



Buying An Older Home: Low-Cost Ways To Update Kitchens And Bathrooms

Choosing your contractor and your projects wisely will keep costs low for older home remodeling.

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If you are charmed into buying an older home filled with history and style, your remodeling ideas may come at a higher price. Mold, termites, roof quality, or an old water heater can all be problems found in an older home that are not fun to deal with while renovating. Homeowners must think to themselves—is my remodeling project simply cosmetic, or will it be a bigger project due to further repairs along the way?

David Itah, principal at [Indigo Remodeling](http://www.indigoremodeling.com), says you need to pay attention to what's behind the wall to determine your remodeling costs and what will be needed to complete the project.

“A newer home that’s the same size and in good condition is going to be a lot less of a project than an older one. A home inspector should point this out to homeowners when buying, but if there is any sign of wear and tear from water, it can really affect the price.”

Kelsey Kroon, realtor at [Douglas Elliman Real Estate](#), also sees this when she works with new homebuyers who are envisioning what their homes will look like once they move in and start renovating.

“Kitchens and rear extensions are among the top project requests I see, and the main issue with doing that in an older home, is trying to bring a contemporary modern feel to old structures,” said Kroon.

After considering the state of your home, you can consider which projects make the most sense to make updates. Nowadays more than ever, Itah says that homeowners are starting to ask for budget-friendly updates that never came in five to seven years ago. To start, if the update you are looking for is something you don’t know how to do yourself, you will need to find the right contractor for the job by researching their projects and receiving quotes for what you are looking to do.

“I’ve learned by meeting people over the years in my business that in some cases it will cost you a lot of money if you start your work with an unrealistic budget or a contractor that doesn’t know what he or she is doing,” said Itah.

One of the top ways homeowners are updating their kitchen these days is by replacing the kitchen countertops. Depending on the material you want, this update can drastically change the look of your kitchen—often times one of the most popular spots in a home for gathering. Itah is seeing a lot of requests for lighter color quartz or marble resembling materials with grey colors throughout the kitchen walls.

Kroon suggests, “If countertops and sinks are still in good order, keep them, and work around it with new cupboards and floorings. You can also look into updating your appliances.”

Another common kitchen remodel is painting cabinetry instead of fully remodeling or replacing. This also gives the room a new look and feel and can be updated with current color trends. White shaker kitchen cabinets, in particular, are in high demand. Then moving to the walls, painting your kitchen or bathroom a new color can liven it up and provide you with a weekend project you can do yourself. Take it one step further and add or change the backsplash on your kitchen or bathroom walls for a look with more texture and excitement.

Some updates may seem less exciting or stylish but can drastically change the look of the room. Before throwing out or replacing an old tub or shower, consider refinishing it. Companies like [Bathwraps](#) and [Miracle Method](#) can do it quickly and efficiently for you without the hassle of dealing with installation.

Kroon has advice on other small ways to update a bathroom if you don’t want to touch the sink or bathtub, “Add new mirrors, shower heads, tiling and paint, and replace the curtains over the

bath tubs with sliding glass aluminum framing.”

With any remodel, Itah believes homeowners can find ways to save even when working with a contractor if you budget appropriately and know the cost of the materials.

“One very smart saving tip for clients is to ask the contractor to have the estimate exclude finished materials. Then you can go shop around and make a list for yourself of the finish materials you’d like to use and what it will cost you to purchase them yourself.”

When it comes to low-cost remodeling you will want to stay away from—especially without an expert—is anything mechanical or in the plumbing. Kroon says if cheap electric wiring is installed, it will only cause you more problems later on. These remodeling updates should be brought to an expert to handle with care so that you don’t create a bigger problem for yourself with a bigger price tag.