

Renovations that add value from inside out



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Good renovations are key to adding value to your home

If they're done right, you can get a great return on investment when the time comes to sell.

But with so many options to choose from, it can be near-impossible to figure out which renovations are right for your property.

We're here to make the near-impossible, possible—even easy. In the following pages, you'll find tricks,

tips and advice on renovating anything and everything in your home in preparation for sale, ensuring you get the price your property deserves.

Let's get started.



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General advice: 'Every room' renovations

Painting

Painting a room for added value is a cliché—but a cliché for good reason. It's easily one of the most cost-effective, but simple, ways to modernise a dated space.

A tidy paint job tells your buyers as soon as they walk in the room that they are entering a home that is well-maintained and carefully cared for. That counts for a lot in the modern day, with buyers more aware than ever about potential repair problems and maintenance issues.

And there are a lot of different ways to use paint beyond just tidying up marks and chips. You could add a feature wall to a room, or change the colour palette of a room from cool and cold to warm and inviting, using the latest on-trend colours.

A solid paint job will give your buyers a reason to believe that this home is ready to move into right now without having to re-decorate beforehand, and you'll find it a lot easier to secure a great offer come sale time.

Where to start with a repaint

If you decide to go with a repaint, we'd recommend hiring an expert. While it is perfectly possible to DIY a paint job, and is an extremely common method to add value at a low cost, professional painting is much harder than it looks.

Failing to remove varnish from paintwork first, for example, or failing to apply an undercoat or primer, can mean that your paints can flake, peel or drip—extremely embarrassing when pointed out by a now-unimpressed potential buyer.

If you'd prefer to do the work yourself, check out our guide to DIY painting below.



Lighting

There's not much point in updating your home's look if you don't have the right lighting to show it off. The right bulbs with the right wattage and temperature reveal the true value of your hard work to your potential buyers—and it's an extremely easy and cost effective 'renovation' to put in place too.

There are two value-adding traits of your lighting: the effect of the lighting itself, which enhances existing features, and the value of the lighting fixtures themselves.

For example, an overhanging chandelier or feature pendant would certainly be an arresting lighting fixture, while wall mounted or recessed bathroom lights would modernise and enhance your existing bathroom.

Our advice is to consider both these possibilities, but pay special attention to the enhancement factor. The majority of the time, buyers are going to be more interested in what the lights illuminate, rather than the lights themselves!

Different types of lighting

There are three types of lighting to consider when updating your look: general lighting, task lighting and accent lighting.

General lighting is used for general illumination, and usually includes your central overhead lighting in any room, such as a feature pendant light.

Task lighting is used for detailed work, and is generally practical in nature. For example, you might have spotlights designed to illuminate kitchen benches for easier use, or in your bathroom above the mirror.

Accent lighting is used to show something off, rather than directly improve illumination. A series of under-cabinet LED lighting in the kitchen, for example, would be considered accent lighting. Effective illumination is centred around balancing these three types of lighting according to the purpose of the room.

Kitchens tend to have a lot of task lighting, as do bathrooms, while a living room is unlikely to benefit from the same treatment. They would be better off with an investment in better general lighting, perhaps with a dimmer switch or two to add ambience.

What about natural lighting?

Natural lighting is often considered the most valuable kind of lighting in a home: you'll find your agent opening up every single curtain and window to let in as much sunlight as possible and to emphasise the sense of space, warmth and comfort.

With that in mind, you may also want to consider upgrading your windows, adding new ones, tidying up framing and sills, or even installing skylights where appropriate. These are bigger changes than just swapping out a bulb, but it can make a big difference to the overall lighting, and therefore the appeal, of your home.

Heating

A decent, efficient heating system is simply expected now, especially in higher value properties. Failing to have one doesn't just reduce your sale price; it can put a buyer off from purchasing your home altogether.

What are my heating options?

The four main types of heating used in New Zealand are:

- Heat pumps.
- Central heating.
- Wood pellet heating.
- Natural gas.

The heating you'll need will depend on the environment your home is in. Natural gas, for example, is not available in the South Island due to a lack of natural gas piping at the time of writing.


Heat pumps on the other hand are a popular choice in the northern regions, as they also provide a cooling function for the summertime.

Even if you already have one of the above heating systems installed, it pays to ensure that you review your energy use and check if your choice is suitable for your expected buyers.

What about solar?

We haven't mentioned solar heating in the above list for a simple reason: it can be expensive to install, and this cost often doesn't translate into the same amount of value added back into your home in the short term.

That said, they can be attractive to the environmentally-conscious purchaser. The investment may be worthwhile—ask your agent about what kinds of buyers you are likely to attract, and choose accordingly.



Related content:
[What is the best home heating system?](#)

Insulation

The value of insulation is really an extension of the value of heating: insulation is integral to ensuring that the heat that's generated stays in the home for longer.

In addition, the presence of insulation may particularly appeal to an investor. By July 2019, it will be law to ensure a certain level of insulation is installed within a rental property. Remove the need for the investor to install it themselves and get a higher price for your home at the same time.

What are my options for insulation?

[Harrisons Energy Solutions](#) explains that there are five main types of insulation in New Zealand:

- Fibreglass, which has high thermal performance, but there are concerns about the use of chemicals used to bond the fibres.
- Polyester insulation, which is recyclable and eco-friendly but has a lower thermal performance than other options.
- Wool insulation, which is a natural product (a preference for some buyers), but it's also more expensive to achieve the same level of performance as other options.
- Foil insulation, which doesn't degrade due to compacting or moisture absorption, but must be used in addition to other kinds of insulation in some applications.
- Polystyrene, which is a popular and effective choice in modern buildings, but it does require careful installation to ensure there aren't any gaps and is not very environmentally friendly.

Related content:
[Rental property insulation: everything you need to know before 1 July 2019](#)





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Flooring

Renovating your flooring, which may be as easy as replacing or removing some worn carpet or dated lino, can transform the look of your home, and also reduce some of the potential workload for the buyer. If they know that they won't have to come into the home and add "replace the living room carpet" to their list of issues, they are far more likely to sign on the dotted line for the sale and offer a higher price.

What are my flooring options?

You have a few different choices in flooring, each with their own pros and cons. These include:

- **Carpet.** Soft, comfortable, easy maintenance, but often loses out in popularity to hardwood.
- **Hardwood.** Extremely popular and on-trend, looks great, but can scratch (especially if you have animals in the home).
- **Vinyl.** Water resistant, but damage to one part might mean having to replace the entirety to maintain that barrier.
- **Laminate.** Better for insulation and scratch resistant, but can suffer from waterproofing issues.
- **Tiles.** Great for wet areas and easy to clean, but only really suitable for kitchens, laundries and bathrooms and can be expensive depending on the tile.
- **Linoleum.** Cheap and easy to clean, but can look cheap.
- **Concrete.** Great thermal performance, but can be off-putting for buyers. Polishing the concrete and laying down a cosy rug can work wonders in modern living areas.

Generally, we would advise home sellers to go for hardwood or laminate in high traffic areas such as living rooms and hallways, carpet in bedrooms and tile in bathrooms; your choice for the kitchen.



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[The kitchen design trends you need to know in 2018-2019](#)

Kitchen

The kitchen is no longer just a space for cooking: it's the central, social hub of the home.

As a result, it's one of the rooms that homebuyers pay the most attention to. It's hard to do a renovation in this room that won't improve appeal to most buyers. They can be expensive to remodel, but they're also one of the best places to recoup your investment.

How much should I spend?

Some experts recommend spending a maximum of [10 per cent](#) of the value of your house on your kitchen, others say [15 per cent](#).

Out in the regions you tend to get more bang for your buck, so we recommend sticking to about 5 per cent of the value of your home.

However, you need to keep in mind that this won't always scale accurately. It's unlikely to be worthwhile spending \$50,000 on the kitchen in a million dollar home. It won't necessarily now be worth \$1,050,000: there's diminishing returns.

Suitability will vary depending on the property, however, so don't be afraid to stray away from these guidelines if you think your buyers will prefer an alternative.



With that said, here are a few tips to squeeze the most value out of your kitchen reno:

- **Don't go overboard.** Be wary about making your kitchen more upmarket than the rest of your property. For example, don't spend \$30,000 remodelling the kitchen of a quaint three-bedroom bungalow. Rather than appreciating the modern, stylish kitchen, they'll be tallying up how much the rest of the property will cost to renovate to keep up with it.
- **Stay practical.** While kitchens should look fantastic, if they don't function just as well, your investment won't be worthwhile. Think of your kitchen 'work triangle'—or sink, stove, and refrigerator—and ensure these are no more than a few steps away from each other. Designers

Elizabeth Roberts and Steven Gambrel told *Bon Appetit* that if there was only one thing they would always update in a kitchen, it would be the stovetop. It's the most used appliance in the kitchen, so it pays to ensure it's a good one.

- **Invest economically.** Most home buyers want a house that's a good investment and cheap to run. Make the choice easy for them when remodelling your kitchen by choosing a quality, reputable and energy-efficient oven and stovetop. They're more expensive to buy upfront, but the energy savings over time can be considerable and attractive to buyers. As power prices keep rising, home buyers will be considering the impact of their appliances on their utility bills.



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Bathroom & laundry

Much like kitchens, a fresh bathroom and laundry is almost certain to appeal to every kind of buyer. Young families, retirees, empty nesters: everybody likes a nice bathroom. This is why bathrooms can return between [\\$1.50](#) and [\\$2.00](#) for every dollar spent on a renovation.

How much should I spend?

Bathroom renovations can cost anywhere between [\\$5,000](#) and [\\$30,000](#), depending on your location and what you're planning to do. On the lower end of that scale, you'll be looking at repainting and replacing some tapware, maybe some tiles, perhaps switching out the vanity or replacing a toilet. On the upper end, it's a full refit of showers, baths and other installations.

Most of the time, we'd recommend sticking to the lower end of the pricing scale. The smaller renovations are usually the ones that make the biggest change to the value and greatest impact.

One exception to that rule is if you have older pipes. If your pipes are coming to the end of their serviceable lifetime, it does pay to get them replaced.

Most pipes have an extremely long lifetime, but if you notice you have lost water pressure over the years, it may be time for a refit as good water pressure is a must for any home buyer.

You can find more information about pipe lifetimes at [HouseLogic](#).

Here are a few additional factors to keep in mind:

- Neutrality is especially important here—keep it demure and inoffensive in the colour department.
- Don't skimp on the tapware, or the lighting: nobody is going to want to buy a home with a bathroom they have to bring a flashlight to see in!
- Try to avoid doing anything that will require plumbing rearrangement. It is an expensive exercise, and often doesn't add as much back to the value of your bathroom.
- Rather than replacing the toilet entirely, try just swapping out the toilet lid. This can be enough to make the toilet look new without having to shell out for a new throne.



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Indoor living areas: Lounge, dining & bedrooms

Kitchen and bathroom renovations can break the bank, but improving a bedroom or lounge can be a far less expensive affair. You don't have to deal with plumbing or gas, and so long as you stay away from complex electrical work, you won't need to call in a specialist.

A fresh paint job or a wallpaper replacement is an excellent place to start. If you're happy to do the work yourself, this can set you back little more than the cost of a few cans of paint, a roller (or two), and some floor covering.

You should also consider other typical room improvements as well, such as:

- New carpeting.
- Updated light fixtures.
- Door and frame touch ups.
- New window furnishings.

Small adjustments make a big difference when it comes to sale time.

A special note on living room renovations: this is a great project to accomplish alongside a kitchen refresh. People love open-plan living, such as combined living rooms, kitchens and dining rooms. As long as you take [the right level of care](#), it is perfectly possible to remove non-structural walls in your home yourself—but we'd still recommend hiring a professional if you want to avoid added stress and potential costs.

Consider turning an unused room, such as an office or rumpus room, into a bedroom or family living space; turning a two-bedroom into a three-bedroom without having to pay for an extension is an easy way to instantly add value to a home.

Don't be afraid to look outside the home for living space renovations either. Pergolas attached to the home can make the perfect extension to your open-plan living area.



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Roof restoration:
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Outdoor living areas & landscaping

Never forget the exterior of a home when considering renovations; failing to landscape properly could mean you miss out on an [extra 16 per cent](#) added on to your price when it comes to sale time.

The same goes for painting the exterior; losing out on that curb appeal through shabby cladding is an easy way to put off buyers before they even step through the door. Beyond the usual garden prune and landscaping, you should consider more permanent additions to your garden. A deck, for example, could add an extra 30 per cent to the value of your home, and only costs between \$5,000 and \$15,000 to install.

Here are a few extra tips:

- Take a drive around your neighbourhood for inspiration. Most people are going to prefer a house that keeps with the local aesthetic; so match your neighbours.
- Always start with basic maintenance. A power wash, a paint trim, a lawn mow and fresh mulch over flower beds are a good start, then take a

look at painting the front door and adding some potted plants. Only then should you move on to larger projects like an exterior repaint, re clad or deck addition.

- Be especially careful if you are repainting an older house, which can suffer from problems like rotted wood or water ingress. This may require additional prep work and material costs.

Renovating a rental? Check out the below for more information:

- ▶ [6 questions ask before renovating a rental](#)
- ▶ [A quick cost guide to rental renovations](#)
- ▶ [Time-saving rental renovation tips](#)
- ▶ [How to add extra living space & better rental income](#)
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