

THE LAKES NEWS SHOPPER'S

# Spring home Okoboji



A special supplement to the award-winning  
**THE LAKES NEWS SHOPPER**  
Tuesday, April 4, 2023

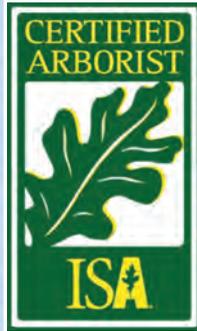
**Inspiration for Our Day-** "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" ~ John 14:6

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*About* **Garland Iron Works**

Founder and owner, Cory Garland, was raised in the Lakes Area and graduated from Spirit Lake High School. Cory went on to earn a degree in Welding from Iowa Lakes Community College in Emmetsburg. He decided to put down roots West of Milford with his two sons, Nate and Kayden, and wife, Morgan. Cory has 13 years of welding experience under his belt and has always had the dream of opening his own welding shop. His dream finally became a reality in September of 2019 when he opened Garland Iron Works, LLC. Cory strives for perfection and the highest quality in his work. He often jokes that this business is "like retirement" for him since he gets so much joy out of making customers' visions come to life. Having grown up in the Okoboji area, it makes it easy to fall in love with the beauty of the lakes and the community that surrounds them. This same community has helped Cory's business become successful with the support it has provided. Cory looks forward to continuing to build and fabricate beautiful metal works that families can enjoy for years and years to come.

*Garland Iron Works exceeded our expectations! We were looking for someone to build handrails and a chandelier for our remodel and had heard awesome things about Cory. His craftsmanship and attention to detail is second to none. We highly recommend Garland Iron Works and would definitely work with Cory again. - Sean Kondrath*

*Cory was professional, on time, on bid and listened to my ideas. I am so thrilled with the quality and beauty of my new deck. Don't hesitate to give him a try! - Jamie Hicks*



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## Local Boat Lovers Start Their 5th Summer Helping Clients Broker Their Boats!

Barry and Julie Van Iperen are extremely excited to continue having Boji Boat Brokers in the Iowa Great Lakes area. There are not a lot of options for people wanting to sell their boats and Boji Boat Brokers, located at 1520 Hudson Avenue, Spirit Lake, can offer options with terms that work. Their focus is on you and helping you sell, purchase or trade your boat. It has taken years of knowledge working in the Okoboji area, along with experience in this industry, contacts and relationships, to get where they are today.

Boji Boat Brokers offers you a complete and professional process with skills that specialize in the sale and marketing of boats. If that means helping you find your next boat or selling your existing one, they are here and their priority is you.

They make sure your boat is clean and ready, and expose it in both a local and national network of advertising. They will represent you and your boat like it's theirs. Stop in and see for yourself.

If there is a particular boat you are looking for, with their many resources, they are able to help you find your "dream boat".

Their goal is to be able to fill a niche that customers have been looking for, but haven't been able to find. They have many years of

experience selling boats, but it has been part of their lifestyle even longer.

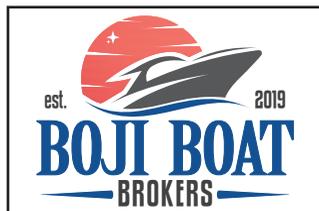
Barry has been selling boats in the Lakes area for over 25 years. Since 1969, Barry has been enjoying summers in Okoboji, starting at Edgewater Plaza, swimming and skiing, to working 25+ years in the boating industry, locally and then gaining the knowledge of selling yachts in Florida for one of the largest family owned brokerage companies in the world. Barry's experience is vast and he wants to share his knowledge of buying and selling boats with you.

Julie's knowledge of boats comes from a life centered around boats and boating. She worked at a local boat dealership for nearly 10 years

doing all aspects from accounting to cleaning to selling boats and was looking forward to getting back in the business.

With one common theme, passion for the water, Barry and Julie want you to enjoy it as much as they do.

Boji Boat Brokers looks forward to reconnecting with past customers, and making new ones in 2023. Stop in at 1520 Hudson Avenue in Spirit Lake or call 712-330-3152 for more information. You can also check out their website at [bojiboatbrokers.com](http://bojiboatbrokers.com) for current inventory and testimonials.



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## 2023 TOURNAMENT/EVENT SCHEDULE

May 8.....SGOWA	Aug. 9 ..... Dakota Tour Okoboji Open Pro/Am
May 12 .....Kiwanis	Aug. 11 ..... Mammoth Hockey Fundraiser
May 13 .....27-Hole Spring Fling	Aug. 18..... Glow Ball
May 15 ..... Senior Ladies	Aug. 27 .....SGOWA
May 27-29 ..Memorial Weekend Veterans Free Green Fees	Sept. 4 .....Sportsman's Pub
June 3 ..... 8" Big Cup Scramble	Sept. 16-17 ..... 2-Play Scramble (Calcutta)
June 5-8 ....Junior Camp Week 1	Sept. 18 ..... Senior Ladies
June 17 .....MS Charity Golf Fundraiser	Oct. 2 .....SGOWA
June 25 .....Love Take Root	Oct. 1 .... Customer Appreciation
June 26-29 .. Junior Camp Week 2	Oct. 13-15 .... Chili Bowl Extreme Weekend
July 9 .....Parent/Child Scramble	Oct. 29 ..... Brooks Gives Back/ Drain the Pub
July 24-27 ..Junior Camp Week 3	
July 30 ..... Iowa PGA Junior Tournament	
Aug. 4 .....Fuel Iowa	

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# RANDY L. NELSON TREE CARE, LLC.

Tree climbing comes natural for Randy Nelson, owner of Randy L. Nelson Tree Care, located in Estherville, Iowa. He has always enjoyed the outdoors and being in nature. When Randy was younger he would drive his parents crazy always climbing trees, little did they know he would end up making a career out of climbing them! Randy grew up in Fairmont, Minnesota, and joined the active army in 1987 after graduation. He started his Arboriculture career in the Twin Cities in 1992, becoming an ISA Certified Arborist in 1997. Randy started his own company in 1999, back in his hometown of Fairmont, Minnesota, but a lot has changed since then. He had to take some time away from climbing to recover from rotator cuff surgery in 2015-2017, then moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, where he worked as a consulting arborist for two years, then back to Minnesota in 2018 where he was an operations manager for a national tree care company. With all his years of combined experience as an arborist he decided to get back to doing what he loves most, owning his own business again. Randy and his wife Stacie purchased a log home situated on 5 acres, on the west edge of Estherville, in March of 2021. As an arborist, the space was a perfect fit for him, with tons of mature trees and room to grow his business. "I feel very privileged to be involved in the tree care industry as a climbing arborist. Tree climbing with rope and harness has become kind of a lost art nowadays with aerial lifts and bucket trucks being used more often." I truly enjoy meeting new clients and helping them solve their tree problems," Randy said. My goal for Randy L. Nelson Tree Care LLC is to develop long term clients and be able to help them develop a pro-active tree care program that makes sense for their property with their budget in mind."



"I have known Randy Nelson for nearly 20 years in his professional career as an arborist and his expertise in all matters concerning trees. He is a remarkable professional! There seems to be no end to his knowledge and motivation to do the job right while advising the customer of everything involved. I have recommended Randy to many people over the years with absolutely no negative feedback. He is simply the best at his craft! - Bill Morrow



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May 5	Kentucky Derby Golf for the Cure (4-Person)
May 29	(Memorial Day) Monday-Fun Day 4-Person Best Shot
June 2	Camp Foster YMCA 8" Cup (July 14 Rain Date)
June 4	Two-Man Best Shot Tournament
June 11	Couples Best Shot Tournament
June 12, 13 & 15	E H Junior Program Golf Clinics
June 16	4-H Foundation of Iowa 4 Person
June 20	Two-Gal Best Shot
June 21	Hope Haven Charity 4-Person Best Shot
June 25	Blake Foster Two-Man Handicap Best Shot
June 27-29	30th Annual EH Junior Golf Camp (Primarily Instructional)
June 28	VFW 9-Hole Best Shot Fundraiser
June 30	Sam Chozen Memorial, (Stead Family Hospital Charity) 4-Person
July 6	PGA Drive - Chip & Putt Local Qualifying
July 8	Colton Baschke Charity 4-Person Best Shot (Rain date, Sunday, 9th)
July 18	Four-Gal Best Shot Tournament
July 21	Cattlemen's Regatta (Back Pack Charity Event)
July 30	31st Annual Parent- Child Best Shot Tournament (9 & 18-hole divisions)
August 4	Hawkeye Wrestling Club 4-Person Fundraiser
August 6	Ruebin's Legacy Two-Person Best Shot
August 7	Quest Wealth Management Wounded Warrior/ 1st Responders Charity Amateur Golf Extravaganza
August 12-13	Emerald Hills Club Championship Weekend
August 26	5th Annual Beth Huseman Memorial "Beth Ball"
August 27	Abben Cancer Center Classic (4 Person)
Sept. 4	Hawkeye / Cyclone Labor Day Golf Clash, 4-Person, (w/Spencer CC)
Sept. 8-10	U of O Couples Tournament (with Okoboji View & Spencer CC) 1:00 Friday, 1:00 Saturday, 9:00 Sunday
Sept. 16	EH 8" Cup 4-Person Best Shot
Sept. 24	Captain's Getaway Men's ABCD Best Shot
Oct. 1	Three-Person Best Shot
Oct. 15	EH Fall Classic Four Person Best Shot

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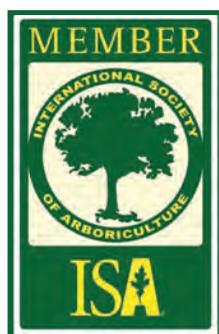
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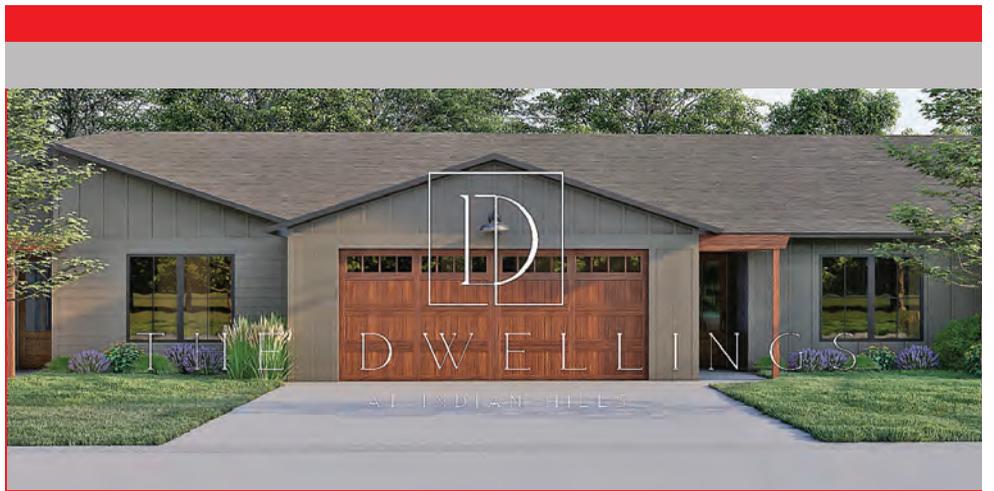
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# Spring into Snook's of Okoboji

Whether it's a weekday or a weekend, with the sun in full heat or the leaves falling from the trees, Snook's of Okoboji is sure to be open and ready to fill your lifestyle needs. Snook's of Okoboji opened in 1995 in a quaint building in West Okoboji, and has since grown into their current building with 20,000-square-feet of show space on Highway 71 in Okoboji. You'll know you've arrived at Snook's of Okoboji as the vibrant hues of summer welcome you with a wide variety of Adirondack chairs and outdoor furniture, in every color, located on the front lawn and beyond.

We have the largest outdoor showroom in the lakes area, but you are sure to feel right at home as soon as you enter. Friendly staff members immediately greet customers with a warm welcome. Upon talking to them, you'll realize just how knowledgeable and well-informed the Snook's staff is. Customers that know exactly what they want will appreciate the ability to buy any piece off the floor and take it home the same day, or have it delivered. For those that need a little more guidance, have no fear. Talk with an expert designer about your needs; they are equipped to guide you through the entire process. If they don't have your must-have piece on the floor, they'll custom order it for you.

With a wide variety of product offerings and unbeatable customer service, it's no wonder Snook's has been a design staple of the lakes area for over 20 years. Bill Adams managed the store for eight years before taking ownership in October 2011. He took the business from its original location, added the outdoor store and eventually combined two locations into one, making Snook's the ultimate destination store. Snook's offers a full color center and flooring for every room; carpet, hardwood, luxury vinyl tile, plank wood and more. They also design and install custom tile showers, surrounds, backsplashes, and in-floor heating systems. You will also find a wide variety of Leather Italia indoor furniture, decor, fantastic selection of umbrellas, outdoor patio furniture, and fire tables/pits.

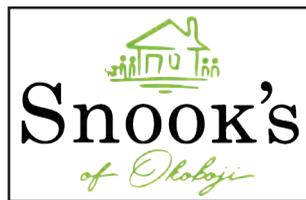
Known for the largest selection of outdoor living

furniture in the Northwest Iowa Great Lakes area, Snook's has what you need to take your outdoor living experience to the next level. From lounge chairs for quiet mornings, to fire pits and fire tables for late-night get-togethers, you're sure to find what you're looking for at Snook's. Weather-proof Adirondack furniture makes a great addition to any outdoor living space. There's no chipping, fading, mildew, or maintenance, so you can set your chairs outside year-round and let your cares float away, with our 20 year warranty. For those cool summer nights, Snook's offers propane, natural gas plus wood burning fire pits in a plethora of styles and designs.

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Besides offering quality furniture and flooring, Snook's customer service goes above and beyond. The store offers an array of services like design consulting, financing, fast delivery and estimations for all your flooring needs. Whether you're here to play or here to stay, stop by Snook's of Okoboji today. You'll be pleasantly surprised by everything the "hometown place to shop" has to offer.

In October of 2022, Snooks of Okoboji and Okoboji Wholesale traded homes! Snooks is now located at 1651 Exchange Street in Okoboji, and Okoboji Wholesale is located at 1005 Okoboji View Ave. Feel free to call us at 712-332-7530. Check out our website at [www.snooksofokoboji.com](http://www.snooksofokoboji.com) and follow/like us on Facebook.



## Get the Whole Package at Okoboji Wholesale/OW

Starting a new business is hard enough, but Bill Adams and his crew make it look easy. Hence, the new appliance store, "OW" Okoboji Wholesale, was started. Appliances, everyone loves them until they no longer work for the intended purpose. That's where Okoboji Wholesale saw an opportunity to enter the lakes area in October of 2018, to offer scratch n' dent appliances at a wholesale price. Owner Bill Adams did countless hours of research and found the lack of discounted appliances in Northwest Iowa and made the business decision to open up shop. Spirit Lake was the original home of Okoboji Wholesale in a 2,400 square foot showroom packed to the walls in scratch n' dent appliances. Before each appliance set foot on the floor it was run through rigorous testing to ensure the appliance was working as intended. With some appliances arriving in non-working condition the service team would have to diagnose the issue and repair until the appliance was sellable. With thousands of units leaving the showroom floor, Bill and his staff took the liberty to ensure the satisfaction of a working appliance was leaving with a happy customer. With a lot of blood sweat and tears from Bill and the top tier staff he has, they relocated in the heart of Okoboji on Highway 71, two buildings north of Snook's of Okoboji in an 11,000 square foot building. They outgrew their old location in Spirit Lake and moved on to something bigger and better. The purchase of a long-term existing appliance store in Milford happened in August 2020, which was Okoboji Wholesale's biggest milestone. This gave them the opportunity to purchase brand new appliances along with the new scratch n' dent. Melanders in Milford was around for many years and served thousands of happy and satisfied customers. Included in the purchase, Okoboji Wholesale agreed to take over those customers and continue to help and serve them. They now offer a wide variety of kitchen and laundry appliances from top brands such as GE, LG, Speed Queen, Frigidaire, Midea, Galanz,

Beko & Bosch. As soon as you walk in the door, you are greeted by a knowledgeable staff with a combined 25 years experience to help you from start to finish. Any project big or small, they will guide you to make sure you are getting the appliance that is right for you. Professional delivery and installation by their delivery staff, who will go the extra mile, is always a plus for those in need. Okoboji Wholesale doesn't finish after the door is shut. Service is a huge key to any appliance, and they service anything they

sell, whether it's in or out of warranty. Any brand new appliance sold by Okoboji Wholesale comes with a manufacturer's warranty. The scratch n' dent and used appliances are different. Even though the scratch n' dent appliances are open box brand new they do not carry a manufacturer's warranty. Since Okoboji Wholesale has their rigorous testing procedure to ensure all appliances are in working condition that is not an issue for their customers. Also, for pennies on the dollar, they are linked up with Nationwide, the largest marketing group in the U.S. to provide up to 5 years of an extended warranty on the scratch n' dent appliances purchased. With a huge selection to choose from, Okoboji Wholesale has become the largest new and use appliance dealer in Northwest Iowa. It's your one stop shop for any refrigerator, stove, dishwasher, microwave, ice maker, freezer, washer, dryer, and much more. Stop in at our new location 1005 Okoboji View Ave, call 712-332-6050, or message us on Facebook for any questions on availability to get your dream appliances today! Back in October of 2022 one more move was needed with the appliance business growing. Snooks of Okoboji and Okoboji Wholesale traded homes. OW now has 20,000 square feet of space to showcase all the appliances we have to offer. Be sure to stop in and check out our new location today! Visit our website at [www.okobojiwholesale.net](http://www.okobojiwholesale.net) and like/follow us on Facebook.





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# Let the outside in with all-season rooms

Many homeowners express interest in creating fewer barriers between the interior and exterior of their homes. Some may have back yards built for entertaining and want to facilitate the transition between the inside of the residence and the outside when guests arrive. In other instances, homes may back to a nature preserve that homeowners want to enjoy more readily. Whatever the reason for bringing the outside in, all-season rooms can serve as a welcoming bridge between indoor and outdoor spaces

## What is an all-season room?

Also known as a four-season room, all-season rooms are specially engineered spaces that provide a connection to the outdoors no matter the season. They are like sunrooms, but climate-controlled so that they will be comfortable throughout winter, spring, summer, and fall.

## What is the difference between a three-season room and an all-season room?

The biggest difference between

these two spaces is the level of usage and the capacity of the room to be heated and cooled. Individuals who reside in climates with moderate year-round temperatures may get by with a three-season room. However, those who experience all four seasons may need a more insulated space to make the room usable throughout the year.

## Features of all-season rooms

One of the more notable features of an all-season room is an abundance of windows, which allow plenty of natural light to shine in. All-season rooms also can feature creature comforts like a reading nook, outdoor kitchen spaces and televisions. Retractable screens can be installed when privacy or shade is desired.

## Maintaining a comfortable temperature

All-season rooms can be built with adequate thermal insulation and energy-saving features. Insulation will be installed in the walls and roof, and homeowners may have a choice of window ratings for efficiency. Some all-season rooms are specially equipped with

HVAC systems that may or may not be tied in to the home's general heating and cooling system. Some people use portable heaters or air conditioners to control the temperature in all-season rooms. It's best to speak with an all-season room contractor to identify heating and cooling needs.

## How much does an all-season room cost?

Prices vary by region and are contingent on the features homeowners desire. According to the outdoor resource Garden Center Care, a three-season room can cost anywhere from \$8,000 to \$50,000 to build. A four-season room can cost \$20,000 to \$80,000 to add. If there is an existing three-season room, it may be more affordable to upgrade the space into an all-season room, but an architect and contractor should inspect the space to determine the scope of the project.

All-season rooms can be an ideal addition to a property, providing extra space for entertaining or lounging and a connection to the outdoors.

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## Fulfilling a Dream in Her Local Hometown

*Crafting Beauty*

April (Zinn) Junge, owner of Hometown Florals, in downtown Lake Park, has always viewed life through a lens of artistic creativity. Her art is found in her flowers and how she creates beautiful floral arrangements. A variety of floral masterpieces are showcased throughout April's flower shop. Piece by piece, April adds different flowers, colors, spillers and thrillers to create beautiful floral arrangements. Whatever April designs, she wants it to be uniquely hers, not someone else's. Her vast experience comes from years of creating flower arrangements, first starting at Hy-Vee Floral Department during high school, continued learning floral design throughout college after transferring to the Hy-Vee Floral Department in Fort Dodge, as well as working for another local floral shop which had 3 locations, including Lake Park. The knowledge and experience she gained from working at these shops helped her get to where she is now, Owner of her very own flower shop!

**HOMETOWN  
FLORAL**

Hometown Florals brand new location, at 126 N Market Street, in Lake Park, was completely renovated in 2022, compliments of Shelley (Morris) and April's husband Heath, owner of H. Junge Construction. "They both love to renovate beautiful buildings, and there were so many unique features about the new space they were able to keep, while bringing in lots of new elements," April said. We put new tall windows in to create more open space and add lighting to the room. "Algona Glass Company created the framing and installed the windows, they did such an awesome job," she said. The new windows match the original dimensions of the drug store, Riley Pharmacy, that was there many years ago. We kept the back wooden bar, most of the ceiling too and painted it black giving the store a fresh, modern, but historic look. "We have great old buildings in Lake Park that I hope we as a community can continue to revitalize."

Hometown Florals also showcases a variety of house plants and silks along with different sympathy needs such as honoring a loved one with fresh arrangements, lanterns, wind chimes, stones, and benches available to purchase, as well as home decorative items and an all new baby and kid toy line. April is available to make floral arrangements for weddings, bridal showers, anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, funerals and more. Hometown Floral also delivers to the entire Iowa Great Lakes area and surrounding communities, extending into Minnesota. She is available to send flowers all over the United States through the florist to florist network and can be contacted at (319) 444-6834, [april.junge@outlook.com](mailto:april.junge@outlook.com), or via her Facebook page. Check out her website at [hometownflorallakepark.com](http://hometownflorallakepark.com). The shop hours are currently Monday 10-6pm, Wednesday 5-7:30pm, Thursday 10-6pm, and Saturday 9-3pm. April is hoping to add more hours as the summer comes along, so follow her facebook page for updated hours or feel free to call and set up an appointment during non-business hours and she will try to accommodate you the best she can.



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# Factors to Consider When Buying Furniture

Buying furniture can be an exciting prospect. The opportunity to breathe new life into a home with the addition of different furnishings inspires many people. However, at the same time, searching for furniture can be a tad overwhelming, especially when homeowners do not know where to begin.

Statistics Canada reports that Canadians spend an average of \$934 on furniture each year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, in 2017, Americans spent an average of \$2,484 on furniture. While furniture may not be the most costly investment, it's also not the cheapest, which is why getting it right is important.

### Determine your needs

The first step in purchasing new furniture is to decide what is needed. Assess current furniture and think about what works for certain pieces and what doesn't. Then you can gear purchases around desired features. For example, if you've determined chenille fabric holds on to too much pet fur, the next couch may be leather or microfiber.

### Measure more than once

Measure your room multiple times and create a mock floor plan. This will help when figuring out if certain pieces can fit into the space. Some retailers even offer floor plan software on their websites so that you can upload the dimensions of your room and see how certain items will fit in your spaces. In addition, be sure to measure the width of doors to ensure that it's easy to get the furniture into the home when delivered.

### Determine your style

Figure out which style best fits your personality and lifestyle. This may be traditional,

transitional or modern. Incorporate pieces accordingly, or mix and match to create a look that is completely unique.

### Confirm materials

Consider your budget when choosing the construction materials for the furniture. Solid wood tends to be more expensive, but often more durable than engineered products. In addition, check to see how items are built. Pull out drawers and check hinges to ensure the quality is there.

### Save money on sales

Furniture can be expensive, but there is room for savings. Shop when retailers offer seasonal sales. Consider warehouse retailers, which often sell select items at a discount.

### Read reviews

Before taking the plunge, be sure to read reviews of items and retailers. While items may appear perfect, reviews can shed light on how pieces stand up to wear and tear. Shopping for furniture means taking steps to measure, match style, read reviews, and find pieces that fit homeowners' lifestyles.

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# 5 signs It's Time To Renovate

Homeowners renovate their homes for a variety of reasons. Renovations can increase the value of a property and make homes safer and more comfortable for their occupants. Improvements also can be made to stay current with the times or to give a home a new vibe. Statista projects \$510 billion will be spent on home improvements in 2024. The home improvement market is generating significant revenue. In fact, nearly a quarter of Americans opting to renovate their homes will spend an average of \$10,000 on their projects. According to a Home Stars Renovation report, 8 percent of Canadian homeowners who have renovated have spent more than \$20,000 on a home improvement project.

Kitchens and bathrooms often get the most attention when it comes to home improvement. However, every room and space in a home may need a renovation at some point, and the following are five signs it's time to renovate.

**1. Age**  
The National Association of Home Builders states that 50 percent of U.S. homes are over the age of 40. That means that age alone could dictate a need to renovate, particularly if some materials are original to the home. For example, asphalt roofs typically last 25 to 30 years, while window frames can last 20 to 50 years depending on how well they have been maintained.

**2. Inconvenient layout**  
Some homeowners scratch their heads when faced with awkward floor plan layouts. While one may live with the inconvenience for some time, typically a floor plan that isn't working for the homeowner is a major driver of renovations.

**3. Outdated looks**  
A home can look dated even if it is a relatively recent build. That's because trends change quickly. For example, dark, cherry cabinets that were popular just a little while ago have now been replaced by lighter color palettes. Homeowners whose homes do not match the looks emulated in design magazines may consider a change, particularly if they're planning to sell soon.

**4. Deterioration**  
Signs of water, storm or structural damage should be addressed as soon as possible. Any deterioration should be a strong indicator that it's time to renovate.

**5. Efficiency**  
Escalating utility bills could be indicative of an inefficient home. Homeowners can conduct energy audits and then improve the areas where energy loss may be occurring, such as windows, doors, siding, and insulation. Homeowners can renovate their homes when they see fit, but various signs may warn that it's time consider updating or remodeling a home.

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# Make a Dining Room More Elegant for Entertaining

The kitchen may be the heart of a home, but when it comes to entertaining, a dining room — if one is present in a house — tends to be the prime gathering spot for meals.

Dining rooms may not be top on the list of spaces to renovate, as they tend to be used infrequently. But a dining room makeover may still be a worthy endeavor. Here are some simple ways to make the dining room more elegant and functional.

- **Clear out the clutter.** The first step toward improving a dining room eating area is to remove any extraneous items from the space. If the dining room table is not used very often, it likely has become a catch-all for other items, such as bills, newspapers or kids' homework. Rather than using the dining space as a makeshift office or homework station, invest in a rolling cart to store those papers and other items. Simply roll it into a closet or another room when it's time to host a party.
- **Hang a statement light.** Few decorative items add as much drama and ambiance to a dining space as a new overhead light. People hear chandelier and think a bejeweled or crystal design. But various chandelier styles can fit the aesthetic of a home. The light will be a focal

point and instantly make the dining area more elegant. Install the light on a dimmer to adjust the illumination as needed to set the mood.

- **Invest in new linens.** Purchase coordinating table linens that will be used for special occasions. A decorative table cloth or table runner coupled with cloth napkins and placemats helps to set the scene of the dinner party.
  - **Add a piece of artwork.** Many modern homeowners have eschewed the China cabinet that once was standard in dining rooms. Rather than a bulky piece of furniture, a large piece of statement-making artwork or framed photos over a more minimalistic buffet table or small service bar is preferable. Choose artwork that complements the colors in the space.
  - **Include a centerpiece.** Centerpieces add sophistication to the table and tie into the event. Floral arrangements, a bowl or basket of fruit, pine cones or greens from outdoors, or collectibles like shells in a tall canister can serve as centerpieces. There are many simple ways to dress up dining spaces and make them more elegant.
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## 6 signs you may need a new HVAC system

There's no place like home, especially when that home is a comfortable and safe haven. One of the ways residents find comfort in their homes is by maintaining the right indoor temperatures, which fluctuate along with the seasons. While there is much to be said about opening windows and doors to let Mother Nature do her thing, indoor comfort is often maintained with an HVAC system. HVAC stands for heating, ventilation and air conditioning. It can include heat pumps, furnaces and air conditioning units. It is an automated system that works by adjusting a thermostat to regulate air temperature, and sometimes humidity, in the home. According to Enviguard, a commercial contracting provider, HVAC systems also may be used to improve indoor air quality through filtration and oxygen replacement.

As with any mechanical device, an HVAC system has a life span that must be considered. Should any of the following conditions be present, it is likely time to consult with an HVAC technician to see if repairs or replacement of the entire system is warranted.

### 1. Age

If the HVAC system is more than 10 years old, it could be time to begin budgeting for a new unit. Many modern, efficient systems may last 12 to 14 years with routine maintenance. But it's good to keep an HVAC system's age in mind so you can readily recognize when it might start to fail.

### 2. Longer or constant running times

An efficient, properly working system will quickly heat or cool the home and then turn off. A system that is turning on repeatedly or having to run for awhile before the set temperature is reached could be nearing the end of its utility.

### 3. Strange noises

Groaning, banging or loud humming noises should be addressed. While these noises may indicate that certain components need maintenance or replacement, they also could be symptoms of age and a system nearing failure.

### 4. Frequent repair visits

Knowing the HVAC company's repair person by name is a sign that the system has required too much work in recent months. Repeated issues and repairs are probably signs that it's time to consider a system replacement.

### 5. Higher bills

Sticker shock when receiving electricity or gas bills likely mean the HVAC system isn't working efficiently and might need to be replaced.

### 6. Poor indoor air quality

If the home is dusty or humid or even if allergies seem to have cropped up out of nowhere, this could indicate a poorly functioning HVAC system.

HVAC systems are vital to keeping indoor environments comfortable and safe. Such systems may exhibit certain signs that indicate they need to be replaced.

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# Minor Exterior Upgrades That Can Help Sell A Home



The home improvement industry has been booming for years, but forecasters are projecting a deceleration in 2023 and perhaps beyond. Estimates from the Home Improvement Research Institute, which is the leading market research resource for the home and building products industry, indicate that growth in the home improvement products market is expected to decelerate from 7.2 percent in 2022 to 1.5 percent in 2023. Inflation continues to affect consumer spending, and homeowners may be looking to spend less on renovations in the year ahead. Minor upgrades that aren't as costly as larger projects can still make a big difference, especially among prospective buyers. When looking for minor upgrades that can help sell a home, homeowners can rely on Remodeling magazine's annual "Cost vs. Value Report." That report analyzes costs for an assortment of remodeling projects and determines the value of those projects at resale. Though resale value depends on a host of variables, including location, the following are some relatively minor exterior upgrades that impress buyers and provide a strong return for homeowners.

• **Garage door replacement:** Garage doors matter more than sellers may recognize, as various real estate professionals note that buyers appreciate homes with updated garage doors. That's good news for homeowners, as the "2022 Cost vs. Value Report" indicated homeowners recoup roughly 93 percent of their garage door replacement investment at resale. The average cost of such a

job is right around \$4,000, making this a budget-friendly remodeling project.

• **Window replacement:** The cost of new windows will depend on just how many windows must be replaced. But there's no denying buyers like the idea of low emissivity (low-E) windows, which can cut energy bills by a significant amount over time. The Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy estimates that heat gain and heat loss through windows is responsible for between 25 and 30 percent of residential heating and cooling energy use, so sellers who can tell buyers they have new low-E windows can emphasize those savings in home listings. The "2022 Cost vs. Value Report" indicates that homeowners recoup roughly two-thirds of their investment in new windows at resale.

• **Landscaping:** Well-maintained landscaping is another home exterior component that can make a strong first impression on buyers. A recent survey of nearly 7,000 realtors conducted by the National Association of Realtors found that upgrading a landscape recouped roughly 83 percent of homeowners' initial investment at resale. In addition, 11 percent of realtors surveyed indicated that an upgraded landscape was the decisive factor that closed the deal for the house. Updating a home's exterior doesn't have to bust homeowners' budgets. Many affordable projects also provide a substantial return at resale. *@metrocreativeconnection*



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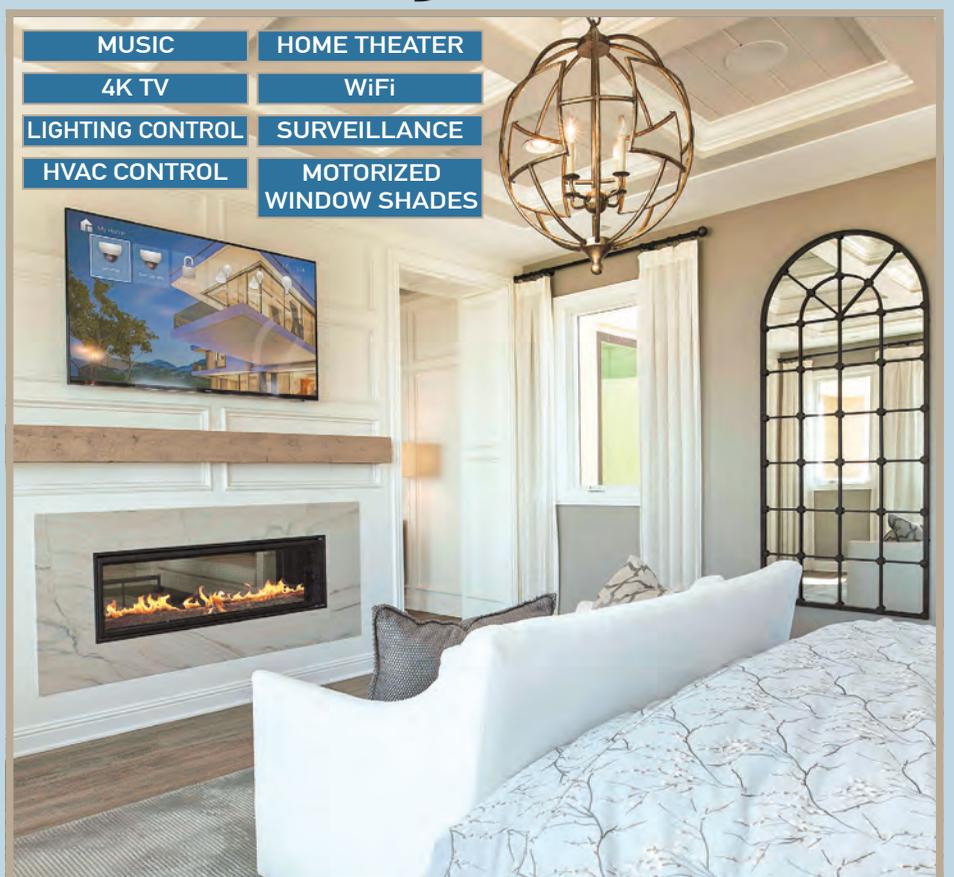
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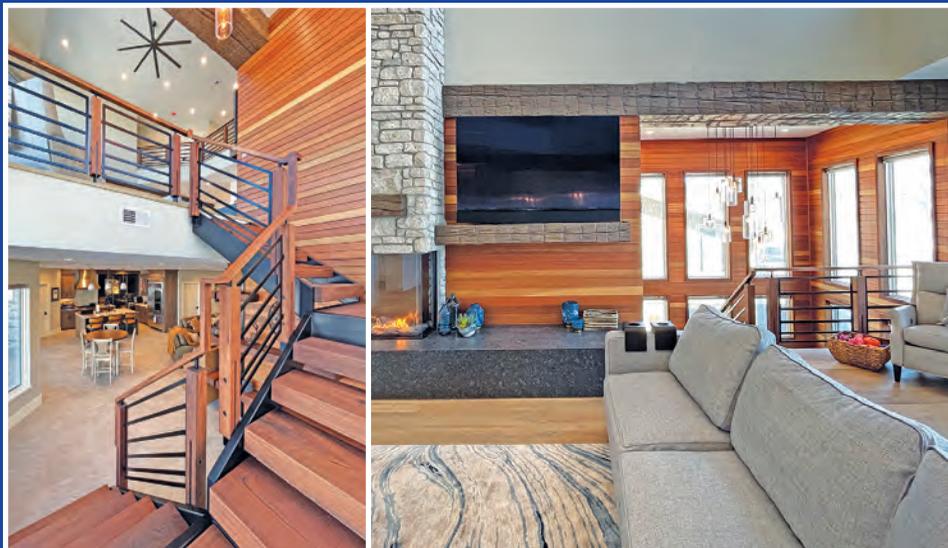
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## Signs a Home Exterior Needs Updating



Renovations are a great way for homeowners to reshape their homes. Some may aspire to renovate so their home is more reflective of their personal taste, while others may do so in an effort to make their homes better align with modern styles and sensibilities. Regardless of why a homeowner chooses to renovate, the need to do so is often evident to the naked eye, especially when the time comes to update home exteriors.

Curb appeal is often discussed in regard to the effects it can have when selling a home. But curb appeal is equally important for homeowners who aren't putting their homes on the market. A well-maintained, aesthetically appealing home is a source of pride, while a home with fading curb appeal can make homeowners feel a little sheepish. Homeowners who want their homes to maintain their curb appeal can look for signs that it's time to update their home exteriors.

• **Curling shingles:** The roof may not be the first thing people think of when pondering curb appeal, but a damaged roof can contribute to problems that ultimately affect the exterior and interior of the home. Multiple curling shingles indicate it's time to replace the roof. The sight of curling shingles is not pretty, but the larger issue in such instances is the potential for costly water damage when water gets in through the affected shingles.

• **Dated entry door:** Many home improvement experts insist they can determine when a home was

built or most recently renovated simply by looking at the front door. Steel and glass doors are popular in modern homes, so homeowners with front doors with ornate designs and oval glass inserts can likely benefit from an upgrade to their entryway. A modern front door can make a statement and real estate experts note how popular updated front doors are among buyers.

• **Unsightly landscaping:** It's not only the physical components of the home that may suggest an update is necessary. Homeowners without a green thumb may have exterior landscaping that has seen better days. If a spring or summer day spent tending to your landscaping is not your ideal weekend pastime, then consider replacing unsightly landscaping with low-maintenance plants or hardscaping. These alternatives to more needy plants can create curb appeal without requiring any extra work for homeowners.

• **Cracked driveways/walkways:** If the driveway looks like a busy road at the end of snow plowing season, chances are that's adversely affecting the impression people have of your home. In addition, cracked walkways indicate a need for renovations, as these areas are front and center when welcoming guests.

Updating a home's exterior can restore curb appeal and help homeowners feel better about their properties.

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# 5 Patio Projects to Enhance Outdoor Living

Warm weather paves the way to more opportunities to enjoy fresh air. For homeowners who have the luxury of outdoor spaces, including private patios, now is the time to start thinking about projects to enhance these gathering spots. A patio can be considered a transitional area that links the outdoors to the inside of a home. According to the

home and lifestyle resource The Spruce, a patio is often an oasis for lounging and entertaining. And depending on homeowners' budgets and preferences, a patio can be just as comfortable and stylish as interior spaces. The following are five patio projects that can transform these valuable spaces.

## 1. Pretty pergola

A pergola is an open-air (traditionally wood) structure that adds a measure of shade and privacy without completely blocking views of Mother Nature. Installing a pergola over the patio helps define the seating area. Hanging plants can add to the ambiance and string lights can make this a great spot to gather when the sun sets.

## 2. Patio fire pit

Build a fire pit right into the design with the same materials used to create the patio. For example, if the patio is brick or flagstone, build up to create an eye-catching fire pit. Fire pits not only look good, they also expand the time frame that the patio can be enjoyed, offering cozy spots to sit even when the weather chills.

## 3. Frame it in

Make the patio a true extension of the inside by putting up walls around three sides of the patio if it connects to the home. Leave the last open to the yard, or consider installing screens to mimic the look of popular lanais. The walls will offer more weather protection, meaning you can invest in high-quality patio furniture to make this a fully functioning outdoor living room. Hang a television that is rated for outdoor use for movie-watching under the sun or stars.

## 4. Ooh la la

Vintage bistro tables and chairs can turn a drab patio into one that calls to mind a Parisian courtyard. Whimsical lighting and accents that you would normally think to see indoors, like a gilded mirror, can add extra appeal. Soften wrought iron and other metals on the furniture by including plenty of flowers and greenery. Don't forget the candles and a place to stash a bottle of chilling wine.

## 5. Farmhouse chic

Transform a patio into an entertaining space that caters to guests. A large farmhouse style table flanked by benches and some upholstered chairs sets the scene for a dinner amid the fresh air. Watering cans filled with wildflowers and mismatched flatware establish a casual feel for gatherings in the space. For those who plan to cook and serve outside with frequency, invest in outdoor appliances so you'll never have to miss a beat with guests.

The options for transforming patios into stylish gathering spots is only limited by the imagination.

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# Questions to Ask Your Renovation Contractor

Individuals looking to renovate their homes typically reach out to a number of professionals for estimates before choosing a contractor. Once that decision has been made, it's customary to sign a contract to ensure all parties are protected during and after the work.

A renovation contract outlines the details of a remodeling job. The construction company or the general contractor will create this legal document, which will list the steps of the job and how issues will be resolved should problems arise. Prior to signing a contract, however, homeowners should engage in a conversation with the contractor and ask key questions.

**• How long have you been in business?**

Verify the information that the contractor and/or company provides by doing a search with the Better Business Bureau and perusing online reviews to confirm the company is dependable.

**• Are you independently owned?**

Some companies are independently owned businesses while others are franchises.

Franchised businesses may have to follow a strict set of rules, while independent contractors may have more leeway in terms of policies.

**• What is your licence number?**

Obtain the licensure information as well as the contractor's insurance details. A contractor's general liability insurance protects your home and property in the event of an accident.

**• Are you familiar with local building codes?**

Check to see if the contractor has worked in the area before, and if he or she

is familiar with the permit process. Make sure a contract documents who will be securing the permits.

**• How will the project be supervised?** Some contractors sub-contract out the work and may only stop by to check on progress. Understand how often those drop-ins will take place, and how to get in touch with the person in charge should a problem arise.

**• Is there a warranty?** Certain contractors will stand behind their work for a period of time, even coming to make repairs if there are any issues. Check to see if a warranty policy is in place.

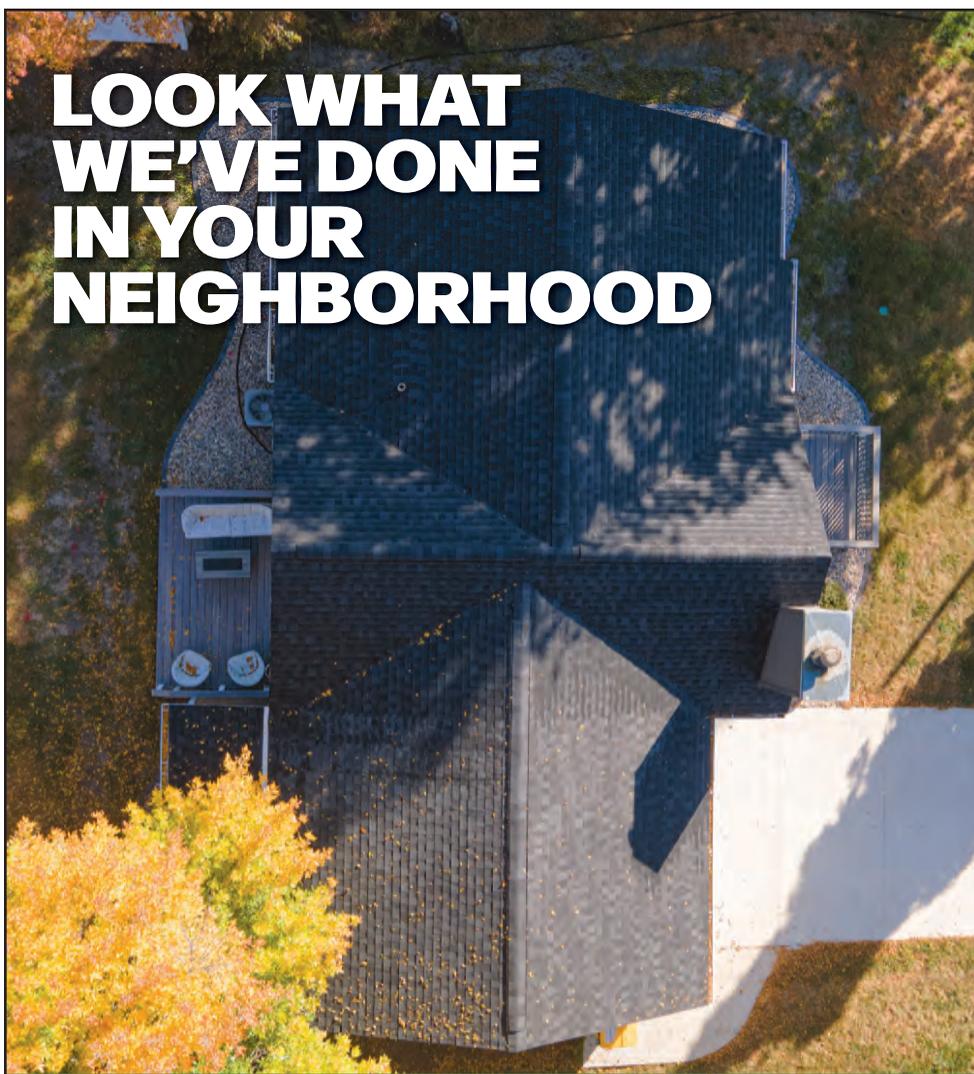
**• What is the policy for home protection and clean-up?** You'll want to ensure the rest of your home doesn't become damaged or soiled due to the construction. Have the contractor spell out plans for mitigating mess during demolition, and whether the construction company will be responsible for removing the debris.

**• What is the final price?** One of the more important questions to ask is if the price stated on the contract will be the final price, or should incidentals be expected if issues are unearthed during construction? Some contractors may need to tack on charges for extra materials, and that can stretch homeowners' budgets.

It's important to touch base with the contractor and ask key questions about the project, which will be reflected on the contract both parties eventually sign.

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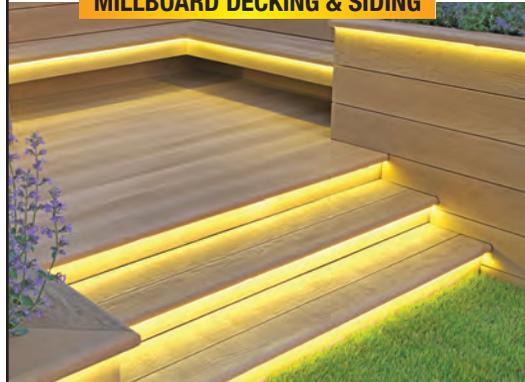
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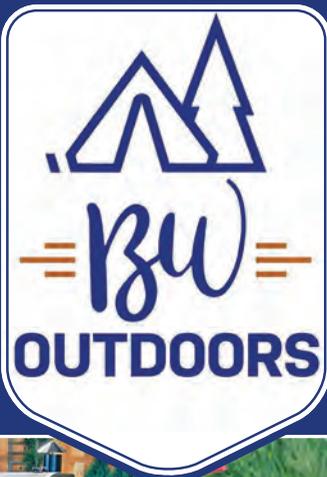


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# Why it Pays to Hire Contractors for Home Renovations



A sense of pride comes from a successful do-it-yourself home improvement project. However, quite often inexperience and time constraints lead homeowners to turn to professional contractors to make sure jobs get done correctly and on time.

Allied Market Research reported in 2021 that the home improvement services market is predicted to reach \$585.3 billion by 2030. The following are some reasons why renovation-minded homeowners benefit from the services of professionals.

- **Tasks can be overwhelming:** A home remodel is a large undertaking with many different steps. Contractors who have been around the block a time or two understand how to organize and manage time to get the job done. Plus, they're devoting all of their attention and time toward the remodel when on the job. This differs from when a do-it-yourselfer tries to work on a remodel in between other responsibilities.

- **Network of suppliers:** A good general contractor will have a list of material suppliers he or she routinely uses. Often contractors become preferred sellers, which means they get a lower wholesale rate, and will often pass those savings on to the customer.

- **Licensed and bonded protection:** Licensed and bonded contractors not only have the skills for

the job, they have insurance protection behind them. Therefore, if an injury occurs or the job goes awry, the homeowner will be protected from liability. A license means the contractor will have to uphold licensing standards, which could mean staying current on trade practices and skills.

- **Expertise:** Experienced contractors have done the work they have been hired to do many times, which means their skills are fine-tuned. Knowing the correct way to do a job results in fewer errors (and thus fewer repairs), shorter time periods to get the work done, and potentially lower costs overall.

- **Frees up time:** Homeowners who hire out for remodels can utilize their time in other ways, such as on the job or spending time with family.

- **Reduces stress:** Putting the work in capable hands means homeowners do not have to educate themselves about how to do the task, purchase tools, prevent injuries, and/or deal with potentially negative outcomes. Certainly having extra people in the house can be challenging, but it may not equal the stress caused by tackling a job on one's own.

There are many advantages to hiring contractors to renovate a home instead of taking the DIY route.

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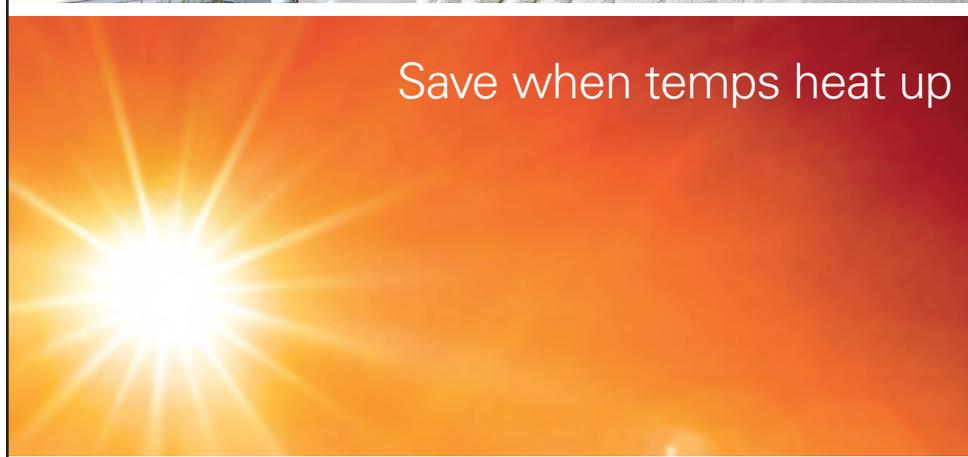
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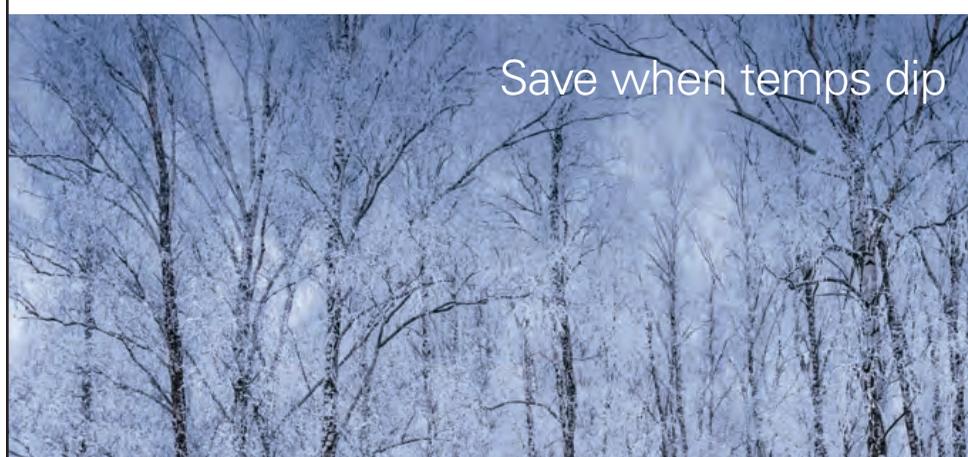
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# 6 Strategies to Get More Organized

When the new year arrives, many people focus on changes that can be implemented in the months to come. This time of year is a popular one to make resolutions to clean and organize homes and offices.

There are plenty of things that can use a little organizational attention. There's no ideal way to get organized. Whatever works is a good approach, but the following are six strategies to help individuals clear the clutter.

## 1. Utilize to-do lists

People tend to be less productive when they're storing all of their tasks in their brains. The first step to getting organized is to remove those plans from the head and put them down on paper or in some other tracking tool. A digital to-do list manager, for example, enables you to see all of your tasks, deadlines and due dates in one place so you can get things done more efficiently. Carry around a notepad or use the digital notes app on a phone to jot down thoughts and needs as they come up.

## 2. Corral your "smalls"

Smalls are keys, phones, chargers, wallets, headphones, and other accessories. When these items are grouped together, they're easier to find so you can stay on track. Invest in an attractive organizer and install it by the front door or another high-traffic area. You'll cut down on trying to find those smaller items when running errands.

## 3. Conquer clutter regularly

It's easy to be put off by cleaning and organizing when clutter has gotten out of control. Instead, by cleaning up items on a daily or weekly basis, it's much easier to keep ahead of clutter. Treat it like a daily job, including sorting mail and tossing unnecessary items; emptying waste pails; dusting the desk; deleting emails; and putting items back where they belong.

## 4. Categorize emails

Utilize the folder creation option from popular email providers to sort your messages. Drop messages that need attention into categories of your choosing, such as school, health and receipts.

Then you'll know which folder to go into when searching for what you need, eliminating the time-consuming task of scrolling through a full inbox.

## 5. Give one; toss one

When bringing new items into the home, follow the procedure of giving away or throwing out one item for each new item that is received or purchased. This can help to tame clutter.

## 6. Mise en place your life

"Mise en place" is French for "put in place." It is used in the kitchen to refer to preparing and setting out all ingredients needed in a recipe. The same concept can be used elsewhere. Lay out clothing on the dresser for the next day at work or school. Prep the foyer of a home with items you need, like an umbrella, shoes and paperwork. Organize backpacks so they're ready for the school day. Establish a to-go bag at work for items that need to be brought home. Getting organized can be as simple as taking small steps that have lasting impact.

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