

Home Improvement Help

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Are you looking for ways to improve your home *and* increase its resale value? Are you not sure where to begin? Appraiser Mike Airhart, CRA., IFA. of Qualified Appraisers, inc. has been in business for nearly 20 years, and has some advice to offer those interested in improving home value during the currently difficult financial times. Normally, it is best to consult with a state certified appraiser before making any *major* investments, to ensure the best possible return. The appraisers at [Qualified Appraisers, inc.](http://www.qualifiedappraisersinc.com) can help you make the decision to get that brand new kitchen, or maybe just replace the countertops, sink, and floor. Click [here](#) to contact us today with your questions. For some ideas of what you can do to increase your home value, or at least *maintain* the value, read on.

Only a few years ago, almost any new roof, windows, kitchen, or bathroom would yield at *least* a 100% return. Unfortunately, in the current market, there may not be much you can do to increase the value of your home. But it is still a good time to consider improving, especially since home values are already picking back up in some areas, and are expected to at least hit bottom everywhere else by June 2010. The [Qualified Appraisers, inc.](http://www.qualifiedappraisersinc.com) website offers links to some excellent resources on home values and market trends, as well as general how-to guides for some of the suggestions in this article.

Things that can be done with minimal or no cost:

(While these may not increase your value, they will help maintain it.)

- ✓ **Keep your home clean inside and out.** An important aspect of selling your home is getting potential buyers into the house. No matter how beautiful it is on the inside, if your yard is not up to snuff, or your home's exterior is dirty, you may have a difficult time getting anyone to look at the inside. Also, if the inside is dirty, potential buyers may wonder what else is wrong with the house.
- ✓ **Landscaping**, if it is a do-it-yourself project, can be done pretty inexpensively. The [Qualified Appraisers, inc.](http://www.qualifiedappraisersinc.com) website has a link to the Arbor Day Foundation, which includes tips on how to plant trees in your yard to increase the value of your home as well as save on heating and cooling bills.
- ✓ **Consider repainting your interior walls** if they are an unusual color, or if they are too bright or bold. Just because you love fuchsia or chartreuse doesn't mean anyone looking to buy your home will love it. The best colors to have in your home are neutral colors that are easily covered if a buyer wants to customize. With the newer designer paints, neutral colors are not just white and beige anymore, either. Go to our [website](#) and check out our link for home decorating to learn more, and get some ideas on what you can do to improve the marketability of your home's interior. Just be aware that hiring someone to paint your home can be quite costly, but doing it yourself costs nothing more than the supplies you need.

Keeping everything in good repair is one of the most important things you can do to avoid losing value on your property.

This can mean expenses as hefty as replacing a furnace or rewiring your house, or as little as replacing an O-ring to ensure your faucets don't leak. Below is a run-down of the important parts of your home to keep up, from most important to least:

- ✓ **Roof**
- ✓ **Plumbing/septic if applicable**
- ✓ **Electrical** (fixtures and wiring should be up-to-date)
- ✓ **Heating and air conditioning**
- ✓ **Windows** are important to keep in good repair for the sake of energy efficiency as well as the aesthetic quality of your home. Obviously, they should open and close fairly smoothly, but you can also increase their

energy efficiency cheaply and easily. Caulking and weather stripping are a couple of the simplest and most inexpensive things you can do. Visit [our website](#) for links to websites with helpful information on the subject of caulking and weather stripping. You should replace cracked panels and redo the glazing (if applicable). You can also install storms if your windows are not insulated.

- ✓ **Energy efficiency** is becoming more and more important with rising costs of utilities and the emergence of eco-consciousness among consumers. Realtors report utility bills for homes as a selling point. Lower operating costs for a home means better home value. The Qualified Appraisers, inc. [website](#) has resources on making your home more energy efficient, including insulation and Energy Star websites. Below is a list of things to consider:
 - ✓ **Blown-in insulation** (if your home is not already insulated and you don't intend to tear the walls out) is surprisingly inexpensive if you do it yourself. It usually requires two people, but is not extremely difficult if you are in decent physical shape. You can rent all of the equipment you need at local hardware stores.
 - ✓ **The sill plate in the basement** (where the wood of your floor meets the concrete of your basement walls) is a spot many don't think about.
 - ✓ **Attic insulation** can save quite a bit on energy. Many homeowners do not realize how much heat goes right out of the top of the house.
 - ✓ **Exterior doors/weather stripping**—resources can be found on our [website](#).
 - ✓ **Water heater** should be serviced and cleaned regularly.
 - ✓ **Furnace and A/C** should be serviced and cleaned regularly.
 - ✓ **When you replace older appliances** you may want to consider spending just a little more and getting Energy Star approved appliances. You might even qualify for a tax credit. [Click here](#) to go to our website for more information.

Home Improvement Don'ts

- ✓ **Don't** paint your home weird colors. Remember to stay neutral so that a potential buyer with different tastes than you will still see the possibilities in your home.
- ✓ **Don't** finish the basement unless you are doing it for yourself and don't intend for it to raise your home value significantly. Many owners are disappointed to find that they invested far more into finishing the basement than they will get back out of it when they sell.
- ✓ **Don't** over improve. As a general rule, you should not increase the quality or size of your home more than your neighbors. The biggest and nicest home in the neighborhood is usually not worth as much as it would be in a neighborhood full of similar homes. To get a good idea of what is typical in your neighborhood, as well as what will provide the best return, contact [Qualified Appraisers, inc.](#). Our appraisers can assist you in deciding how best to invest in your home.
- ✓ **Don't** replace things that are in good working order already, unless what you are replacing is odd or out of place in your neighborhood. In other words, if you don't like the color of your roof or siding, don't bother replacing it unless you intend to stay in your home a while, or you own the one pink house with green shutters on a street lined with brick homes.
- ✓ **Don't** make a major investment in improving your home without consulting a professional who can help you decide if the investment is worth it. If you are planning to put several thousand dollars into a new kitchen or bathroom in order to be able to sell your home for more, then why not spend a couple hundred dollars extra to confirm that your investment will have the return you are looking for? For professional advice, contact [Qualified Appraisers, inc.](#) today!