

# YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING



## Room FOR IMPROVEMENT

It may sound strange, but did you know that some home renovations may *decrease* the value of your home? *Money* magazine suggests avoiding these four renovations at all costs:

- **A swimming pool.** Unless you live in a hot climate, a swimming pool can be a liability, not an asset. In the Southwest, a pool can increase a home's value by 11 percent. But if your home is in Oregon or Illinois, the cost of insurance and pool maintenance is a buyer turn-off. Families with small children especially avoid homes with pools.
- **Home addition.** Sure, an addition to your home will add inside space. But how will it look from the outside? Many home additions can look boxy or unnatural with the rest of the house. If you do go for an addition, make sure it is well designed.
- **Trendy finishes.** Don't fall for the latest style or trend when it comes to renovating. As soon as it's out of style, it will stick out — and look bad. One trend that will probably last for a while is custom paneling in maple or mahogany for home appliances. Otherwise, stick to timeless, classic renovations.
- **A jacuzzi.** Nothing beats a good soak after a long day. But not everyone loves a giant tub with multiple jets. Instead, try a rain showerhead if you want to add some luxury to a bathroom.

## Wired @ Home

FEELING MORE 1997 THAN 2007? Check out these top technology trends for homes, according to the Custom Electronic Design & Installation Association:

- 1 **A home theater or media room.** A home theater is a room dedicated solely to the viewing of movies and programs, designed with top sound quality in mind. A media room is incorporated in a home's living space and is a multipurpose room where a homeowner can watch television, read a book or play a game. Home theaters can run anywhere from \$15,000 to \$150,000 or more, depending on the components.
- 2 **Home health-care products and installation.** As the population ages, there's more demand for health-care products that take advantage of the latest technology. Patient-monitoring systems can allow a caregiver to check up on an elderly loved one from afar. Biometric monitoring devices can keep constant watch on a patient's vital signs.
- 3 **Media Center Edition (MCE) computers.** This audio/visual computer can help manage a home's various media sources, providing such features as surround-sound processing, as well as access to Internet radio and the one-touch recording of TV shows.
- 4 **Microdisplay-based televisions.** High-definition televisions are hot, including LCD (liquid crystal displays), DLP (digital light processing), LCoS (liquid crystal on silicon) or LCD-based rear-projection TVs. Depending on size and type, prices for these products run the gamut.
- 5 **Lighting and automation.** Homes can be set up with the ability to control lighting and other features throughout the house from any room — and any part of the world. Systems can also create lighting schemes and automation that can turn down the lights and close the curtains when a DVD is started.

## fast fact » » » » » » » » » »

69 million American households own pets, and about three-fourths of these households view their pet as a child or family member.

(Source: American Pet Products Manufacturers Association)



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# Pop the Cork

Cork isn't just for wine bottles anymore. This green material is, well, popping up all over the place, from wall coverings that are durable and soundproof to stylish flooring that's easy on your feet. Plus, cork is naturally antimicrobial and insect-repellent, and it doesn't absorb dust. Harvested from the bark of the cork oak, the material is eco-friendly and renewable. So, save a tree and look to cork the next time you're considering what to do with that outdated parquet kitchen floor.



## Fix or Replace?

A recent issue of *Consumer Reports* offered a timeline to determine when to say "adios" to old appliances that aren't operating properly. The magazine took into account age, typical repair and replacement costs, and improvements made in newer models.

Here are the ages when it's more sensible to replace an appliance than to fix it:

- Six years: dishwashers, over-the-range microwaves, and top-freezer refrigerators
- Seven years: clothes dryers and top-loader washers
- Eight years: Bottom-freezer and side-by-side refrigerators, electric or gas ranges, electric wall ovens and front-loader washers



### DID YOU KNOW?

The optimal temperature of the water in your dishwasher should be 130 degrees F or higher.

Any lower and it's more difficult to remove grease and food. Lower temperatures can also result in spotting, filming and improper drying.

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