

# Remodeling Hints for a Tough Real Estate Market

*Courtesy of ARAcontent*

If you're selling your home, you're not just competing against the house down the street anymore. You're mixing it up with desperate new-home builders with pockets deeper than yours, banks willing to sell foreclosed homes at a loss, and buyers who know that sellers are at a disadvantage. You definitely need an edge.

Remodeling remains one of the best ways to set your home ahead of the competition. Upgrades to outdoor areas that expand the living space and add curb appeal can help sell your home faster and for a better price. Homeowners seeking to improve their living spaces are not making the traditionally popular - yet costly - upgrades to kitchens and baths. Instead, they are adding to the curb appeal with outdoor structures or landscaping if they are planning to sell.

But did you know that using high-quality materials throughout your home can also improve value and salability? Homeowners need to make the whole package appealing, which means it has to be long-lasting, low-maintenance and visually attractive.

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“Cheaper materials may save money at the outset of a renovation project, but in the long run they reduce the potential value of a home,” says Richard White, an architect who specializes in custom homes.

In fact, in homes that increased in value by at least 100 percent, owners spent 2.5 times more on improvements than in homes where the value increased by less than 50 percent, according to a study by Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

White offers the following insight into using high-quality materials to enhance the value of your home:

Choose timeless, not trendy. Often, trendy building materials can't compete with traditionally popular ones for staying power and durability. Choosing traditionally popular materials for your renovation can help ensure your house is appealing

to a wide range of buyers through years of evolving fads.

“People trust building materials they know,” White says. “If I grew up in a home with Western red cedar siding, I know the qualities of the wood and what it will do for my home.”



Long a traditional favorite, Western red cedar has a number of qualities that make it a preferred, quality material for decking, siding, and the increasingly popular outdoor living spaces that can enhance a home's value, White says. Natural preservatives in the wood make it very durable for outdoor uses, even in more severe climates, according to Web site [realcedar.org](http://realcedar.org). Its texture and coloration give it a rich, natural beauty that enhances interiors as well, in features such as interior paneling, vaulted ceilings, trim and boxed-in beams.

One trend worth tapping, however, is the movement towards more eco-friendly homes. Many buyers are looking for homes that incorporate recycled materials or new ones drawn from renewable sources, energy-efficient design and a minimal carbon footprint. When choosing products for your remodeling project, consider the steps the product took to reach your home.

Curb appeal projects can be as simple as sprucing up the landscaping with a Western red cedar arbor, trellises, or adding a wood fence to increase privacy; or they can take the form of a pergola or even a gazebo or deck to expand the outdoor living space. From the smallest project to the grandest, Western red cedar's versatility can add beauty to the outside of a home *Continue on page 20*

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Synthetic materials such as vinyl and plastic are manufactured with nonrenewable materials. Minerals making up cement, stucco and metal are mined from the earth and not replaced.

Woods such as pine, fir, and Western red cedar are renewable resources, grown and harvested sustainably. The environmental costs of wood production are also much less than mineral or synthetic materials. Production of concrete requires 70 percent more energy than wood building products and releases 67 percent more pollution into the air.

“Wood has a lower environmental impact throughout its life cycle than other building materials” says Paul Mackie of the Western Red Cedar Lumber Association.

Even if you have no immediate plans to sell, and are remodeling to improve your enjoyment of your home, remember that someday you may want - or need - to compete for buyers in a tight market. The right remodeling enhancements, done with the right high-quality materials, can help any home become more attractive to buyers and sustain its value through conditions such as the current market.

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