

# Lake Mills Graphic

### Exterior renovations that can improve home value

Renovating a home to improve its value can be a smart investment. Interior improvements, such as updating kitchens and baths, offer good return on investment, but there are plenty of exterior renovations that can add value to a home and give it that coveted "wow" factor.

#### Landscaping

Abundant and well-planned landscaping can instantly boost curb appeal. According to the landscaping company Lawn Starter, 71 percent of prospective home buyers say a home's curb appeal is an important factor in their buying decisions. As buyers use the internet to look for their dream homes, there's no denying a beautifully landscaped, nicely photographed property can entice buyers to click and read more about a house.

#### Address insects and minor repairs

Improving home value may come down to fixing areas of the home that can negatively affect its appeal to buyers. Hire an inspector to look at key components of the house and recommend what needs to be fixed. This way it is discovered before home buyers come in and do their own inspections. Termite infestations, deteriorating roofs and hidden water leaks are some things that might need fixing.

#### Improve the entryway

The front door is the focal point of a home's exterior. Invest in a new door or paint it a striking color to add appeal. Remodeling magazine's "Cost vs. Value Report 2019" indicates changing an entry door to a steel replacement can offer 74.9 percent ROI. Such a door provides visual appeal and added security — things buyers look for. In addition to the front door, make sure that the entryway has a level walkway, steps that are in good repair, accents that are free from rust or tarnish, and decorative plants.

#### **Outdoor lighting**

Outdoor lighting can add to the ambiance of a property and serve as a security feature. Utilize different lights, such as a bright light by the entry, uplighting in



trees and shrubs for drama, a light-lined path to the door to improve visibility, and motion-detection lights to improve the security of the property.

#### Repaint (or reside) the exterior

A fresh coat of paint or new (or cleaned) siding can instantly give homes a facelift. Neutral, warm and inviting colors tend to have the widest appeal. Adding manufactured stone veneer to the home can offer a 94.9 percent ROI, says Remodeling. And after doing the front door and siding, investing in a garage door replacement offers the highest ROI of all exterior projects listed on the "Cost vs. Value Report 2019." This improvement returns 97.5 percent when selling.

Knowing which improvements add value to a home can help homeowners tailor their efforts to those that are most financially beneficial.

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### How home design trends are evolving for social distancing

COVID-19 has brought changes to everything, and home design is no exception. Experts are expecting to see lasting impacts on everything from the materials we use to the rooms we prioritize. Check out these and other noteworthy trends:

Houses over apartments: Many people who live in condos or apartments do so to be closer to the action—work, entertainment and shops—and never planned on spending much time at home. But the pandemic has changed that, and more people are going to want a home that offers plenty of room and outdoor space in case they need to self-isolate again.

Self-sufficiency: A hard lesson we've learned is that things and services we thought we could count on aren't necessarily a sure thing, so items that increase self-reliance will become very popular. Expect to see more homes with sources of energy like solar panels, sources of heat like fireplaces and stoves, and even urban and indoor gardens that allow you to grow your own produce.

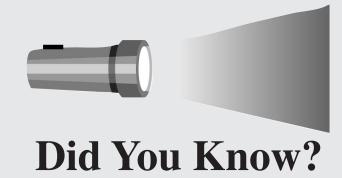
Outdoor living: Between playgrounds closing and parks becoming overcrowded, many of us are turning to our balconies, patios and backyards for fresh air and nature. This means we're going to be investing more in our outdoor spaces, with functional kitchens, soothing water features, cozy firepits, and high-quality outdoor furniture to create a much-needed escape.

Healthier spaces: Thanks to spending more time indoors and reprioritizing our health, we'll turn to design to help ensure our homes are safe and healthy for our families. We'll see a rise in products like water filtration systems as well as materials that improve indoor air quality. For new homes and additions, alternatives to wood-framing like insulated concrete forms, offer improved ventilation for healthier indoor air quality and an environment that's less susceptible to mold, will be key.

Home office space: Business experts are suggesting many companies will see that working from home is not only possible but offers tangible benefits, like saving money on office space rent. With working from home on the rise, creating a home office space that inspires productivity will be a major project many of us tackle. Luxury home office furniture that feels chic and blends into your décor as well as ergonomic chairs and desks will see a major boost.

Custom and quality: With the hit to the economy, people are going to be buying less, but what they do buy will be better quality, while at the same time making an effort to support American businesses. When it comes to design, trends will shift to locally made furniture, custom-built homes and pieces and materials that stand the test of time.

TF20608



A flashlight is an invaluable part of any disaster preparedness kit, and it's a handy tool to have on hand in a car, at home or when traveling. You never know when you might need a flashlight, and it's helpful to have many on hand. When stocking up on flashlights for emergency kits, choose ones with light-emitting diode, or LED, technology. According to Popular Mechanics, LED flashlights are 70 percent more efficient than incandescent models. That means the batteries powering the light have the potential to last 10 times longer. Furthermore, LEDs do not have any fragile parts like incandescent bulbs. That makes them more likely to withstand shock or even endure being dropped.

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### How to build a more energy-efficient home this summer

With weather forecasts calling for a warmer than normal summer and social distancing encouraging us to spend more time at home, we could all benefit from boosting our home's energy efficiency to save on energy bills. Here are some big and small changes that could help:

Start with a solid foundation. If you're adding an extension to your home, a pool to your backyard or even planning a custom-built dream home, choose sustainable materials that promote energy conservation. Instead of traditional wood-framing, consider insulated concrete forms. The eco-friendly alternative features thermal mass walls that can reduce heating and cooling costs by up to 60 percent a year.

Work on your windows. Did you know that about 15 to 20 percent of your home's surface is windows? This means any issues with them can have a major impact on your energy consumption. Take time to caulk any gaps or air leaks, and consider upgrading to energy-efficient windows. Double-paned windows boost your insulation and help ensure your cooled, air conditioned air doesn't escape.

Switch to outdoor energy sources. Take advantage of the gorgeous weather to spend more time outside. Instead of cooking meals in your energy-intensive oven that also heats up your home, break out the barbecue and enjoy dinner al fresco. You can also ease up on the clothes dryer by setting up a line and some pins in the backyard and use the wind and sun for drying power.

Install a smart weather station. Technology can help you make sure you're consuming energy wisely. A smart thermostat is a great idea, but a smart weather station can work with it and other devices to go a step beyond, programming them around current and predicted weather patterns. For example, it can ensure your scheduled sprinkler won't go off in the middle of a downpour.

Be mindful of your refrigerator. If you aren't careful, a lot of energy can be used by your fridge. First, make sure the one in your kitchen (and basement) is a newer model, as older ones can cost hundreds more a year to power. Then, clear it out so the shelves and drawers aren't overcrowded, which makes the fridge work harder to pump cool air throughout. Finally, if you let leftovers cool on the counter before putting them inside, your fridge will use less energy.

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### **Did You Know?**

Outdoor living is wildly popular, as more and more homeowners are bringing elements once reserved for home interiors into their backyards. When designing outdoor living spaces, homeowners may learn about biophilic design, an architectural concept that aims to incorporate natural elements into outdoor living spaces. Proponents of biophilic design say it satisfies an innate human need to affiliate with nature, thereby helping to reduce stress that people may experience after being stuck indoors for much of their days. Biophilic design is often part of a home interior design, but many homeowners also embrace it when designing their outdoor living spaces. For example, surrounding outdoor living areas with noninvasive plants, flowers and trees and using natural materials like wood and stone when building such spaces are great ways to embrace biophilic design and create a tension-free ambiance in outdoor living spaces.

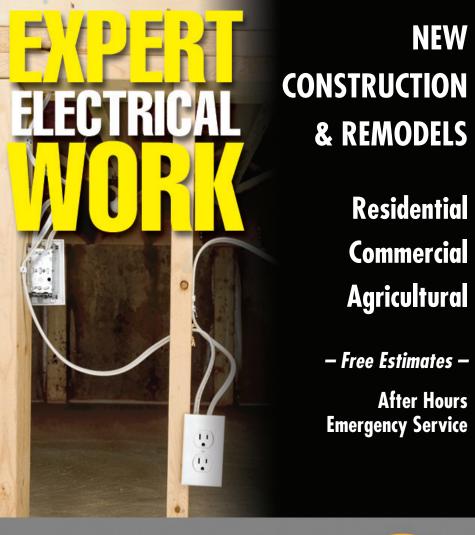
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Barbecues in the backyard or cocktails on the patio provide some fun ways to enjoy the great outdoors from the comforts of home. While friends and family flock to such entertaining opportunities, some unwanted guests may want to crash

It's impossible to ensure a completely bug-free outdoor environment, but there are steps homeowners can take to reduce the amount of pests who want to join the

Western Exterminator Supply suggests first identifying which kind of insect infiltrations are most common where you live. House flies, fruit flies, mosquitoes, wasps, and bees tend to be abundant in spring and summer. Ants, termites and other bugs also can be prevalent. These insects, however pesky they may seem, often can be kept away without the use of pesticides and other chemicals.

- Lure away pests. Many insects will be happy to snack on a treat and leave you alone. Put out a dish of sugar water or slices of fruit for insects that feed on sweets and nectar, or a slice of sandwich meat for wasps and yellow jackets. Place these items a fair distance from your gathering.
- Install fans. A patio ceiling fan can blow away mosquitoes and flies relatively easily. And you and your guests will likely enjoy a nice breeze on sultry days.
- Use mulch wisely. Mulch will add to curb appeal, but having it too close to the house, according to the National Pest Management Association, can present an ideal environment for roaches and ants to nest and find their way into a home. As mulch decomposes, it generates heat and a cozy spot for pests, including mice. Keep mulch 12 inches away from the home's foundation and entertaining spaces, or use inorganic mulch.
- Keep patios clean. Sweep up and clean away any spilled foods and beverages promptly. Even a tiny nugget of food can attract ants and other insects.
- Use natural pest deterrents. Citronella oils can drive away some insects, as can garlic and rosemary. Lavender, eucalyptus, marigolds, and other pungent aromas will naturally keep mosquitoes and other flying insects at bay. Some people also have luck with mint-flavored mouthwash misted on patios and furniture.
  - Address standing water. Mosquitoes and some other insects lay their eggs in



standing water. Routinely drain areas where water collects, including gutters and downspouts

- Use light colors. According to HouseLogic, studies show that bugs see dark and bright colors more easily than light colors. Choose lighter shades of paint for outdoor areas and it may make these spaces less attractive to some bugs.
- Leave those spider webs. Many people yell "eek" at the sight of spiders and spider webs. But those arachnids and their sticky webs can do a fine job of capturing many unwanted insects. Resist the temptation to tear down webs and shoo spiders away.

Addressing insects means employing various natural strategies to make outdoor entertaining more pleasant.

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### Why is my house so dusty and what can I do?

Spring is a season of rebirth and renewal. As trees and flowers bloom anew, many people get renewed vigor to tackle projects in and around the house.

Spring cleaning projects can take on many forms, from garage overhauls to washing the interiors and exteriors of windows. According to the 2019 American Cleaning Institute National Cleaning Survey conducted by Wakefield Research, 77 percent of households surveyed commit to spring clean projects every year.

Dust is a formidable foe during spring cleaning projects. Dust is unsightly and dust mites can trigger allergic reactions. But many homeowners lament that, once they dust, dust returns in a flash. Dust may seem like a never-ending nuisance, but there are some ways to mitigate dust for more than just a few hours.

#### Invest in a better vacuum cleaner

Vacuuming carpets can release and resuspend dust and allergens that were trapped in carpeting and throw rugs, advises the Queensland University of Technology. Traditional vacuums may toss that dust into the air rather than remove it. However, vacuums with HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filters can catch particles at .3 microns in size or larger at an efficiency rating of 99.97 percent. Another solution is to switch to hard-surface flooring, which is less likely to trap dust.

### Change the AC unit filter

HVAC filters are supposed to trap particles that flow through the air and the heating and cooling system. Inadequate or dirty filters cannot do that job as thoroughly as new filters. Check the filters in both window and whole-house AC or heating units and replace according to the recommended schedule. Consider filters with a higher MERV rating, which can catch smaller particles.

#### Use less cloth and linen

The cleaning service Maid to Shine Cleaners suggests that textiles trap more dust, particularly synthetic fabrics. Replacing items around the house with leather or wooden furniture may alleviate some of the dust problem.



#### Take off shoes

Dirt and debris from outside can contribute to dust in the house. Remove shoes when entering the house to reduce the accumulation of dust.

#### Keep pets brushed and groomed

Pets bring many positive things to a home, but no matter how short their coats, pet dander can be part of the dust problem. Washing and grooming pets regularly may put a dent in the dust situation.

In addition to these suggestions, getting a whole-house filtration system, increasing wet dusting and checking for leaky ducts that can be sucking dust from attics, basements or garages are some other ways to reduce dust in a home.

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### Top five hottest home building trends

These days, home trends are about more than good design and aesthetics—they're about creating spaces that reflect our values and are more comfortable and enjoyable to live in. From net-zero and net-positive construction to tiny minimalist homes, trends are all about your family's lifestyle.

Whether you're shopping for a new home, renovating your own or creating a new build from scratch, here are some of the biggest trends you need to know for inspiration.

Sustainable design: This one has been popular for a long time, but green design has evolved to be about much more than energy-efficient appliances and LED light bulbs. Now, it's all about making sure everything in your home reduces your carbon footprint and minimizes any impact on the environment.

To try the trend yourself, think big and get creative—install solar panels on your roof, choose building materials that don't require deforestation and upcycle old furniture for decorative elements instead of buying new.

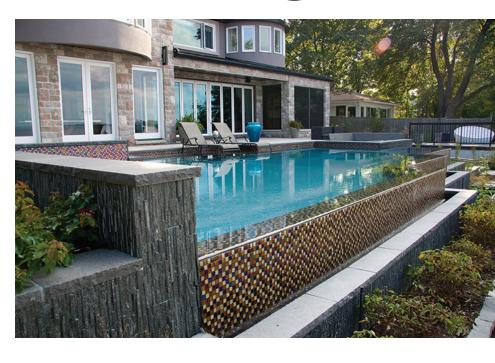
Disaster resiliency: Climate change affects us in so many negative ways, and one of the top concerns is the increase in natural disasters. From wildfires that last for months to major floods that affect entire cities, we now need to prepare for the worst when building our homes.

Switching to disaster-resilient materials is an important first step. Many builders now prefer to use stronger, more energy-efficient materials like insulated concrete forms (ICFs) instead of more traditional materials like wood. ICFs can withstand winds of up to 250 miles per hour (equivalent to an F4 tornado) and offer a fire protection rating of up to four

Outdoor living: Many of us are now choosing to forgo getting a cottage or summer home and recreate the experience in our own backyards. This trend helps you make the most of your existing space and take full advantage of your yard or patio during the sum-

You can design a full living space outside, complete with an outdoor television and comfy couches, as well as a kitchen and refrigerator for entertaining. Consider adding a fireplace or firepit to keep warm during cool summer nights and enjoy the outdoors through spring, fall and even winter if you're brave.

Home automation: This is another longstanding trend that shows no signs of slowing down. It has also evolved to encompass more of the home to make life even more comfortable and convenient. From an oven that can be turned on remotely to preheat, to skylights that can open and close automatically to create the perfect ambient temperature, there are more ways than ever to integrate smart home technology into your living space.



You can start small with voice assistant and smart light bulbs and work your way up to a total smart home system that includes home security, temperature controls and all your electronic devices.

Customization: You don't have to settle for what mass manufacturers decide to build, or what works for everyone else. Creating a home that's as unique as you are is the latest trend, with custom-built storage and personalized architectural features to make your space stand out.

You can even go as far as building a custom home that's suited to your family. Older home demolitions and purchasing land-only properties is becoming more common, allowing you to work with an architect to create exactly what you want with a new build.

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### Common home emergencies, and how to prevent them

Dorothy Gale said "there's no place like home" in "The Wizard of Oz." But what about when homes are no longer safe?

Household emergencies can occur at any time. When disaster strikes, knowing how to proceed effectively can make a world of difference and potentially save lives. Fortunately, it's easy to prevent or reduce a wide range of household dangers by embracing some simple safety measures.

- Accidental falls: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that accidental falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injury among nearly every age group. Roughly three million adults age 65 and older, experience falls that result in emergency room visits each year in the United States. Falls can be prevented by removing tripping hazards, installing steady handrails and other supports and adding lighting in and around a home. If a fall should occur, stabilize the limb or injured area of the body and seek medical assistance.
- Kitchen fires: The potential for danger exists whenever cooking with heat or over open flames. Kitchen fires may occur, but they don't have to spread or cause serious issues if fast action is taken. Never use water to put out a grease fire it will only spread it and make it worse. Cover the fire with a lid to suffocate the flames, or use baking soda to douse the fire. Always have an all-purpose fire extinguisher on hand, and know how to operate it.
- Burst pipes: Burst pipes or leaking plumbing can quickly cause major damage in a home. Locate the water main, which is usually in the basement or garage, on the "street side" near the water meter. Turn off the main to save the home and your wallet. Make the water main visible, mark which way is off, and instruct others in the house on how to use it.
- Tipping furniture: Tip-over incidents send thousands of people (especially young children) to emergency rooms each year, says the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. Top-heavy items, like dressers, TV stands and televisions, bureaus, and bookcases should be anchored to the wall.



- Unintentional poisoning: People may inadvertently consume household poisons. State Farm advises calling 9-1-1 if the victim is unconscious or not breathing. If the person is alert, consult with the American Association of Poison Control Centers at 1-800-222-1222 (or the Ontario Poison Centre at 1-800-268-9017) and await instructions. Keep the bottle or packaging of the assumed poison on hand and be prepared to discuss symptoms and personal information about the victim.
- Fire or other danger: No one ever thinks an emergency situation necessitating escape from the home will take place. But to play it safe, residents should designate emergency exits that are the quickest and safest ways out of every room in the house. Practice this plan and pick a specific meeting spot outside.

Safety at home involves knowing how to act fast in an emergency and how to reduce your risk of being in potentially dangerous situations.

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