

Spring

HOME

IMPROVEMENT 1



- Signs a home exterior needs updating
- Pros & cons of open concept floor plans
- How to upgrade your home to accommodate modern living

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How to upgrade your home to accommodate modern living

Remodeling projects allow homeowners to put their personal stamps on a property. In addition to choosing a color and design scheme that fits a particular aesthetic, homeowners may want to outfit their homes with various features that can make them more accommodating to modern living. Homeowners can use these ideas as a springboard for remodeling projects designed to modernize their homes.

- **Open floor plans:** Open floor plans remain coveted characteristics of modern home architecture. An open layout enables occupants to feel like they are enjoying spaces together without having to be on top of one another. Since sightlines are not obstructed in open floor plans, homeowners can enjoy a cohesive design style across each level of the home.
- **Eco-friendly features:** Eco-friendly features modernize homes and may even earn homeowners rebates from the government. From positioning rooms to take advantage of natural sunlight to using environmentally responsible materials throughout a home, modern homes can function with a much smaller carbon footprint than older structures.
- **Smart home technology:** A smart home is equipped with appliances and other devices that can be controlled remotely, typically from a phone or computer connected to the internet. Investopedia notes that



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smart home technology offers homeowners convenience and cost savings. Smart home technology is available across a wide range of budgets, ranging from thousands of dollars for a complete home automation to roughly \$100 for a small change like a smart thermostat.

• **Accessibility features:**

A home that can grow with its residents is advantageous. When choosing renovations, features like slip-resistant flooring, stylish grab bars and low-threshold or barrier-free showers can enable homeowners to age in place more comfortably.

• **Dual owner's suites:** Dual owner's suites can be an asset for couples who choose to sleep separately. The Sleep Foundation says individuals choose to sleep in different rooms for a variety of reasons, notably reduced sleep interruptions and improved sleep quality. Plus, an extra bedroom can come in handy when one person is ill or in the event a partner snores. Rather than one person in the relationship getting the "lesser" space, certain homebuilders now offer plans for dual owner's suites so both people get the features they desire in a bedroom.

• **Three-season room:** Many homeowners aspire to bridge the gap between the indoors and outside. Three-season rooms help transition from the yard to the interior of a home, and offer a touch of nature without the bugs or unpleasant elements.

A number of home improvements can bring homes up to the standards of modern living. SH252608t



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Signs a home exterior needs updating

Renovations are a great way for homeowners to reshape their homes. Some may aspire to renovate so their home is more reflective of their personal taste, while others may do so in an effort to make their homes better align with modern styles and sensibilities. Regardless of why a homeowner chooses to renovate, the need to do so is often evident to the naked eye,

If the driveway looks like a busy road at the end of snow plowing season, chances are that's adversely affecting the impression people have of your home.

especially when the time comes to update home exteriors. Curb appeal is often discussed in regard to the effects it can have when selling a home. But curb appeal is equally important for homeowners who aren't putting their homes on the market. A well-maintained, aesthetically appealing home is a source of pride, while a home with fading curb appeal can make homeowners feel a little sheepish. Homeowners who want their homes to maintain their curb appeal can look for signs that it's time to update their home exteriors.

• **Curling shingles:** The roof may not be the first thing people think of when pondering curb appeal, but a damaged roof can contribute to problems that ultimately affect the exterior and interior of the home. Multiple curling shingles indicate it's time to replace the roof. The sight of curling shingles is



not pretty, but the larger issue in such instances is the potential for costly water damage when water gets in through the affected shingles.

- **Dated entry door:** Many home improvement experts insist they can determine when a home was built or most recently renovated simply by looking at the front door. Steel and glass doors are popular in modern homes, so homeowners with front doors with ornate designs and oval glass inserts can likely benefit from an upgrade to their entryway. A modern front door can make a statement and real estate experts note how popular updated front doors are among buyers.
- **Unightly landscaping:** It's not only the physical components of the home that may suggest an update is necessary. Homeowners without a green thumb may have exterior landscaping that has seen better days. If a spring or summer day spent tending to your landscaping is not your ideal weekend pastime, then consider replacing unsightly landscaping with low-maintenance plants or hardscaping. These alternatives to more needy plants can create curb appeal without requiring any extra work for homeowners.
- **Cracked driveways/walkways:** If the driveway looks like a busy road at the end of snow plowing season, chances are that's adversely affecting the impression people have of your home. In addition, cracked walkways indicate a need for renovations, as these areas are front and center when welcoming guests.

Updating a home's exterior can restore curb appeal and help homeowners feel better about their properties. TF234808



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Pros & cons of open concept floor plans

Open floor plans that make it easy to move through primary living and entertaining areas have been popular for decades. Open concept floor plans join the dining room, kitchen and living (great) room into a communal space where sight lines are maximized and walls are minimal. According to JJones Design Co., the origins of open concept floor plans may be traced to the deaf community. An open layout allows for better visual communication and awareness of one's surroundings, and some deaf individuals modified their kitchen and living spaces to facilitate more room for social gatherings and signing. Nowadays, it's nearly impossible to find a new construction with closed-off rooms. Here's a look at some of the pros and cons of having an open-concept home.

Benefit: Open concept plans make small spaces feel bigger. When smaller homes are broken up by walls, they can seem even smaller. By tearing down walls, one can trick the mind into thinking there is more square footage.

Drawback: The space may feel too large. An open concept floor plan in a large home can make interior spaces feel cavernous. A cozy home can be difficult to achieve with fewer walls.

Benefit: Open concept plans facilitate the flow of natural light. Without walls to break up rooms, homeowners can maximize light coming in through their windows. This also may help to brighten darker rooms that do not get as much natural light.

Drawback: Privacy can be hard to achieve. Unobstructed views from windows and doors can make it more challenging to create privacy when desired. When window shades are open, passersby can see into a home.



Also, sunlight may end up wearing out flooring and furniture throughout the home.

Benefit: Open floor plans allow more space to spread out when entertaining. One of the biggest pluses of open floor plans is that it makes it easier to host crowds. Guests can enjoy the communal space, while hosts can still interact with friends and family even while preparing meals in the kitchen.

Drawback: Homeowners will likely need to do more cleaning ahead of hosting guests, as multiple rooms will be on display. Also, cleanup afterwards may be more arduous since guests have spent time in multiple spaces.

Benefit: Open concept plans can improve property value. The home renovation experts at The Spruce note open floor plans are desirable and increase the value of a home by up to 7.4 percent a year.

Drawback: Some home buyers are beginning to shy away from open floor plans. This may have been prompted by stay-at-home requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, when multiple family members were working and doing school work at home. In that environment, an open-concept layout didn't provide the privacy or distraction-free spaces residents may have needed.

Open floor plans have been around for more than 30 years, but they aren't everyone's cup of tea. The pros and cons of this design style merits consideration when renovating or shopping for a home. HI254737

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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

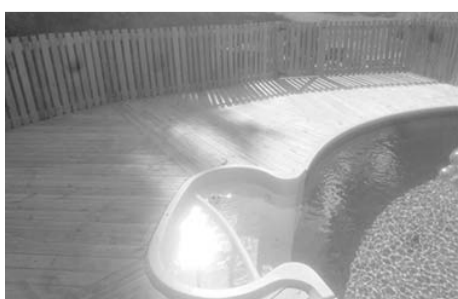


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hefty fines and/or force the job to be redone so it's up to code. Professionals likely know the rules regarding permits and often include the cost of acquiring permits in an estimate.

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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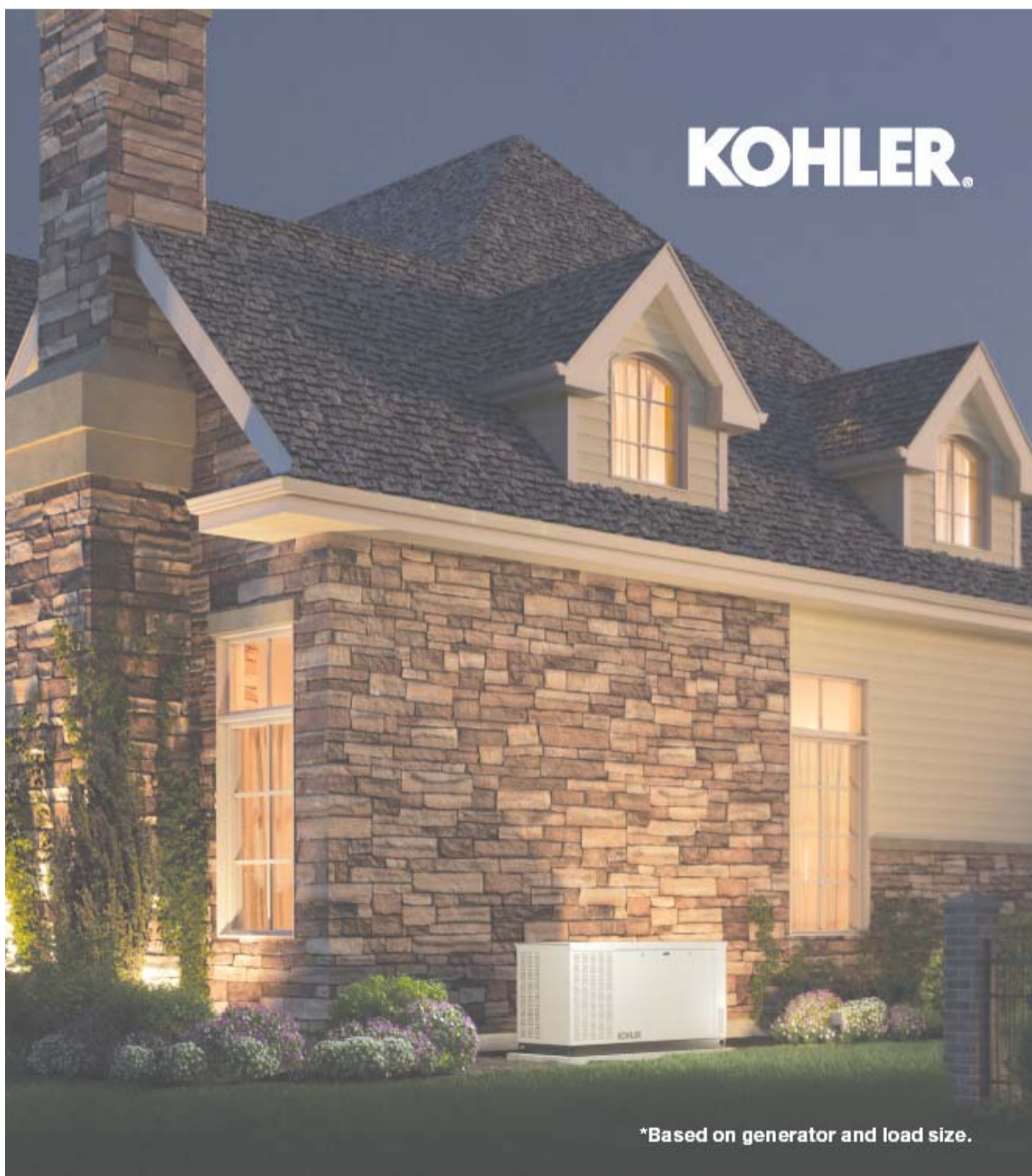
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Did you know?

Certain home improvement projects are more complex than others. Projects that involve working with gas lines are among the most complicated and risky undertakings, and even seasoned do-it-yourselfers are urged to leave such tasks to certified professionals. According to Angi, the average cost to move a gas line is between \$15 and \$25 per linear foot, and homeowners can expect to pay an additional \$1 to \$10 per linear foot for pipe materials. A natural gas plumber can install, extend and repair natural gas lines and ensure that the project is completed safely, on time and within homeowners' budgets. Angi notes that the average cost to move a gas line is between \$250 and \$750 for the whole project. However, if a buried line must be excavated, that cost could run into the thousands of dollars. SH222678

Did you know?

It's no secret that a good-looking lawn can entice buyers when selling a home, but homeowners may not realize just how much they can benefit from even the smallest investments of time and money in their home exteriors. According to the Top Agent Insights Q2 2019 Report from HomeLight, low-cost outdoor home improvements to a landscape provide sizable returns on investment. For example, the report found that a \$268 investment in a lawn care service can lead to a \$1,211 increase in home value at resale. Similarly, \$340 worth of fresh mulch can increase home value at resale by \$769. More than 85 percent of real estate professionals recommended other small and simple projects, including removing dirt, grime and cobwebs from a home entrance and trimming trees and shrubs prior to putting a home on the market. GT224830



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Give your home a new look with these shutter styles

Homeowners have many options at their disposal if they want to improve their homes. A focus on the exterior can be a promising and rewarding way to direct renovation dollars.

Curb appeal has a significant impact on how a home is viewed. Manicured landscapes, updated windows and doors and well-lit landscapes can improve the value of a home and ensure it sells quickly and above market rate.

When homeowners assess items they may want to change, shutters can be an area of consideration. Shutters can help windows look a little less plain. In most modern residential properties, shutters are purely decorative. However, their roots lie in home protection. Originally, shutters were used in lieu of windows so they were the only way to safeguard a home's interior from the elements. Some shutters still offer that protection, but those typically are installed on homes in hurricane-prone areas.

Window shutters lend a finished and distinctive look to a home. When shopping for shutters, individuals can choose among various styles.

• **Louvered:** A louvered shutter features several wood slats that overlap each other on the same frame. A typical louvered shutter features two sets of slats separated by a center rail. Some functional louvered shutters are operational, meaning the slats can be tilted to allow air to flow through. But this is something typically reserved for indoor shutters. Decorative ones have fixed slats.

• **Panel:** Panel shutters come in different styles. Raised panel shutters present a boxed design where rectangular features will stand out from the rest of the frame. Flat panel shutters (sometimes referred to as shaker) have the boxed design, but those rectangles are not raised. Recessed panels are the opposite of raised panels. As their name suggests, recessed panels are set back from the rest of the frame.



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• Board and batten:

Board and batten shutters are formed from grouped single boards joined together with shorter crosspieces of wood called battens.

Battens are positioned horizontally or at an angle. These shutters have a more informal, rural feel.

• Bahama/Bermuda:

These tropical-inspired shutters are of the louvered variety, but they're installed from the top of the window rather than on the sides.

• Scandinavian:

Scandinavian series shutters are very decorative board and batten shutters. They feature a series of cutouts and designs.

• Combination: Some shutters offer the best of both worlds, with louvered on top and a solid panel on the bottom, or vice versa. This gives homeowners infinite options.

Shutters are available in various materials. The most common include wood, vinyl and composite. Cedar, mahogany and pine are commonly used woods for exterior shutters. Vinyl is more economical and lightweight, but they can be challenging to clean and do not offer the longevity of other materials.

Composite shutters are durable and cost less than wood in most cases. Color is another consideration when replacing shutters. Shutters can stand out or blend in with the siding and other architectural accents. Shutters also can flank a front door to fully complete an exterior look. TF234819



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