

A little money goes far to grab higher selling price

“Real estate agents know that a ‘buy’ or ‘don’t buy’ decision is often made with that first impression. If the first impression is positive, buyers walk through looking for reasons to purchase your house,” says Robert Irwin, author of “Improve the Value of Your Home Up to \$100,000: 50 Surefire Techniques and Strategies.”

Here are several suggestions for relatively small do-it-yourself home enhancement projects:

■ Make a bathroom more “spa like” with a medium upgrade. Martha Webb, owner of the BCW Group, a Minneapolis-

SMART MOVES

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based real estate consulting firm, says inexpensive bathroom improvements can help homeowners build equity quickly.

She tells how her 31-year-old son scored a major triumph with a do-it-yourself bathroom project on the little candlelight yellow Victorian house he owns.

“He went to Home Depot and spent just a few hundred dollars for a wonderful new sink, vanity and mirror combination. It took him five visits

back to the store for information. But he figured out how to install the whole thing himself, and it looks great,” she says.

■ Replace old shrubs without reworking your entire landscaping plan. When you hire a professional landscape designer to revamp your yard, it’s easy to spend several thousand dollars. But those selling a home can achieve significant results on their own for vastly less money if they retain the same landscaping scheme and simply replace old shrubs with new ones.

“You need to take a good hard look at your plants. If they’re half dead or have been

there for 20 years, they should be pulled out,” Webb says. “You can find something striking for just \$30 or \$40 a plant, and they’re easy to install yourself,” she says.

■ Replace indoor and outdoor light fixtures. Rewiring a home or installing lighting in new areas is work for a professional electrician. But many people who are attentive to directions can safely replace current fixtures without calling in an electrician.

Webb notes that there are enormous variations in pricing for replacement lighting fixtures, but that handsome pieces — such as a bronzelike front

door light — can be purchased for as little as \$50.

Moreover, new light fixtures can have a dramatic impact on the look of your residence, especially if they’re well-chosen and brighter than the old ones.

■ Consider mending your fences. If your property is surrounded by a fence that needs repairs, then this project should go near the top of your pre-sale priority list, Webb says.

Though laborious, it’s not hard to repaint a picket fence. And the replacement of broken or missing posts should be an easy task for most any homeowner. What’s more difficult —

but hardly impossible — is for a typical homeowner to raise or replace a broken-down fence. You may want to call in a friend who is handy before attempting this work yourself.

■ Run, don’t walk, to your nearest paint store.

As an expert on the preparation of homes for sale, Webb believes there’s no expenditure of cash that yields more return on investment for sellers than for cans of paint and equipment.

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