

Revamping bathrooms not costly

This article is provided by local realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

When it comes to revamping bathrooms, today's consumers have more choice than ever before. Modern sinks and tubs come in a wide array of colors, shapes and price ranges - with something to suit virtually every taste and budget.

However, if you have a small bathroom and a limited budget, you don't have a lot of options when it comes to remodelling. Short of knocking down walls, there isn't much you can do to increase the physical size of a small room.

If you fit into this category, but want to give your bathroom a new, roomier look, don't despair. By using just a few simple and fairly inexpensive tricks, you can make your bathroom appear much more spacious.

As you begin to plan that new look, keep in mind the old adage that simpler is better. This certainly holds true for small rooms. Excessive decoration and bold, overpowering patterns can dwarf a room, making it appear much smaller than it really is.

Try to avoid choosing loud wallpaper or too many ornate accessories. Remember, you want a clean, uncluttered look.

Color is another factor to consider. Dark colors may make a

room seem more cozy and inviting, but they make it appear smaller as well. Bulk, dark medicine cabinets and vanities can also emphasize the smallness of a room - appearing to gobble up more space than they actually take.

You should also keep in mind that dark-colored flooring or floor tiles with large, busy patterns can make the floor space of a small bathroom appear to shrink.

LIGHTER AND BRIGHTER

Try using lighter colors on the walls and ceiling. A monochromatic scheme can open up a room. Basic colors like cream or white look attractive and allow you greater versatility when it comes to choosing accessories. If you have dark, decorative wall tiles with large patterns, you might want to consider replacing them with something simpler - perhaps plain tiles with an attractively patterned border.

Clear or pastel shower curtains with a light, airy pattern can help open up the room. Use of area rugs as opposed to wall-to-wall carpeting also helps create space because the smaller rugs visually break up the floor space.

Installation of a pedestal sink can create more room - both visually and physically. The only drawback, of course, is the loss of storage space that a standard vanity unit provides. If storage is not a problem, this may be the

route you want to take. Sleek and stylish, pedestal sinks are currently very popular.

BE CREATIVE

Many older, smaller bathrooms have wall-hung sinks. If you have one of these units, you may want to think twice before replacing it. Though often small in size, these sinks can be given a new look when fitted with attractive skirting - this covers the exposed pipes and provides extra, out-of-sight storage space.

Corner sink units are another space-saving option for a small bathroom or powderroom. These units can fit easily into a corner, taking up much less room than a conventional, full-size vanity.

MIRRORS AND LIGHTING

Mirrors are one of the easiest and least expensive ways to visually increase space in a small bathroom. You may want to consider installing a large, wall-hung mirror, or purchasing a good-sized over-the-sink cabinet with mirrored panels.

Bright lighting can also help to open up a room. A skylight, for instance, can create the sense of being in a larger room. A luminous ceiling is another option. However, these two alternatives may be more expensive than those previously mentioned. Talk to the experts at your local building centre to get a better idea of the amount of work these projects would involve, as well as the costs.

Home inspections good investment

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Wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to gaze into a crystal ball to find out what types of problems or benefits you might encounter with the house you've just decided to purchase? Wouldn't it be helpful to know if the foundation is really as sturdy as it looks, or if the plumbing and wiring conform with current standards?

A home inspection will give you the opportunity to have the house examined closely by qualified professionals for overall soundness and any possible faults - in essence a top-to-bottom "physical" for your future home. These inspections are a fast, easy and relatively inexpensive way to find out just how your future home measures up.

A home inspection can also give you a good idea of what to expect in future home maintenance costs. Experts will tell you whether the roof will need replacing in two years or ten, or if the furnace is really likely to last another winter or two. They'll also let you know if the wiring and plumbing systems meet current standards.

When you consider that a home is probably the single, largest purchase you'll make in your lifetime, it makes sense to do as much preparation work as possible. A thorough home inspection

may also save you from making a big mistake. If there are a lot of major problems requiring immediate attention, you may want to reconsider the deal, or renegotiate with the vendor. Some lending institutions now require a home inspection before approving a mortgage.

CONDITIONAL CLAUSES

Home inspections are generally done following completion and acceptance of an offer to purchase. As a buyer, it is up to you to request that a conditional clause is inserted in your offer noting that the purchase is contingent on satisfactory completion of a building inspection. Once the offer is accepted, it is then up to you, the buyer, to make arrangements for an inspection.

When shopping for an inspector, try to find one licensed in a building-related field, such as an architect, contractor or structural engineer. Your realtor can probably recommend several to choose from. You may also want to ask your friends for referrals to good inspectors. Call the recommended firms and get a few price quotes.

Also make sure you ask about the firm's qualifications and how long they've been in business. Ask for references and check to see if they guarantee their inspections. Do they also provide pest detection for carpenter ants and termites?

If certain types of pests, such as termites, are a problem in the area, you may even want to call a

local exterminator to do an additional inspection of the property.

A thorough inspection lasts about two to three hours and should include all aspects of the house: wiring, plumbing, foundation, and overall structure, roof, the heating system, windows and doors.

To help you get the most out of your inspection, it's a good idea to write down questions in advance that you may want to ask the inspector. Most inspectors invite their clients to accompany them as they go through the house. This is an excellent opportunity for you to learn as much as you can about your prospective investment - so make sure you take advantage of it. If you don't understand, something that's being explained, don't be afraid to ask questions. Remember, you're paying for this service.

SUMMARIZE RESULTS

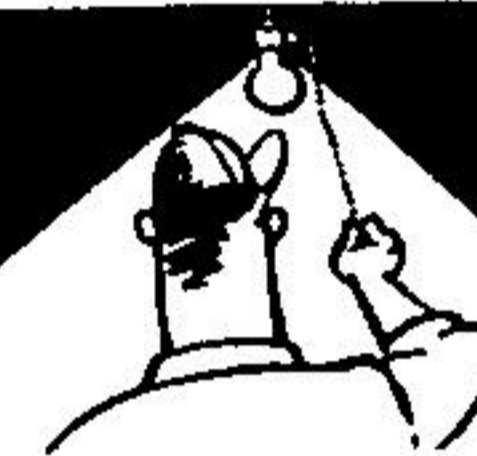
Once the inspection is complete, the inspector will probably sit down with you and summarize his findings. Inspection firms generally supply written reports, complete with cost estimates for immediate and future repairs. These reports are extremely helpful because they help you remember what was said during the inspection. Two or even 10 years down the road, you can still access the information.

The cost for home inspections vary with the size of the home, its age and condition, as well as the geographical area.

Survey Completed Friday, January 4, 1991	MORTGAGE RATES ANNUAL INTEREST					
	SIX MONTH	ONE YEAR	TWO YEAR	THREE YEAR	FOUR YEAR	FIVE YEAR
TRUST COMPANIES						
Canada Trust	N/A	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50
Municipal Trust	N/A	12.75	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50
NRS/Royal Trust	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	11.75
CHARTERED BANKS						
Bank of Commerce	N/A	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50
Bank of Montreal	N/A	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.20
Bank of Nova Scotia	N/A	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50
Royal Bank	N/A	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50
Toronto Dominion	13.25	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50

This survey was prepared to help the Herald Homestyle readers track weekly Bank and Trust Company rates.

Phil's Basement



Ahh! Peace on earth at last — or at least here at 14 Croissant Crescent. The twins are actually doing their homework, Em is at the local high school starting her French lessons and for the first time in what seems like weeks, the house is free of relatives.

So as I planned, I headed up to the attic to start my caulking and weatherstripping project. I got a great pamphlet from The Hydro and it said the best time to caulk the attic is in the winter, because it's not too hot up there and it's also easier to feel the spots where warm air's coming in from below.

I was surprised to learn that up to 15 per cent of the air leaks in a house are right in the attic. Anyway, Em and I want to insulate up there, so we had to do this caulking and weatherstripping first.

I had to laugh, though, remembering what just happened. I guess Em and the kids will never let me live it down.

We were up there just last week storing the Christmas decorations when my foot slipped between the joists and I put my foot right through Belinda's bedroom ceiling. What a mess, with Belinda screeching and plaster in the hamster cage.

Then the next day Em was on the phone with one of her cousins talking about something

Great Aunt Hilda had done which annoyed me, and she said, "Phil was so mad, Ethel! He just went through the roof!" Then she realized what she said and everybody, the twins included, burst out laughing. And then, of course, Ethel had to have an explanation.

Anyway, I got a great caulking gun for Christmas and went to the mall to get the right stuff. I went all out and got the type of caulking which lasts at least 10 years.

According to the pamphlet, caulking and weatherstripping are sort of like the same dog but with a different tail; caulking seals edges that meet, but don't move, and you weatherstrip when one surface moves, like at the bottom of a door. It was easy. And I have to say, I'm looking forward to cutting down on our heating bill. Up to 25 per cent, The Hydro said. I could use the money.

It'll pay for a sheet of plasterboard and some paint for Belinda's ceiling.

This newspaper, in conjunction with Ontario Hydro, is bringing you Phil's Basement to help "bring home" ideas on how to save energy. To receive the brochure "Caulking and Weatherstripping", call Ontario Hydro at 1-800-263-9000 and tell them Phil sent you.