause upheaval to daily life, and that can mean stress

on top of already chaotic schedules. If money and situation allow, plan a getaway during a particularly tough stretch of the project so the noise, mess, and disruptions will not induce headaches. Consider spending a few nights at a hotel or a friend or relative's house to escape the constant grind of the project.

Home renovation projects add value and functionality to homes. Such undertakings can go more smoothly with some sound planning.

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5 renovations that provide a **STRONG RETURN** on *investment*

Renovations that make homeowners and residents of a home happy are always worth the investment. Though it's certainly true that projects that create more functional, usable space and add comfort and convenience are worth the price, such renovations are even more beneficial if they provide a good return on homeowners' financial investment. Returns are often cashed in when homeowners put their homes up for sale, and each year Remodeling magazine releases its "Cost vs. Value Report," which considers a wealth of data across the United States to determine which renovations return the highest percentage of homeowners' financial investment. According to the "2024 Cost vs. Value Report," the following are five projects that provide a strong return on investment (ROI).

1. Garage door replacement: The average job cost for this project is slightly more than \$4,500 but the project is valued at \$8,751, providing an especially high 194 percent ROI.

2. Steel door replacement: Remodeling magazine notes that a steel entry door replacement is worth double what it was worth in 2023. This project offers a 188 percent ROI on an average investment of \$2,355.

3. Manufactured stone veneer: A manufactured stone veneer is a man-made product that appears as if it's natural stone. Many homeowners prefer manufactured stone veneer to natural stone because of the price, as the former is less expensive and easier to install, which means lower labor costs as well. The comparatively low cost of manufactured stone veneer is perhaps one reason why it averages a roughly 153 percent ROI on an

average cost of just more than \$11,000.

4. Grand entrance upscale (fiberglass): Few things are as awe-inspiring as an impressive entryway, and upgrading to a grand fiberglass entrance door provides a 97 percent ROI. Components of these entryways can vary, but Remodeling magazine notes the project may entail removing an existing entry door and cutting and reframing the opening for a larger with dual sidelights.

5. Minor kitchen remodel: According to the "2024 U.S. Houzz & Home Study" from Houzz Research, kitchens were the most popular rooms to renovate in 2023. There's no denying the appeal of a newly

renovated kitchen, and homeowners considering such a project may be happy to learn that a minor kitchen remodel that costs an average of around \$27,000 provides a 96 percent ROI. Bankrate.com notes that minor kitchen remodels typically keep the current kitchen design, size and layout intact, but these projects may involve painting walls, refreshing backsplash, replacing lighting and plumbing fixtures, and changing cabinet hardware and facades.

Home renovations that provide a significant ROI can make homeowners happy once a project is completed and even happier when the day comes to put a home up for sale.



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Tips to make a home LESS VULNERABLE to *criminals*

Property crimes are perhaps more common than people may realize. Data from the Council on Criminal Justice indicates residential burglaries declined by 26 percent in 2023 compared to 2019. However, the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicates there were nearly seven million property-related crimes committed in 2019, which means there were still more than five million such crimes committed in 2023.

Homeowners recognize the importance of protecting themselves, their loved ones and their valuables. Locking doors at night is one measure of protection anyone can employ, but there's a host of additional steps individuals can take to make their homes less vulnerable to criminals.

- Embrace some simple solutions. The Insurance Information Institute recommends utilizing simple security devices such as padlocks, door and window locks, grates, bars, and bolts. These devices may not prevent burglars from entering a home, but they can increase the amount of time it takes criminals to gain access. That can be enough to discourage criminals and also provide extra time for homeowners and neighbors to see and report suspicious individuals lurking around homes.

- Periodically assess existing security devices. Locks, security cameras and additional devices are effective deterrents, but only if they're working properly. It's easy to overlook security devices, but routine inspections can ensure they continue to serve as a security blanket between residents and criminals.



- Install a burglar alarm. Burglar alarms can be effective deterrents and even help homeowners save money on their insurance policies. The Electronic Security Association estimates that home alarm systems can save homeowners as much as 20 percent on their insurance policies. Such savings can offset the cost to purchase and install burglar alarms. Homeowners who doubt the efficacy of burglar alarms as a crime deterrent should know that a study from researchers at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte examining the habits of

burglars found that 60 percent decided against burglarizing properties they learned had burglar alarms.

- Trim privacy trees and shrubs around the perimeter of your home. Privacy trees and shrubs can make it harder for passersby to see into a home from a nearby street or sidewalk. However, such features also can provide hiding space for criminals looking to gain access to a property. Routinely trim trees and shrubs near doors and windows so they are not inadvertently providing cover for criminals.

- Light up the outside. Exterior

lighting is wildly popular among homeowners for its aesthetic appeal. But lights around walkways and throughout a landscape also illuminate the exterior of a home, making it harder for criminals to get around without being seen. Spotlights and motion-detection lights can alert homeowners if someone is outside, and such lighting also can make it easier to spot criminals on exterior cameras, which can deter burglars.

There's no shortage of ways for homeowners to make their properties less vulnerable to criminals.

Warning signs a BATHROOM *needs work*

Homeowners know that the work involved to maintain a home is never done. The end of one project has a tendency to roll into the planning of another, and so it goes for years on end.

Fortunate are the homeowners who get to choose when to begin a renovation project, but it's far more common that homeowners spot an issue and then realize it's time to renovate. When it comes to bathrooms, which can be among the more expensive spaces to renovate in a home, homeowners can keep an eye out for various signs suggesting the room needs a remodel.

- **Mold and mildew:** Mold and mildew is perhaps the most glaring sign a bathroom needs to be renovated or remodeled. Mold and mildew pose a notable threat to human health, as the United States Environmental Protection Agency reports that molds can cause allergic reactions. Individuals sensitive to mold may develop symptoms that mimic reactions to outdoor allergens like pollen, including sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, and dermatitis (skin rash). Mold also can trigger asthma attacks in people allergic to mold who have the condition. Mold can grow in poorly ventilated bathrooms, such as those without a fan or ones in which fans are not working properly. Mold and mildew will return if it's merely scrubbed away, so the underlying cause of mold must be addressed to prevent its return.

- **Small signs of fading:** Stains, peeling paint, cracked paint, and gaps in grout are small signs of fading that indicate a bathroom is in need of renovation if



not a complete remodel. These issues also can serve as warning signs of larger issues, such as water issues and structural problems, so they should not be merely written off as minor problems or eyesores.

- **Rising water bills:** Some signs a bathroom could use a little TLC are not necessarily confined to the room itself. If water bills are rising significantly and do not align with price increases or an uptick in water consumption, homeowners may have leaking pipes. Such pipes might be beneath a bathroom sink or behind tiled walls. Discoloration on the walls, peeling

paint or wallpaper and/or a musty odor may indicate leaks inside a bathroom wall. If coupled with rising water bills, these signs could be indicative of a significant issue that requires immediate attention.

- **Issues with tiles:** Cracked or damaged tiles in the shower and bathtub or even on the floor are unsightly and also pose a safety hazard. Cracked floor tiles can lead to slips and falls, which can be especially harmful to older residents. And cracked tiles within the shower and tub area can indicate water problems behind the walls or general disrepair. Such issues

should be addressed before they escalate into something larger.

- **A dated vibe:** Of course, some issues affecting a bathroom are not necessarily health or safety hazards but more an affront to homeowners' grasp of current styles and trends. If walking into a bathroom unintentionally feels like stepping backward into a bygone era, then it's probably time to consider a renovation or remodeling job.

Various signs can indicate to homeowners it's time to consider a bathroom renovation.



Elevate the BACKYARD *experience*

Chances are no one wants to replicate the side effects of the global pandemic anytime soon. Despite all of the upheaval it brought to so many people's lives, there was at least one silver lining to the pandemic: a newfound appreciation for backyards and other outdoor living areas. Back in 2021, OnePoll, on behalf of the landscaping company TruGreen, found survey participants reported spending 14 hours outside every week, which marked a three-hour increase than before the pandemic hit.

Outdoor spaces like patios, decks, yards, and even front porches remain popular places for homeowners and their loved ones to congregate. Various studies have shown that those who

spend more time outside in nature have lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression. Being outside is strongly associated with improved mental and physical health. Homeowners who want to maximize the potential of their outdoor spaces can look to these ideas to take backyards up a notch or two.

Establish a gathering spot

A well-designed yard has one or more dedicated gathering spots, particularly areas that enable comfort underfoot. Homeowners can give consideration to hardscape that enables individuals to spend time outdoors without standing in soggy or buggy situations. Whether

they're traditional decks, platform decks, concrete or paver patios, or areas separated from the lawn with pea gravel or another type of rock, homeowners can make the yard more useable through these spaces.

Invest in an outdoor cooking area. Grilling, smoking and even making brick oven pizzas outdoors is a major component of backyard entertaining. Outdoor kitchens can increase the convenience of prepping, cooking and serving food outdoors. Grills and other cooking gear can be built into weather-resistant counters and cabinetry.

Install a pergola

A pergola or another structure is the perfect way to add privacy to a

gathering spot and create more shade and weather protection when Mother Nature does not want to cooperate.

Think beyond the summer season

When making backyard improvements, homeowners can incorporate ideas that make the yard more functional during different seasons. For example, a fire pit or outdoor fireplace can be a spot for making summer s'mores or sipping mulled cider in the fall. An enclosed three-season room offers the opportunity to see nature and enjoy it without bearing the full brunt of chilly temperatures.

There are many ways homeowners can enhance the functionality and appeal of their backyards.



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Design ideas that can create a PEACEFUL

feel

Homes are often characterized as sanctuaries for their residents. A calm place to come home to after a busy day at work or school is often just what people need to unwind.

Certain design components can help individuals turn their homes into relaxing respites from the daily grind. With that goal in mind, individuals can consider these ideas to create a peaceful feel inside their homes.

- Paint with neutral colors. Wall colors can define the mood in a given room, and neutral colors have long been linked to a calming effect. Subtle shades like beige, taupe and light gray are known to create a relaxed vibe in a room, so these colors can be a go-to choice. Some people consider neutral colors a tad boring, so individuals concerned by that impression can limit neutral colors to rooms designated as sanctuaries, like a reading room, a spa bathroom or a bedroom.

- Employ natural light. Natural light also can help to establish a serene setting at home. Large windows that let daylight in can improve anyone's mood. A 2022 study from researchers at the University of Chile in Santiago found that the more natural light that entered a home, the happier people said they felt. Study authors even noted that the largest uptick in well-being was found among participants who lived in homes in which windows covered at least 40 percent of the dwelling's wall space. Opening blinds or curtains and, if possible, installing larger windows in a home can help to establish the relaxing, happy vibe individuals are aiming for.

- Utilize plants to set a peaceful tone. The United Kingdom-based Royal Horticultural Society notes that research has found that indoor plants can benefit psychological well-being. The RHS notes that improved mood and reduced stress levels are two benefits that indoor plants can provide.

A good mood and less stress can help individuals establish the peaceful feel they're aiming for at home.

- Keep devices out of bedrooms. Watching television while lying in bed, scanning a smartphone before turning off a nightstand light and retiring for the night, or reading an e-reader instead of a print book at night can transform a bedroom from a serene setting into one that's overrun with stimuli. According to the Sleep Foundation, technology stimulates the mind, which can make it harder to fall

asleep. In addition, blue light emitted by devices disrupts the natural production of melatonin, a hormone that makes it easier to fall asleep. That can negate any efforts individuals have undertaken to make their bedrooms as peaceful as possible. Designate bedrooms in the house as technology-free zones to ensure the peaceful vibe continues uninterrupted until everyone goes to bed.

A peaceful home makes for the perfect respite at the end of a busy day. Various design choices can help individuals establish a serene vibe throughout their homes.



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Did you *know?*



Homeowners with an eye on home improvement projects should know that kitchens and bathrooms tend to be the most costly rooms to renovate. An affiliate of the National Kitchen and Bath Association told Architectural Digest in 2023 that kitchens and bathrooms require the most labor-intensive renovations, which contributes significantly to the high costs of such projects. Labor is indeed a significant cost when renovating a home, as the Construction Labor Market Analyzer indicates labor cost percentages in construction are

between 20 and 40 percent of the total budget of a given project. The final cost of any renovation project will depend on a host of variables unique to each home, including the square footage of the room being remodeled and the materials homeowners choose. However, homeowners looking for less costly renovations may want to consider revamping their dining rooms and closets, each of which are projects that can make a difference and tend to require a less significant financial commitment than projects like kitchen and bath remodels.

The most popular rooms to

remodel

Home improvement trends come and go. In a testament to that reality, the wildly popular open floor plan concepts that have dominated homeowners' desires over the last decade-plus could be falling out of favor, a shift that Rachel Stults of Realtor.com linked to the COVID-19 pandemic in a 2023 interview with Business Insider. Stults noted open floor plans will likely exhibit some measure of staying power, but linked the shift toward more traditional layouts to COVID lockdowns and the desire for more privacy among residents.

The shift away from open floor plans is a testament to the fleeting nature of home renovation trends. But trends still deserve a place at the table among real estate investors and homeowners who want to renovate their homes with an eye on projects that could be most appealing to prospective buyers. As homeowners balance their own preferences with those that might help them sell their homes down the road,

they can consider this list of the most popular rooms to renovate, courtesy of the "2024 U.S. Houzz & Home Study" from Houzz Research.

1. Kitchen
2. Guest bathroom
3. Primary bathroom
4. Living room
5. Guest bedroom
6. Primary bedroom
7. Laundry room
8. Closet
9. Dining room
10. Home office

When considering renovating these or other rooms, homeowners should know that Houzz researchers found that the median spend increased for most interior room upgrades compared to the previous year. However, the median cost to upgrade living rooms and home offices remained unchanged.





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