

Spring

HOME

IMPROVEMENT 3



- **Minor exterior upgrades that can help sell a home**

- **What to know about landscape lighting**
- **Turn your yard into a vacation-worthy oasis**

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What to know about landscape lighting

Home improvement trends come and go, and one trend that has become wildly popular in recent years is recognizable in yards every night. Landscape lighting has transformed how people see and enjoy their properties at night, making it one of the more sought-after upgrades among modern homeowners.

Curb appeal is often seen through the lens of how homes appear during daylight hours, but landscape lighting can make homes look better and more modern, and potentially safer, after the sun goes down. With such potential, landscape lighting is worth exploring for homeowners looking to upgrade their properties.

Are there different types of landscape lighting?

When considering landscape lighting, homeowners should know that there are various options to consider. According to the lighting experts at Lumens, spotlights project a concentrated and narrow beam of light that's usually around 45 degrees. Spotlights are often chosen to highlight specific features on a property, like a component of the landscaping. Individuals who want to cast light over wider, more general areas may consider floodlights, which Lumens notes spread light up to 120 degrees.

Inground lighting is among the more sophisticated landscape lighting options. Lumens notes that inground lighting illuminates the whole of a tree or structure, often creating a dramatic look. These circle-shaped lights also are great at illuminating walkways and driveways.

Post lights are another outdoor lighting option, and these are often used to light up long walkways and pathways so it's easier and safer to navigate dark areas at night.

Is landscape lighting a job a DIYer can handle?

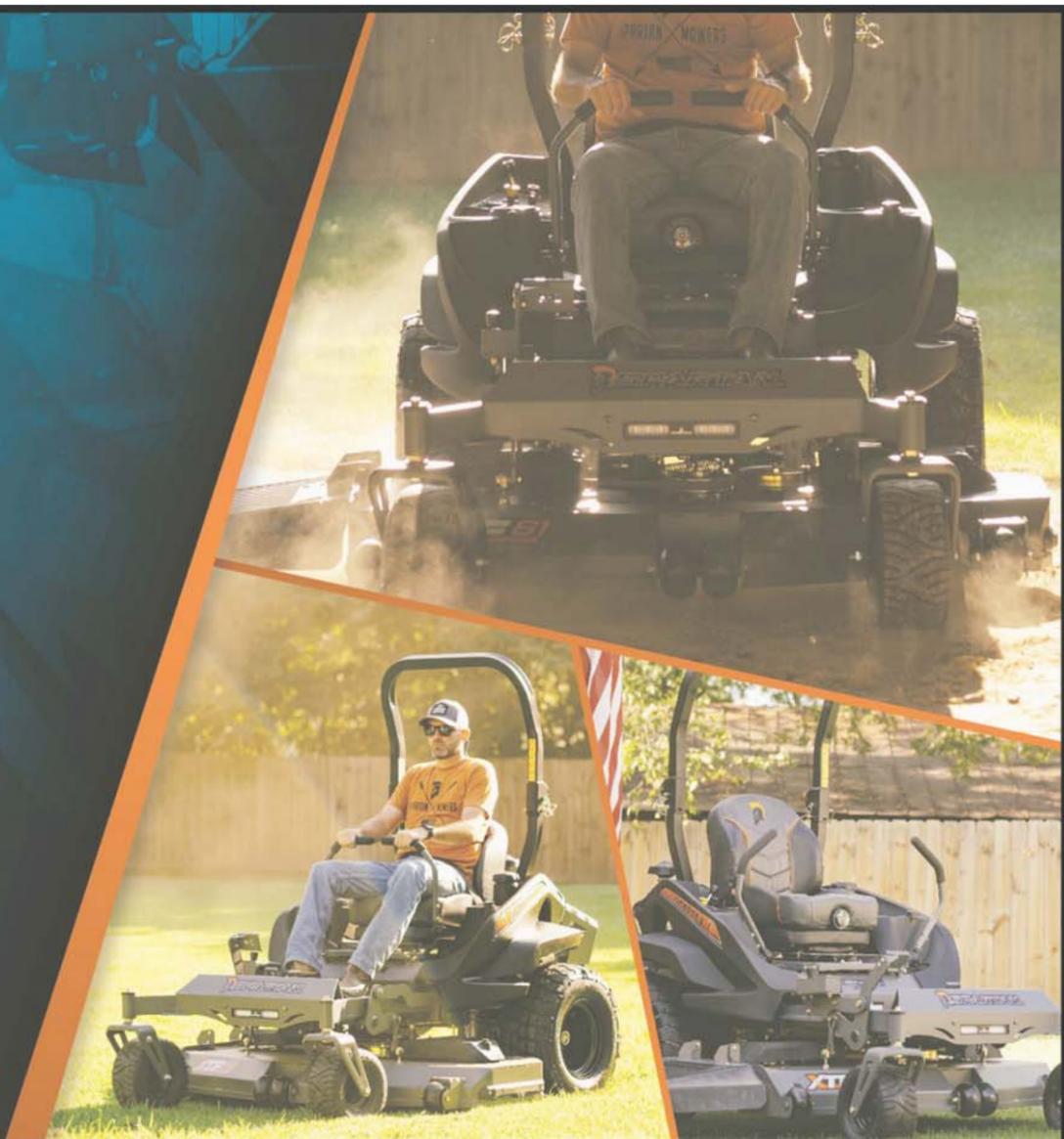
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potential home renovation, and a landscape lighting project is likely to inspire such curiosity as well. The home experts at HGTV note that the feasibility of DIY in regard to a landscape lighting project depends on the type of lighting homeowners want to install and where they want to install it. Replacing an existing electrical fixture may be well within the skill of a seasoned DIYer, but installing a new fixture is a job best left to the professionals. Homeowners whose homes currently have no or very little landscape lighting are almost certainly better off working with a professional. Solar lighting that does not require any electrical work can be installed quickly and easily by anyone, but such options may not provide the look homeowners are aiming for.

How much lighting is necessary?

The amount of lighting homeowners want to install is up to them. If the home currently has little or no landscape lighting, a consultation with a professional can help to determine how much lighting to install and where to install it. When discussing landscape lighting, homeowners may want to inquire about dimmers. Dimmers can increase or decrease lighting depending on the situation. For example, homeowners may want a little extra light during a party, but less when relaxing alone outside at night. Dimmers allow homeowners to adjust as necessary. Landscape lighting is a popular home renovation trend. Homeowners considering adding landscape lighting to their property are urged to work with a skilled professional to devise and install a set-up that makes their homes more appealing at night. TF234813

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How homeowners can turn attics into livable spaces

Houses typically feature various areas that are traditionally designed for storage, such as garages, basements and attics. However, with some renovation, these spaces can be transformed into livable areas.

Attic renovations can give homeowners more space in their homes, which can be used as offices, bedrooms or cozy corners.

Homeowners who would like to convert attics into livable spaces need to take certain things into consideration before starting an improvement project. While the attic may seem like it has plenty of room and is structurally sound enough to walk in, that's not necessarily so. To be converted into usable living space, an attic must be brought up to the standards of modern building codes, according to the design experts at Board & Vellum.

Retrofitting beams and insulation can eat up available space in an attic. Thus, it is best to consult an expert to see if an attic can be converted.

Furthermore, an attic that was not initially designed as a room when the house was built can add extra "load" upstairs if it is converted. That could present certain structural problems. That means a structural engineer also must be consulted to see if adding beams, flooring and drywall will necessitate other changes elsewhere in the home to accommodate the extra load.

In order to have a functional attic room, building codes will dictate that it needs to be accessible by a full-size staircase. Also, it will need to have another exit in case of an emergency so that will likely be an accessible window, according to the home information site The Fill. Homeowners'

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budgets and renovation plans will need to factor into these considerations. Homeowners also are advised to check local permits to determine what else may be required to go forward. It is best to follow the rules. Lack of a permit for work can affect the ability to sell a home down the line. Individuals also should plan for heating and cooling upgrades as the home will need to have ductwork



installed in the attic, or at the least, a stand-alone heating and cooling unit. As heat rises, it can get quite warm in an attic, so ventilation and comfort should be considered. The attic will need to be wired for electricity for lighting and other needs. Air sealing and additional insulation can the attic space more comfortable as well. Consult with a qualified electrician and an HVAC technician and have an energy audit done to discuss needs. Attic renovations can give homeowners more space in their homes, which can be used as offices, bedrooms or cozy corners. This is no small undertaking and all of the right steps need to be followed to ensure a legal, safe and successful renovation. FH238148

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Turn your yard into a vacation-worthy oasis

Warm weather means more time to relax outdoors. For those homeowners lucky enough to have entertaining spaces outside, spring and summer provides plenty of opportunities to enjoy fresh air under the sun or stars. Over the last few years, families have become especially familiar with what works about their yards and where there is room for improvement. Pandemic-related travel restrictions and early stay-at-home mandates resulted in plenty of time spent in backyards on staycations. Even though many such restrictions have been lifted, homeowners may have seen the benefits of having functional respites right outside their doors.

A backyard renovation can cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The American Society of Landscape Architects suggests homeowners budget the cost of a major landscaping project at between 5 and 10 percent of their home's value. Large or small, here are ways to make an outdoor oasis at home.

Create living privacy

Living in close proximity to neighbors may make privacy harder to come by. Wood or vinyl fences, however effective, may not provide the all-natural look many people desire. Vertical gardening, which trains easy-care vines like English ivy, Clematis or various climbing roses to grow on trellis or fencing adds greenery and privacy. Hedges and fast-growing shrubs also can be used for natural barriers.

Install a pool

Pools are the ultimate spots to cool off on hot days. An elaborately shaped inground pool can blend in with the landscape and offer the ultimate hang-out zone. However, above-ground pools also serve the purpose and are more



budget-friendly. Stock tank pools are popular among those who want minimal pool expenditure or have small spaces to work with. Stock tanks are metal vessels traditionally used as watering holes for livestock. They also can be "adult kiddie pools" when combined with some plumbing. Galvanized steel frames make them sturdy. With floats and other accessories, they can become the perfect oasis.

Provide outdoor atmosphere

Create a bespoke bistro vibe by using freestanding planters and posts along with hanging lights to make an intimate outdoor hangout spot at night. For those with permanent structures, like a deck or a gazebo, lights can be strung across the area or on railings or edging.

Extend the living space

Decks and patios can help make outdoor entertaining areas more comfortable by eliminating the need to sit on the grass or gravel. Plus, they add another "room" to the home. When paired with weatherproof patio furniture, such as sofas, loungers and tables, a private seating area can be crafted and utilized for any number of entertaining desires.

Hang a hammock

Few things evoke feelings of relaxation better than a hammock. Fitted between two trees (or two posts if trees are sparse), a hammock is an ideal place to grab a nap or read a book.

Additional oasis-inspired ideas include outdoor kitchens, letting up lanterns, cascading water features, and bird feeders to attract the sounds of nature. SL226007

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Pros and Cons Of Open Floor Plans

Open floor plans have evolved to be the floor plan of choice in new homes and current home renovations. Turn on a home renovation show, and you're likely to see eager homeowners knocking down walls to open the kitchen to the family room. Walls have become anathema to homeowners.

There are many supporters of the open floor plan, particularly those who entertain frequently or like to keep an eye on children throughout the house. Although open floor plans are touted, there are plenty of people who have never been enamored with having all of their rooms flowing into one. There also are some people who prefer a different style.

For those who are not fans of the open floor plan, blame the excess of the 1980s for their inception. In homes built in the 1960s and 1970s, rooms were compartmentalized and isolated for specific activities. During the 1980s, an era of "bigger is better," when entertaining was widely popular among homeowners, designers noticed that many homeowners preferred an open floor plan in which rooms merged into one another, creating the illusion of more space. These floor plans also enable people to be in separate rooms and still interact with one another across the space.

A home's floor plan largely depends on the preference of the homeowner. There are many advantages to having an open floor plan versus one that is more compartmentalized. Here is a look at some of the pros and cons.

Pro: Open floor plans can be safer for parents of young children. If the home opens up with the living spaces branching off from the kitchen, parents can keep an eye on children while the parents prepare dinner. It also eliminates the number of places that kids can hide and get into mischief.

Con: Privacy is reduced in a home with few walls. Much in the way that an open floor plan enables children to be seen from every angle, it also enables you to be seen -- and all of your belongings as well. There's also no place to retreat to if you need a minute to collect yourself when entertaining. You're on display unless you retreat to the bathroom.

Pro: Entertaining can be easier in a home with an open floor plan because hosts and hostesses are not separated from their guests or holed up in the



kitchen the entire time. An open space enables everyone to mingle and conversations to flow.

Con: Those who like to host events without showing guests all of their dirty dishes or secrets of the kitchen may dislike an open floor plan.

Pro: Light can flow effectively through an open space, minimizing dark rooms and reducing the need to install more windows. Light in and of itself can help a home feel more spacious.

Con: While light can flow easily, so can sound. Noises through the house may be amplified. A student doing homework in the dining room may be disturbed by the television blaring in the family room. Talking on the phone or even finding a quiet nook to read a book may be challenging.

Pro: Open floor plans allow for more family time together in one space than a home with a more compartmentalized layout.

Con: People who are collectors or who have a lot of furniture or accent items may find that open floor plans do not work well with this type of design mantra.

Pro: Because several rooms run into one another, color choices for walls and furnishings in a home with an open floor plan can be limited and cohesive, making choices easier.

Con: On the flip side, those who want to incorporate different color schemes and eclectic styles may have difficulty deciding on where to "end" rooms or how to co-mingle furniture.

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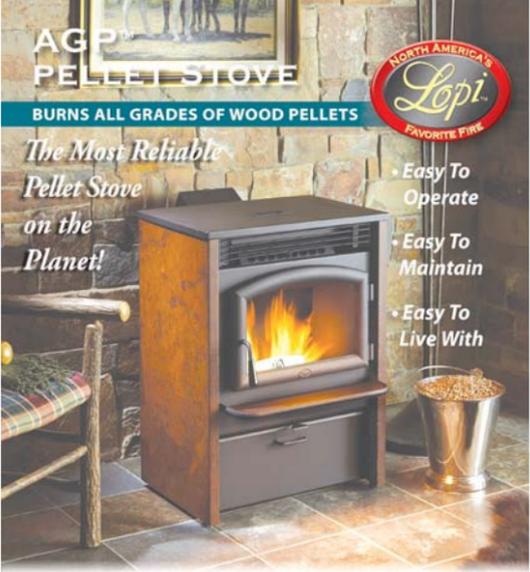
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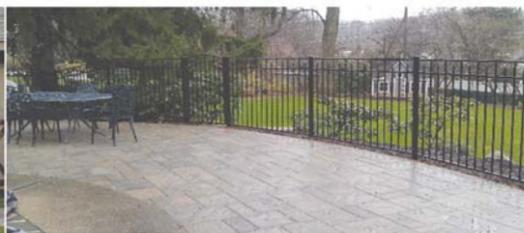
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A guide to various types of home awnings

Homeowners recognize that upgrades can improve the functionality and comfort of their homes. Improving outdoor spaces has proven particularly popular of late. The National Association of Home Builders reports that outdoor living has been propelled to the top of homeowner wish lists. Plus, a recent survey conducted by the New Home Trends Institute found connection to the outdoors/nature and outdoor entertaining ranked high among desired home designs.

One way to make outdoor spaces more accommodating is through the installation of awnings. Many homeowners would like to enhance their homes with awnings but do not know where to begin. Learning about the various types of awnings can help homeowners determine which option best suits their needs.

Fixed awnings

Fixed awnings are stationary on a building's exterior. While the awnings are generally stable, they can be damaged by snow or wind. It's key to find an installation expert to make sure the awning is installed correctly so that it can withstand weather and other issues. It's also important to know that fixed awnings remain in the same position and orientation, so its best to know exactly where to place it beforehand.

Retractable awning

Retractable awnings are the most popular type of awnings because they can be extended when necessary to keep a space cool or protected, then rolled or folded up when not in use. These awnings are advantageous because they can be retracted when bad weather hits to prevent damage.



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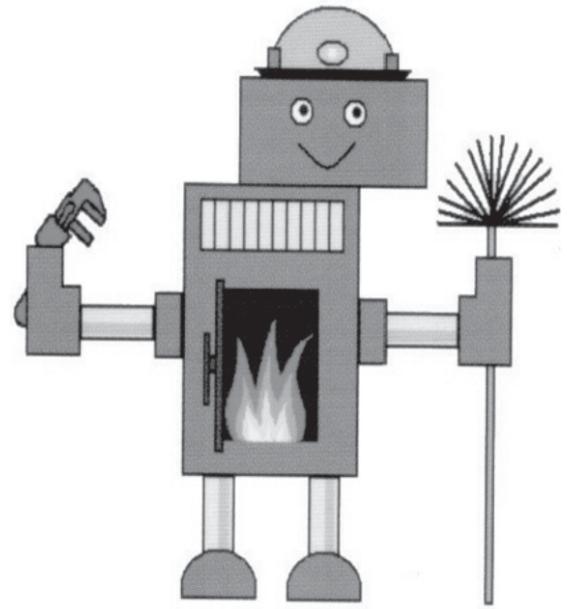
Motorized retractable awning

Motorized retractable awnings offer the utmost convenience. Standard retractable offerings require a handle or hand crank to manually extend or fold up the awning. Motorized awnings can be operated with a sensor, remote or even motion trigger. Even though they cost more, they're a favorite among homeowners.

Areas of use

Awnings can be installed in various locations. Patio awnings are much preferred because of their large coverage area, which typically spans entire patios. Door awnings are installed above the exterior door of an entryway to protect visitors and occupants from precipitation and to improve the home's look. Window awnings can add additional shade and privacy. There also are side awnings, which are essentially wall-like structures that run across a patio, garden or balcony for wind or sun protection. They're also utilized to improve privacy.

Homeowners can choose from various types of awning materials, including fabric, metal, glass, and others. Working with a reputable awning company is the best way for homeowners to peruse possible products and find awnings that will suit their needs. TF23B461



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Some hidden costs of DIY

The home renovation industry is booming, and that's reflected in the cost to upgrade a home. Home Guide says remodeling a kitchen costs \$25,000 on average, and a bathroom renovation runs around \$10,000. Though rates fluctuate depending on a host of variables, renovations can cost \$15 to \$60 per square foot depending on the project.

The average homeowner wants to save as much money as possible when renovating their home. Many think doing much of the work themselves is the easiest way to keep costs low. What some homeowners may not realize is that DIY can be costly and prove a big hassle in the long run. The following are some hidden costs of DIY and renovating in general.

Time

DIY projects are a major drain on free time. Homeowners taking the DIY route typically work on weekends or after work. Few people can take off and devote their undivided attention to a remodel like a contractor can. Time is a valuable resource that is not renewable. Therefore, think of a DIY project in terms of what it would equal in lost wages. Because homeowners are not professionals, a DIY project may take double the time it would take a contractor. It may be worth it to simply hire it out.

Mistakes

Many resources are available to help DIY enthusiasts work on a project, but there are still tricks and techniques learned after years on the job. DIYers may damage their homes by taking shortcuts or not understanding how to do a job properly. A plumbing mistake, for example, may lead to flooding that damages another room in the home. And such mistakes may not be covered by homeowners insurance policies.

Fines

Permits are required for many home improvement projects. Forgetting to obtain permits or not realizing one may be necessary could subject you to



hefty fines and/or force the job to be redone so it's up to code. Professionals likely know the rules regarding permits and often include the cost of acquiring permits in an estimate.

Remediation

It's only after opening up walls or removing floors that you may discover issues you did not anticipate, such as termite damage or mold. These unforeseen factors can drive up the overall costs of a project.

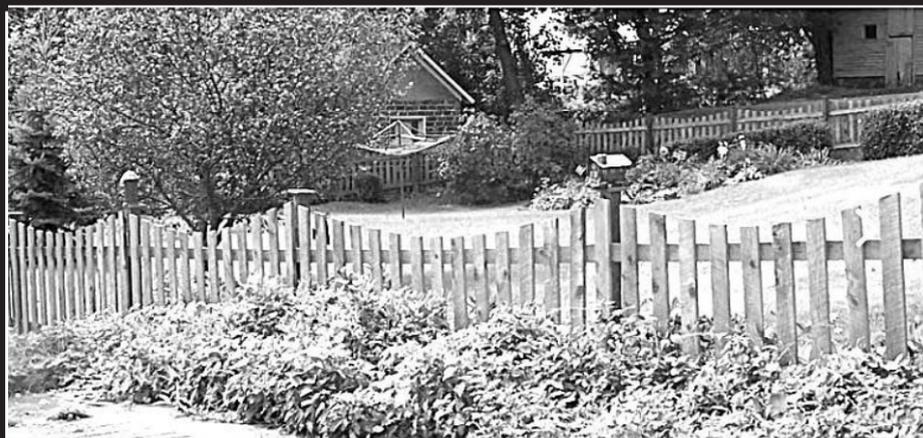
Disposal

Removing old building materials or gutting a room is part of many renovations. Chances are this refuse simply cannot be left at the curb for trash pickup. As a DIYer, you may not factor the costs for a dumpster or the time and money required to haul debris to a recycling or landfill center.

Tools

DIYers may have to purchase tools as they engage in new projects. These expenses can add up and negate the savings of doing some of the work yourself.

DIY projects may initially seem like a way to save money, but weekend warriors should calculate the hidden costs associated with DIY renovations before deciding to do some work on their own. TF233742

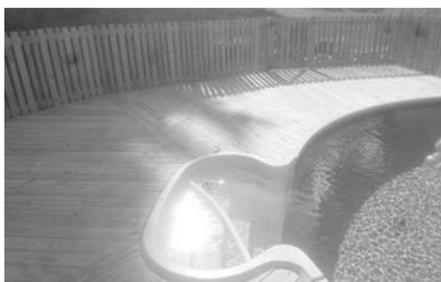


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Minor exterior upgrades that can help sell a home

The home improvement industry has been booming for years, but forecasters are projecting a deceleration in 2023 and perhaps beyond. Estimates from the Home Improvement Research Institute, which is the leading market research resource for the home and building products industry, indicate that growth in the home improvement products market is expected to decelerate from 7.2 percent in 2022 to 1.5 percent in 2023. Inflation continues to affect consumer spending, and homeowners may be looking to spend less on renovations in the year ahead.

Minor upgrades that aren't as costly as larger projects can still make a big difference, especially among prospective buyers. When looking for minor upgrades that can help sell a home, homeowners can rely on Remodeling magazine's annual "Cost vs. Value Report." That report analyzes costs for an assortment of remodeling projects and determines the value of those projects at resale. Though resale value depends on a host of variables, including location, the following are some relatively minor exterior upgrades that impress buyers and provide a strong return for homeowners.

- **Garage door replacement:** Garage doors matter more than sellers may recognize, as various real estate professionals note that buyers appreciate homes with updated garage doors. That's good news for homeowners, as the "2022 Cost vs. Value Report" indicated homeowners recoup roughly 93 percent of their garage door replacement investment at resale. The average cost of such a job is right around \$4,000, making this a budget-friendly remodeling project.

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• **Window replacement:** The cost of new windows will depend on just how many windows must be replaced. But there's no denying buyers like the idea of low emissivity (low-E) windows, which can cut energy bills by a significant amount over time. The Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy estimates that heat gain and heat loss through windows is responsible for between 25 and 30 percent of residential heating and cooling energy use, so sellers who can tell buyers they have new low-E windows can emphasize those savings in home listings. The "2022 Cost vs. Value Report" indicates that homeowners recoup roughly two-thirds of their investment in new windows at resale.

• **Landscaping:** Well-maintained landscaping is another home exterior component that can make a strong first impression on buyers. A recent survey of nearly 7,000 realtors conducted by the National Association of Realtors found that upgrading a landscape recouped roughly 83 percent of homeowners' initial investment at resale. In addition, 11 percent of realtors surveyed indicated that an upgraded landscape was the decisive factor that closed the deal for the house.

Updating a home's exterior doesn't have to bust homeowners' budgets. Many affordable projects also provide a substantial return at resale.
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Factors to consider when planning a home office

As technology has made working remotely easier, more and more professionals are working from home. Working from home can help working parents save money on childcare costs and help all workers avoid rush hour traffic jams and the costs of commuting to and from the office.

The right working environment is essential for men and women who work from home. An environment that's conducive to work can help people increase their productivity and make their employers more likely to allow more employees to work from home. Professionals who are new to working from home may find it takes some time before they can create the perfect working environment, but the following are a few factors to consider when planning a home office.

Space

One of the disadvantages to working from home is that remote workers don't have access to the same level of equipment as in the main office, such as color copiers or scanners. If you want to include even scaled-down versions of such equipment in your office, you will need ample space. In addition, less spacious home offices can feel too tight and enclosed, making workers uncomfortable and less enthusiastic about working every day. Pick a spot in your home that affords room for your equipment and the ability to move around so you don't feel cramped throughout the workday.

Lighting

Lighting is another factor remote workers must consider when they're planning their home offices. Natural light can provide an energetic boost and improve your mood, so choose a room in your home that gets lots of sunlight during the day. Many professionals who work remotely do so from the basements of their homes, which can make it difficult to rely on natural light. If the basement is the only location in your home that can fit a home office,

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look for lighting sources that replicate daylight so you are not working in dark quarters. Speak with your physician about how to arrange lighting to reduce eyestrain caused by staring at a computer.

Connectivity

Connectivity also must be considered when planning a home office. While wireless Internet has made Internet dead zones less problematic, certain areas or rooms in your home may still be touch-and-go with regard to Internet connectivity. Such areas should be avoided when choosing a room for your home office, as it can be difficult to remain productive if your connection to your office's external server is routinely compromised. Find an area where the wireless connection is always strong.

Distractions

While your home might be empty for much of the day, you don't want to be distracted when the kids come home from school or when your spouse or roommate arrives home from work. Avoid putting your home office too close to popular hangout areas in your home, such as the kitchen and the living room. Instead, choose a room where you have lots of privacy so you can focus on your work and won't be routinely interrupted. Working from home can pay numerous dividends, but professionals who telework must put careful thought into the rooms or areas of their homes where they plan to work. FH158411



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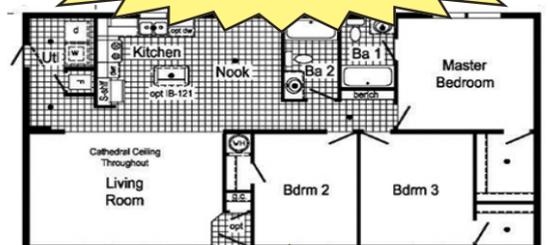
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