



Spring~  
Summer  
2020

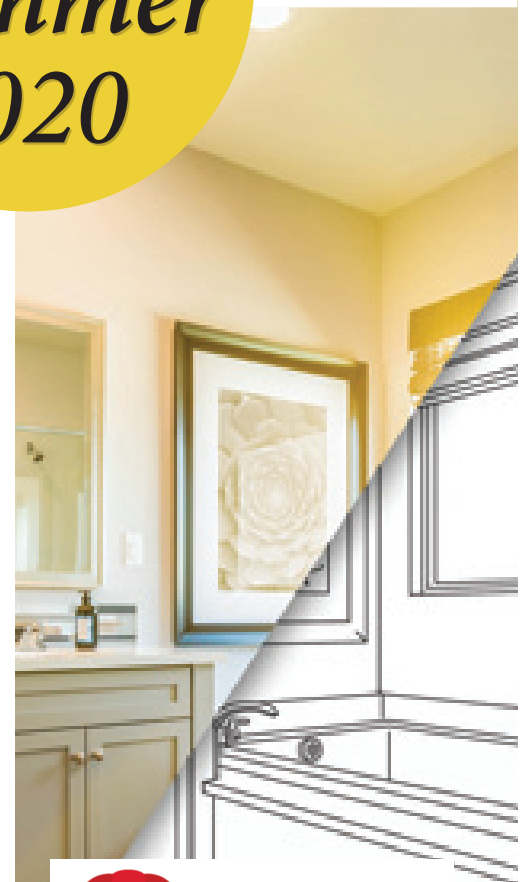
# HOME Improvement



A publication of:

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# 'Reach out, we're looking forward to serving you'

It's hard to imagine that after many weeks into this global pandemic, that flowers are blooming, the sun is shining and that for many, they're finally able to see the forest from the trees. Our beautiful, coastal Oregon towns have been affected in many ways, but our communities have pulled together to make the comeback, greater than the setback!

As nonessential businesses have had to pause, real estate has been on the rise in our Brookings, Harbor and Gold Beach areas, and we don't take that blessing for granted. There are more than sales,



these are families and people whose lives must go on, regardless of the current state of the world. According to Oregon First, there may be challenges for some sellers and buyers alike, but the predictions are still promising through the remainder of 2020 and our RE/MAX team is here to assist, all along your journey of buying or selling. Rest assured, our team

is taking all the necessary precautions to make this process safe and comfortable for all involved. This may be our reality for now, but nature has a way of reminding us that new birth, blossoms, and fresh coastal air is ever present and just waiting for your arrival.

Reach out, we're looking forward to serving you!

Warmly,

*Coastal Oregon Remax  
Coast and Country*

*Marie Curtis*

# Great news from the Oregon housing market

There's truly nothing better than the warm summer sunshine that grazes our coastal Oregon shorelines. As summertime approaches, there's great news for the Oregon housing market.

Although COVID-19 has provided a seismic shock to the economy, it appears that the real estate market is still going strong in our great state and beyond. COVID-19 has made buyers more interested in backyard space and proximity to the outdoors,

something that benefits Oregon's cities as well as its suburbs.

From Harris Beach State Park, to the Samuel H. Boardman State Scenic Corridor, the outdoor wonder of our magical area is just waiting for your arrival! We specialize in luxury real estate, investment properties, vacation homes, and forever homes to raise a growing family.

With our state going into Phase-2 of reopening, we're still committed to imple-

menting safe practices to keep your dream of living in our beautiful area, alive and well.

Reach out, I'd love to hear from you and answer all your real estate questions. The Oregon coast is truly a serene setting and it would be our pleasure to assist in all your home buying or selling needs!

*Cheers,  
Marie Curtis, Owner/Principal  
Broker CLHMS, CRS  
Coastal Oregon*

## Our team is here to make your dreams of Oregon Home ownership come true

When you come to the Brookings, Harbor and Gold Beach areas, you don't have to go far to have the adventures of a lifetime. Think the dream of owning a home is that only made of fairy tales? Think again because our dream team is here to assure you that we have a magical array of luxury properties, beach cottages, retirement abodes and more, all to make the wise choice of making our community your forever home, filling your life with quality adventure that most never get the opportunity to experience, right in your

own backyard.

Check out a list of multiple outdoor activities that are sure to please!

**Azalea Park:** Restored by the city of Brookings, this park boasts 1,100 azaleas and some rhododendrons.

**Natural Bridges Viewpoint:** A must-see hiking adventure you won't regret taking.

**Chetco Point Park:** Oceanfront trails, tide pools, a scenic point and picnic areas are the draw at this local beach park.

**McKay Rock Recreation Area:** McVay is a well-hidden park noted for surf fishing,

clamming, whale watching, and plenty of space to walk on the beach. The large lawn has a nine-hole disc golf course overlooking the ocean.

Our team is always here to lend a hand and help make your dreams of Oregon homeownership come true. I'd love to hear from you and answer any real estate questions you may have. Looking forward to hearing from you!

*Cheers,  
Coastal Oregon*

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# Items to get you started on creating your smart home

Technology has changed the way people live in the 21st century. Once ubiquitous, land lines anchored to kitchen walls have now given way to smartphones that can be taken anywhere. Bulky television sets that required at least two people to move have been replaced with high-definition offerings so light and thin they can be mounted on living room walls.

It's no great surprise that technology also is changing the physical places we call home. Smart homes are a rapidly growing trend. In a typical smart home, devices such as the thermostat, television and even the refrigerator can be controlled remotely through the internet.

Converting an existing home into a smart home can seem intimidating, especially for people who don't consider themselves tech savvy. But today's user-friendly technology makes it relatively easy for anyone to turn his or her home into a smarter one.

Before you get started, recognize that there are cer-

tain must-have items to turn a home into a smart home.

## Hub

The hub refers to software or hardware that connects all of your devices and gets them to work together. Think of the various devices you have and then think of their manufacturers. Chances are strong you have devices manufactured by various companies, and enabling those to work together might seem impossible. A hub does that work for you. And because they can be connected to your smartphone, hubs also make it possible to control devices while you're away from home.

## WiFi router

Some people rent their routers from their internet/cable providers, while others buy their own routers. Regardless of which category you fall into, you're going to need a good WiFi router to get your smart home up and running. Determine which type of WiFi your home currently has and then find a router that's compatible with that

WiFi. Request a list of routers that are compatible with your WiFi from your service provider, as not all routers will necessarily work with your internet connection. If possible, upgrade to the fastest WiFi your internet provider offers, as that will make your smart home that much more enjoyable and frustration-free.

## Devices

You won't necessarily need to upgrade your devices to get a smart home. In fact, if you control or can control any device in your home with a smartphone, you are already on your way to having a smart home. Upgrading to a programmable thermostat that's compatible with your smartphone might be a great idea if your current thermostat is old and not internet-compatible. With a programmable thermostat, you can control the temperature in your home remotely. That ensures the home is a comfortable temperature when you arrive home and allows you to turn off costly heating and cooling units when no one is home.



Smart homes may seem futuristic. But chances are

strong your home only needs some simple, inex-

pensive upgrades to join the smart home revolution.

## Must-haves for a kitchen remodel

Kitchen remodels are among the most popular home renovation projects, whether they consist of swapping out cabinet hardware or doing major demolition.

Due to the sheer amount of time families spend in the kitchen, not to mention the number of tasks performed in this space, it is easy to see why Remodeling magazine consistently ranks kitchen renovations as projects that will enable homeowners to recoup a high percentage of their investments. In the magazine's 2018 "Cost vs. Value" report, midrange major kitchen remodels costing an average of \$63,829 recouped 59 percent of that investment.

When investing in a kitchen project, it is important to incorporate items that are coveted.

- Deep, double sinks: Having a

double sink enables you to soak dishes on one side and then wash on the other. It also makes it easy to wash and prep produce for meals.

- Kitchen island and bar stools: Even though many meals are enjoyed around the table, there's something to be said for the convenience of a kitchen island and some well-placed bar stools for quick breakfasts or snacks.

- Smart kitchen storage: Work with a contractor to include storage solutions built into cabinetry and the pantry. Slide-out shelving, nooks for a paper towel roll and custom-designed areas to store stand mixers and other necessities can make kitchens more functional.

- Outdoor access: If possible, design a kitchen so it is easy to access the backyard via sliding doors. This can make outdoor

entertaining or even coffee on the deck much easier.

- Under-cabinet lighting: Fixtures installed under cabinets provide both ambient lighting and task lighting. Such lighting makes it easier to see what you're working on as well, as even well-placed overhead lighting can fail to illuminate dark corners and spots on the counters.

- Convenient warming drawer: This appliance provides backup to the oven. It's a slide-out drawer that can keep prepared foods out of the way and warm until they are ready to be served. This is particularly handy for holidays and other entertaining.

- Beverage station: Designate one area of the kitchen to beverages, such as coffee and tea. Or make the area an informal bar. This can limit traffic in the kitchen to a single area.

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# 6 options for funding your next home improvement project

Before starting a home improvement project, either on one's own or with the assistance of a professional contractor, homeowners must first consider the costs involved. According to the home improvement resource HomeAdvisor, more than one-third of homeowners do not understand what hiring a professional will cost, and then cannot successfully budget and secure financing once they have set their sights on a renovation project.

HomeAdvisor says that some of the more popular projects, such as remodeling a kitchen or bathroom or building a deck, can cost, on average, \$19,920, \$9,274 and \$6,919, respectively.

Homeowners may find that the more expensive renovations require them to secure some type of financing. Those who have never before sought such financing may want to consider these options.

1. Cash-out refinancing:

With cash-out refinancing, a person will begin the mortgage process anew with the intention of paying off the current mortgage balance, and then taking out additional funds for other purposes. Cash-out refinancing is a way to tap into a home's existing equity for use on improvements or other expenses, such as college tuition.

2. Home equity line of credit: The financial experts at Bankrate indicate that a HELOC works like a credit card, with the house as collateral. There is a credit limit, and borrowers can spend up to that limit. The interest rate may or may not be fixed. However, the interest may be tax-deductible if the financing is used to improve, buy or build a home.

3. Home equity loan: Individuals also can borrow against equity in their homes with a fixed interest rate through a home equity loan. Most lenders will calculate 80 percent of the

home value and subtract a homeowner's mortgage balance to figure out how much can be borrowed, according to the financial advisory site The Simple Dollar.

4. Personal loan: Homeowners can shop around at various financial institutions for competitive personal loans to be used for home improvement purposes. Funds may be approved within one business day, which can be ideal for those who want to begin their improvements soon.

5. Personal line of credit: A personal line of credit allows borrowers to borrow only the money needed at the time, and offers a variable interest rate that is generally lower than fixed loan rates. Again, like a credit card, PLOC gives a person a maximum borrowing amount and is ideal for ongoing purchases.

6. Credit cards: In a pinch, credit cards can be used to finance improvements,



but they do come with the cost of very high interest rates if the balance is not paid in full by the time the bill comes due. However, for funding smaller projects and maximizing rewards

points through home improvement retailers or specific credit card company promotions, credit cards can be a way to earn various perks in addition to the benefit of improving a

home.

Homeowners looking to finance their next improvements should speak to a financial advisor and shop around for the best types of funding for them.

# Outdoor improvements that boost home value

Whether home improvement projects are design to improve the interior or exterior of a house, focusing on renovations that make the most financial sense can benefit homeowners in the long run. The right renovations can be assets if and when homeowners decide to sell their homes.

So how does one get started? First and foremost, speak to a local real estate agent who is knowledgeable about trends in the community. While a swimming pool may be something coveted in one area, it may impede sales in another. It also helps to study generalized trends and data from various home improvement industry analysts to guide upcoming projects.

The following outdoor projects are just a few renovations that tend to add value.

- Fire pit: A fire pit is a great place to gather most months of the year. Bob Vila and CBS news report that a fire pit realizes a 78 percent return on investment, or ROI.

- Outdoor kitchen: Many buyers are looking to utilize their yards as an extension of interior living areas. Cooking, dining and even watching TV outdoors



is increasingly popular. Outdoor living areas can be custom designed and built. In addition, prefabricated modular units that require a much smaller commitment

of time and money are available.

- Patio: Homeowners who do not already have a patio will find that adding one can increase a home's value. Patios

help a home look neat, add useable space and may help a home to sell quickly. The experts at Space Wise, a division of Extra Space Storage, say that refinishing, repairing and building a new patio offers strong ROI.

- Deck: Deck can be as valuable as patios. A deck is another outdoor space that can be used for entertaining, dining and more. Remodeling magazine's 2018 "Cost vs. Value" report indicates that an \$11,000 deck can add about \$9,000 in resale value to the home, recouping around 82 percent of the project's costs.

- Door update: Improve curb appeal with a new, high-end front door and garage doors. If that's too expensive, a good cleaning and new coat of paint can make an old door look brand new. These easy fixes can improve a home's look instantly.

- New landscaping: The National Association of Realtors says an outdoor makeover that includes well-thought out landscaping can net 105 percent ROI. Installing a walkway, adding stone planters, mulching, and planting shrubs are ideas to consider.

Many different outdoor projects can add value to a home.



# Incorporate solar into your re-roofing project

**Dave McMurray, Jr.**

When it's time to re-roof your home, it's the perfect time to think about incorporating solar into that re-roofing project. New advances in roofing/solar technology have made it more affordable than ever to consider solar power.

At McMurray and Sons, we utilize the GAF DecoTech® Solar System. There are other systems available, but we prefer the GAF product. GAF is North America's largest roofing manufacturer. We've used their roofing products for years and they are always of high quality and backed by an outstanding warranty. The solar installation is covered under the same "Golden Pledge" warranty as the roof. Typically, a system will pay for itself in 7-9 years.

We have found that the GAF DecoTech® Solar System provides the same high quality we expect from GAF. This system utilizes roof-integrated solar

panels. They provide a sleek look that is very low-profile, not the older bulky look of solar panels from the past. Instead of being mounted on brackets on top of the roof, this system is installed during re-roofing and it's incorporated into the design of your new roof. The low-profile design eliminates the multiple penetrations common with a solar array, and also helps with the flow of water during heavy rains and other inclement weather.

GAF knows roofing and they have designed their system so that it is fully incorporated into your roof's design, insuring that the installation is streamlined and will last for many years. Their trained installers, such as McMurray and Sons, understand how to install these systems and have passed rigorous training standards.

You have options when it comes to solar roofing systems. The GAF DecoTech System uses standard-sized solar panels.

There are other systems that provide solar shingles or solar tiles that have the solar cells integrated into the roofing material, completely hiding the solar from view. The DecoTech System is more affordable which is another reason we recommend this product. When compared to other rooftop systems, you will be pleasantly surprised.

These newer systems are more efficient and produce more savings on your power bill than the typical, old, roof-mounted systems and they look much, much better. If you've been thinking about solar but haven't felt like it was affordable or something you wanted sitting on your house, think again because this is a whole new ballgame.

McMurray and Sons was established in 1919 and has offices in Brookings, Bend and Eureka, CA.

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# Ten reasons to buy your furniture in person at Barron's

Seeing really is believing, especially when it comes to home decor. While our website can give you an idea of what a piece will look like in your home, there is just no surer way to shop than in the store. Yes, it's convenient to shop online for items you have already purchased and know well or small items. But buying a piece of furniture online is an iffy proposition.

Here are 10 great reasons to come to shop at your local furniture store. Barron's is a locally owned with deep community roots. Terry Adams the owner was born and raised and is an Alumni of Brookings Harbor High.

Quality craftsmanship: In a picture any furniture can appear sturdy and appealing. But without actually look-

ing closely at wood grain, connecting parts, upholstery, inner workings, and back and side angles, it's difficult to know what level of quality will show up on your porch.

No wrench set needed: Most homeowners aren't equipped with the best tools and knowledge to effectively tighten seams, align drawers, and balance shelves, etc. Barron's does the heavy lifting for you, assembling furniture the ways it's meant to be assembled – by experts who have done it many times over.

Does it do its job? In terms of seating and the operation of furniture, you'll want to explore how comfortable it is for yourself. Being able to give a recliner a comfort test-run is impossible with online shopping. Looking inside drawers

and cabinets will give you an idea of how your clothes, dishes, and other items will fit and remain safe and organized.

Extensive stock: While online furniture stores may boast about the sheer numbers of items they carry, they don't necessarily give you the options you might imagine and don't have caring people to help you locate just the right piece from their overwhelming inventory.

The deals: Barron's has deals too! Online stores may offer discounts, coupons, and deals, but Meyers keeps pace with a price match guarantee. Plus Barron's Rewards you every time you shop with our VIP Barron's Bucks Rewards program.

Expertise, but no pressure:

The human factor is a big selling point for in-store furniture purchases. At Barron's, you can ask questions about materials, warranties, pricing, delivery, and any other expectations you may have. Our knowledgeable sales people are furniture experts who know the pieces they sell. There's no pressure with us – we get that you might need some time in the showroom to look and explore without someone hanging over your shoulder.

We still have online Shopping: We've still got great photos at barronshomefurnishings.com to give you a taste before you visit the showroom. If you would like to add items to a shopping cart and make a purchase you can do that to!!

## Save time and money with material alternatives

Home renovations are big business. The home renovation resource Home Advisor states that the national average cost of remodeling multiple rooms in a home was \$41,784 in 2018.

While homeowners cannot change the size of rooms to save money, they can manipulate the materials used to keep expenses down. Many products on the market today are designed to replicate the look of more costly materials without the higher price tags. User-friendly DIY products also can help corral costs by cutting down on labor expenses.

### Resilient flooring

Resilient flooring is manufactured to mimic the look of hardwood, tile, stone, and other materials. According to Armstrong Flooring, specialized manufacturing processes and coatings create a product that resists stains, dents, moisture, and scratches. Most resilient products are made up of several layers to create stability and absorb sound. These products tend to be less expensive than the materials they replicate.

### Laminate countertops

Much like resilient flooring, laminate countertops are inexpensive, low-maintenance and durable alternatives to stone and solid-surface countertops. They come in many different styles that can look like granite or marble. Homeowners also can consider solid surface materials, tile, concrete, and wood block when looking for cost-efficient countertop materials.

### Shower kits

Bathroom renovations can increase the overall value of a home. But some homeowners do not have the time or money to do a complete bathroom remodel. Replacing an old vanity with a newer one and replacing an outdated tub/shower combination can improve the functionality of a space without breaking the bank.



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# Secrets to making your home look like you hired a design pro

Photo spreads in home design magazines can be awe-inspiring. Quite often homeowners wish they could lift the looks right off the pages of magazines and transform their own homes into picture-perfect retreats.

It takes an eye for design to pull a room together — even with inspiration — and make it both functional and attractive. While hiring an interior designer is one way to go, homeowners can use some of the tricks and techniques the designers employ to do a remarkably good job of improving the interiors of their homes without such help.

## Embrace texture

The colors used in a home can add impact,

but designers often utilize various textures to create aesthetic appeal. A single color scheme can be enhanced by various fabrics. Consider a leather sofa made more cozy with chenille pillows next to a rustic side table. Figure out ways to incorporate a few different textures to add depth to the room.

## Be careful with color

Many high-end homes showcase neutral shades that are enhanced by pops of color. If you like a rich, royal purple, leave room for other colors as well. Add touches of purple in vases, throw pillows and other accessories.

Also, many designers work in shades of three for room colors. There may be one main color

for walls, another color for larger accents, such as couches and chairs, and then a third color that pops in accessories such as flowers, pillows and collectibles. These can be any colors, but the most muted tends to be the more abundant shade.

## Add a bit of bling

Glittery items and metallics can add a touch of luxury feel to any space. A shiny table lamp, mirrors, a sparkling chandelier, and the like are easy ways to produce a high-end feel. Reflective surfaces also will cast light around the room, giving the illusion of a larger space.

## Choose a big statement piece

Many homeowners make the mistake of fill-

ing a room with several small pieces of furniture that only contribute to clutter. Instead, look for a statement piece, which can be a cabinet, armoire or chaise. Mix and match large and small elements for a sense of balance.

## Accessorize

Finish the room with accessories and flowers. When placing and hanging knickknacks and wall art, odd-numbered groupings often look the most cohesive and interesting. Experiment with different scales and heights for even more dimension.

When inspiration hits, take some cues from interior design pros to make spaces look like they belong on the pages of your favorite magazines.



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## Pro-Tip: COLOR CHOICE

One often overlooked accessory is choosing the right color for the interior as well as the exterior of your home.

Coastal Oregon is filled with colorful foliage year-round, especially when it comes to hues of green. Ever wonder the meaning behind some of your favorite colors & how they can improve your mood or even interest when selling your home? Here's a peek inside some fun facts about green:

**Increases Wealth:** The primary color in nature & most certainly a draw for many to our Oregon coastal region, it corresponds with life's riches. It's the color of fresh starts & growth as well!

**The Color Green & Mood:** As the hue associated with nature, green is a color that people tend to feel very comfortable around. It represents growth, freshness and harmony and tends to make people feel safe and secure. Lighter greens, which bring to mind the new growth of spring, feel more energetic, while deeper forest greens have a more serious connotation.

**Ready to re-paint a room or front door?** Regardless of what color you're most drawn to, our quaint Oregon coastal towns are bursting with color, just waiting to welcome you into your new home & lifestyle.



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# Why homeowners should add more exterior light to their properties

Homeowners are increasingly realizing the benefits of improving the exteriors of their home, which can be just as valuable as improving the interior spaces. As individuals design picturesque garden beds and cultivate lavish lawns or revamp exteriors with architectural features, they probably want to spotlight these improvements.

This is where exterior lighting can be put to great use.

Exterior illumination can cast a glow on various features, but there are many other reasons to increase lighting around the exterior of a home.

- **Safety:** Trips and falls can occur at night when trying to traverse walkways and landscapes in the dark, as it can be difficult to see

rocks, stairs and uneven pavement. Outdoor lighting can illuminate pathways, entryways and other areas for safer access for homeowners and their guests.

- **Extend outdoor entertaining:** Ample lighting can increase the amount of time one can use outdoor spaces and make them the perfect gathering spot. As autumn arrives, days become

shorter. However, patios, porches and more can get extended use with lighting.

- **Safeguard security:** A well-lit home may be less likely to be targeted by burglars than one swathed in darkness



■ See **LIGHTGING**, Page 10

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are here to help with all of your outdoor power equipment needs. We carry products and accessories from Stihl, Honda, and Husqvarna. We offer gas-

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We have grown to a company with 5 to 10 employees, and we have employees that have been with us for 25 years. We provide living wage jobs to employees, contributing to our coastal cities.

Our Mission is to build a successful company that never loses site of our

customers and treats them as our top priority. Our goal is to grow and change with our community, neighbors, and friends. We are here for you. Call us to discuss your project and your goals and we will help you find the best product for your needs.

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McLennan Excavation was established in 2002 by Casey and Erin McLennan and has providing construction and excavation services for over 18 years. We started from a small single man crew and have grown to a company with 15 to 20 employees. We do small residential jobs to multi-million-dollar municipal jobs. We serve businesses, government agencies, homeowners and all individuals needing our services. We are a medium size business treating our cus-

tomers as if they are our sole responsibility and not one of many minor jobs.

Our Mission is to build a successful corporation that treats all customers as a top priority. Our goal is to grow and change with our community. We provide living wage jobs to employees, contributing to our coastal cities.

Our team is a mix of professionals with over 20 years' experience. We have 3 to 4 crews running projects that are diverse enough to meet all the

needs of the customer at each job.

Our company provides excavation, trucking, road building subdivisions, pipe laying, deep trenches, underground utilities, rock products of all sizes and concrete work for commercial and residential projects.

Our Office is located at 98109 North Bank Chetco River Road, Brookings, Oregon

We can be reached at 541-412-0106 or 541-373-0690

# How to put together the perfect guest room

Whether they're staying with you for one night, a long weekend or a couple of weeks, your houseguests will surely appreciate your hospitality — and even more

so if their room is cozy and inviting. Here are a few ideas to help you put together the perfect guest room.

First, ensure your guests' optimal comfort by leaving several pillows,

cushions, towels, sheets and blankets at their disposal. In the summer, keep a fan in the room if it isn't air conditioned, and in the winter, leave some comfy slippers at the foot of

the bed.

Furthermore, make sure there's enough space for your guests to store their clothes and other belongings in a closet or dresser,

for example. In the bedside tables, stow some useful objects that your guests might need (paper, pens, magazines, books, alarm clock, phone charger, etc.).

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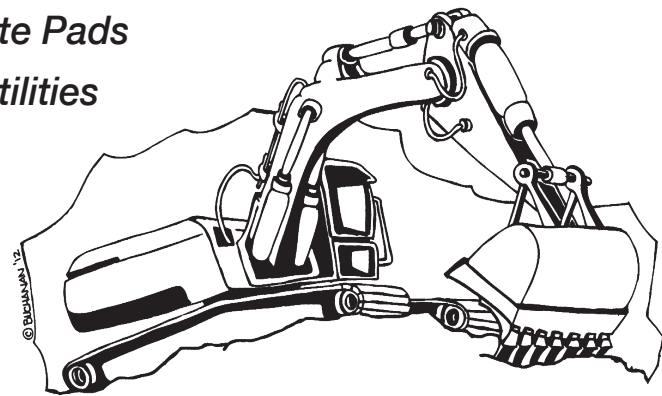
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# Three rules to keep in mind when remodeling your kitchen

Planning a kitchen remodel? Here are three golden rules you should follow to ensure your project's success.

## 1. The work triangle

When planning the layout of your kitchen, you need to consider the work triangle, a zone delineated by the washing, cooking, and food storage spaces. This triangle is where you will spend most of your time.

For the kitchen to function well, the distances between the dishwasher (or sink), the fridge and the stove must be equal, or

almost equal. Don't place these appliances too far apart.

## 2. Clearance

Do you want to build an island in your kitchen? Make sure to leave about four feet of space between your cupboards and your island so that you can move around easily. Similarly, plan for at least three feet of clearance in front of your dishwasher for comfortable loading and unloading.

In all cases, make sure that you can move around without having to contort yourself, even when the fridge, oven or dishwasher

door is open.

## 3. Lighting

Generally, kitchens have four types of lighting: natural light (from a window above the sink, for example), general light (from a ceiling light or recessed lights), task lights (spotlights on your work surfaces) and accent lights (LED strips underneath the cabinets). Be sure to plan out the placement of your lights before beginning construction work.

Finally, for all your construction and renovation project needs, never hesitate to call on your local specialists.



## Lighting

Continued from Page 8

and shadows. Lights can remain on all evening or be motion-triggered. Setting lights on timers also ensures that the home is illuminated whether residents are home or not.

- Create drama: Landscape lighting designers

can establish focal points around the landscape and highlight the best features of a property. Uplighting in trees, silhouetting techniques to showcase plants and spotlights to show off architectural features are all options for homeowners to consider.

- Add value: The experts at Parker Homescape, a landscape design service, say that exterior lighting can add roughly 30 percent

to the value of a home. They also indicate that 50 percent of all home buyers say that outdoor lighting is important when buying a home. If current residents are thinking about selling, now may be the time to invest in exterior lighting.

Improving a home's exterior may be as simple as adding more lighting to improve functionality and beauty.



# Quiet home noise with soundproofing

Many people want their homes to be comfortable, relaxing retreats. While much thought will be given to layout and decor, the noises in and around a house also can affect how enjoyable a space is or isn't.

Certain offenders are driving up the noise levels in homes. New building materials that are lighter than those used in the past can make it easier for noise to travel between rooms. In addition, open floor plans make it easy for noise to travel from room to room, while handheld personal devices can make rooms noisy. Homeowners who want more peace and quiet in their home can take the following steps.

## Add more drywall

Homeowners may not be able to add walls of sturdy brick to block sounds, but they can add more drywall in noisy rooms. Consider adding more drywall to a library or reading nook. The home improvement resource HomeLogic notes that drywall can be used to isolate noisy rooms, such as those where kids practice playing musical instruments.

## Beef up dense materials

Heavy curtains, fluffy furniture and thick carpets can make rooms quieter because they help absorb sound waves. Such items and materials also can help

prevent echoes. Bare walls and floors will only make sounds bounce around.

## Seal holes and cracks

Noises from outside can sneak around gaps in windows, doors and siding. Making sure gaps are sealed will not only make a home more energy efficient, but also help block out some exterior noises.

## Fix squeaky floors

Wood floors can shrink and expand, leading to movement and the development of squeaky areas. By fixing squeaky floors, homeowners can reduce noise created when people walk through their homes.

Soundproofing a home can be a relatively easy and effective DIY project.



# Improve privacy and security at home

Living in close proximity to one's neighbors has its benefits. But many homeowners would no doubt admit that privacy at home is a good thing. Whether homeowners are enjoying their yard or simply want their in-home activities to be less obvious to neighbors, their privacy is a year-round concern. If privacy is a concern, homeowners can take certain steps to ensure their homes stay or become the sanctuaries they were designed to be.

## Window treatments and frosting

Windows allow natural light to enter a home, but windows also enable neighbors and others to see into a home. If thieves are the ones looking inside, wide open windows present a security issue. Window

treatments are an effective way to add privacy to a home. Closing curtains or blinds limits others' ability to see inside the house. Switch to more opaque window treatments when using interior lighting more often, as gossamer draperies may still make it possible for outsiders to understand what's going on inside the home if people and items are backlit.

For those who do not want to compromise natural light, frosted windows can satisfy a desire for privacy. Windows can be purchased with frosting in place, and home improvement retailers sell various products that can create a frosted look.

## Fencing and perimeter plantings

Privet hedge, arborvitae or Italian cypress are fast-growing evergreens

that provide privacy around a home for homeowners who do not want to install traditional fencing. These trees also provide a natural habitat for various yard animals. Layering various plants of different heights and textures also can create a more natural and less imposing look.

Fencing remains a viable option to create privacy and stop noise pollution. Privacy fences come in various materials, colors and sizes, enabling homeowners to choose styles that fit their landscapes.

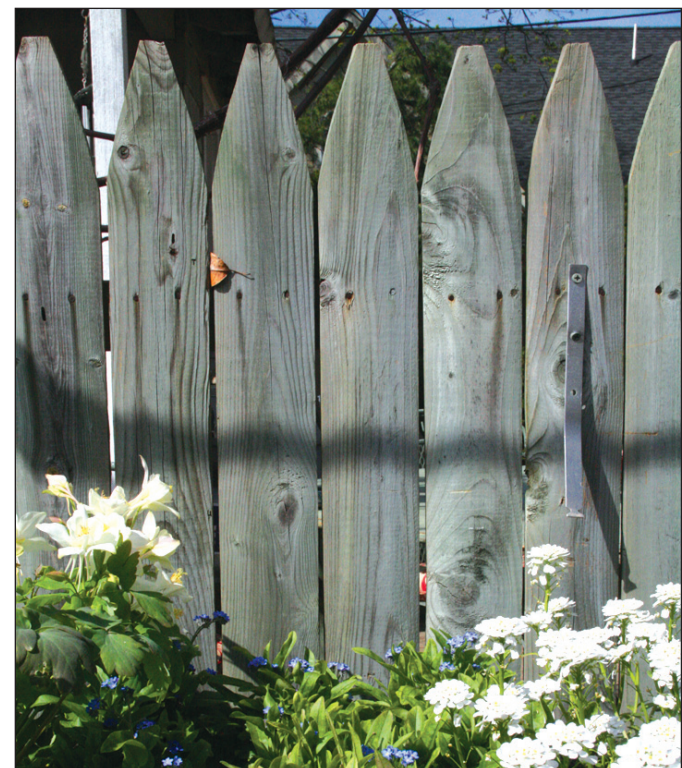
## Pergolas and enclosed patios

Homeowners who like to entertain outdoors may want to make their outdoor living spaces more private. Pergolas allow light to filter through but obstruct direct view of patio activity,

especially when combined with some gauzy draperies hanging on the sides. An enclosed patio or three-season room can be a worthwhile addition for homeowners who like to enjoy the great outdoors without being in the elements or on display for neighbors. Structures vary from screened-in porches to greenhouses to removable gazebos. Potted plants or trailing vines can soften the structural edges and help the privacy devices blend in with the natural surroundings.

## Personal tactics

Homeowners who do not want their neighbors or others knowing what they're up to in their free time can limit what they share through photos and descriptions on social media. Doing so also cuts down on neighbors' curiosity.



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