

HOME

Across the country, homeowners are looking to upgrade their homes with purpose and style. Whether to increase value, add functionality or create a more enjoyable living environment, here are some of the latest trends . . .

trends

architecture

The addition of more open, multi-functional space is in vogue. Great rooms with space-adding, multi-functional live/work zones have become popular.

The addition of more windows is also prevalent and opens the home up to the outside world. Homeowners are increasing their overall living space by building outdoor living rooms.



Natural siding, including wood and stone siding, has returned to prominence. New advancements make these surfaces more affordable and easier to maintain (e.g., vinyl faux wood paneling that will resist rotting, splintering and warping). Man made stone is more functional and less porous than heavy stone.

lighting



Lighting is being used to accent different areas around the house. Dramatic lighting fixtures as well as the kind of light used can have as big an influence on the look of a room as furniture or paint.

Mini pendants, track lighting and contemporary chandeliers have become popular room design elements.

Using in-ceiling lighting and mini-spotlights are also great ways to accent specific areas.

remodeling

Remodeling accounts for about 40 percent of all residential construction spending and about 2 percent of the U.S. economy. Since 2001, spending on home remodeling grew 40 percent and reached \$215 billion in 2005 alone.

Though often costly, major remodeling projects have typically provided a strong return on investment (ROI). A kitchen upgrade or room addition will recoup 80 percent of the cost within the first two years of construction and will continue to increase a home's value over time.



ROI

Here are 5 things to remember when you are looking for the best RETURN ON INVESTMENT.

1. "Neighborhood Norm" Home Remodeling Projects—5 stars ★★★★★
Concentrate on home improvement projects that fit existing neighborhood standards.
2. "Appraisal Booster" Home Remodeling Projects—5 stars ★★★★★
These are the livable space additions—a new office, extra bath, or a spare bedroom. They add the most value to your home.
3. "Home Maintenance and Repair" Projects—5 stars ★★★★★
Roofing, window upgrades, exterior painting projects and general repairs maintain the integrity of your home.
4. "Curb & Home Appeal" Projects—4 stars ★★★★★
Curb and home appeal projects, either outside or inside the home, are typically lower cost and create emotional appeal.
5. "Lifestyle" Home Improvement Projects—2 stars ★★
These single-purpose remodeling projects are important to the homeowner but do not add measurable real estate value.

innovations

Surfaces: Engineered stone is more affordable and less porous than granite. Reflective glass tiles are gaining popularity over traditional ceramic tiles.

Flooring: Bamboo is tougher and more eco-friendly than wood flooring, but beware that low-cost versions risk warping. Concrete slabs are now retro-chic, along with exposed brick or steel in walls. Cork has become a hip, durable and quiet floor.

Home Automation Systems: Household functions including lighting, climate control, personal computers, window coverings and home entertainment systems can be wired and controlled by a single on-site or off-site control system.

Garage Conversions: Flooring, enclosed walls, lighting and furnishings can add usable living space and still provide for storage. Purpose-specific spaces are also popular in other parts of the home.

Outdoor Trends:

Drought-resistant landscaping and low-flow irrigation systems are in demand.

New artificial turf is difficult to distinguish from real grass. It saves water, requires little maintenance and is being installed on athletic fields and yards throughout the country.

