

ROC Real Estate & Rental

Updates that can sell a house

Deal with repairs, then aesthetics

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Call it the HGTV effect. Thanks to HGTV and myriad other home and real estate sources now available, most home sellers are cognizant that a home has to show well in order to get a fast sale for the most money.

Little things like decluttering and cleaning can go a long way, but what about major renovations? What types of home improvement projects will reap the most rewards in a resale?

While they may not be the most glamorous, the home improvement projects that are the most important when selling a



Left, Trevor Donovan at a Penfield home he remodeled next to his father and Nothnagle agent Brian Donovan. Trevor has remodeled a few homes that he turned around and sold. CARLOS ORTIZ/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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house are the deferred maintenance items and outstanding repairs, said Brian Donovan, an agent at Nothnagle Realtors' Pittsford office.

Once the basics such as roofing or painting are taken care of, it's important to look as the aesthetics as well, Donovan said. Buyers in today's market have high expectations; instead of overlooking problems, they often magnify them.

"You will win or lose the sale within 14 to 16 seconds from the buyer en-

tering the home," Brian Donovan said. "A home with inferior condition will have its sale price discounted far below the cost to cure."

When it comes to those major renovations, kitchens and baths are the consistent leaders for returns, Donovan said, noting industry figures of \$1.25 returned for each dollar invested in those areas. Today's buyers do not have the time to fix dated rooms, so an updated kitchen and bath will result in a faster sale, he said.

Donovan often works with his son on home spruce-up projects before a home is listed, present-

ing it as one of several options to the seller. Trevor Donovan is the owner of Nuvo Doors in Penfield, which specializing in cabinet refinishing and interior doors as well as other contracting projects.

Trevor Donovan works on his contracting business as well as his other business of flipping homes — purchasing homes in poor condition in sought-after areas to sell for a profit. So he knows what buyers are attracted to. What they want is a clean, Pottery Barn interior with hardwood floors and updated cabinetry and appliances, he said.

Stainless steel appliances, granite counters

and white cabinetry are very popular right now, Trevor Donovan said.

He points to a Pittsford village home he flipped recently for as an example of return on home improvements. The 1,700-square-foot home built in 1860 was purchased for \$102,000. Trevor Donovan put in \$88,000 in materials such as new cabinetry, appliances as well as subcontractor labor costs. The home sold for \$226,000: a profit of \$36,000.

There are many ways to make small repairs that just change the facade, Trevor Donovan said. His company specializes in keeping the existing kitchen cabinetry and changing out the doors for a new look. Updating the cabinetry in a small kitchen similar to the one in his 1,500-square-foot condominium in Penfield would cost around \$2,200.

As far as bathrooms, sellers can make small

changes, such as changing paint color or a vanity, that start at \$500, Brian Donovan said.

Be careful when making improvements if you are looking to sell — remember that you are not remodeling for personal tastes. You may like oak cabinetry, but that is not what is currently in vogue, Brian Donovan said. Other remodeling don'ts include brass or wallpaper, he added.

Also, make sure you watch your budget so the cost of improvements does not exceed the market standard for the area, Brian Donovan said. If a home is in a lower-priced area, it wouldn't make sense to put in that granite counter. The reverse is true for a home in a higher-end area, where if a seller is asking for \$400,000, updates like those granite counters are almost expected, he said.

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