



Spring HOME Lawn & Garden

HOME EDITION

A supplement to the Annandale Advocate and Maple Lake Messenger Wednesday, April 24, 2024

How to recognize when it's time to replace your windows

Windows are a major component of a home. Window installation professionals will tell homeowners that the average life span of residential windows is between 15 and 30 years. Most well-maintained products can last 20 years, so homeowners who have windows approaching that age may want to schedule a window assessment and possible replacement.

Replacing windows is a job that requires advanced skill, and this is not a do-it-yourself project. There are many qualified professional window installation companies that will work with homeowners to measure, order and install windows that will fit with the style of a home and local weather, all while providing features the homeowner desires.

For those wondering when to replace windows, Pella and Renewal by Andersen,

two of the premiere window manufacturers, offer these guidelines.

■ Difficulty opening and closing windows. A window that does not operate as it should can aggravate homeowners. If windows are sticking shut or cannot be securely closed, it's probably time for something new.

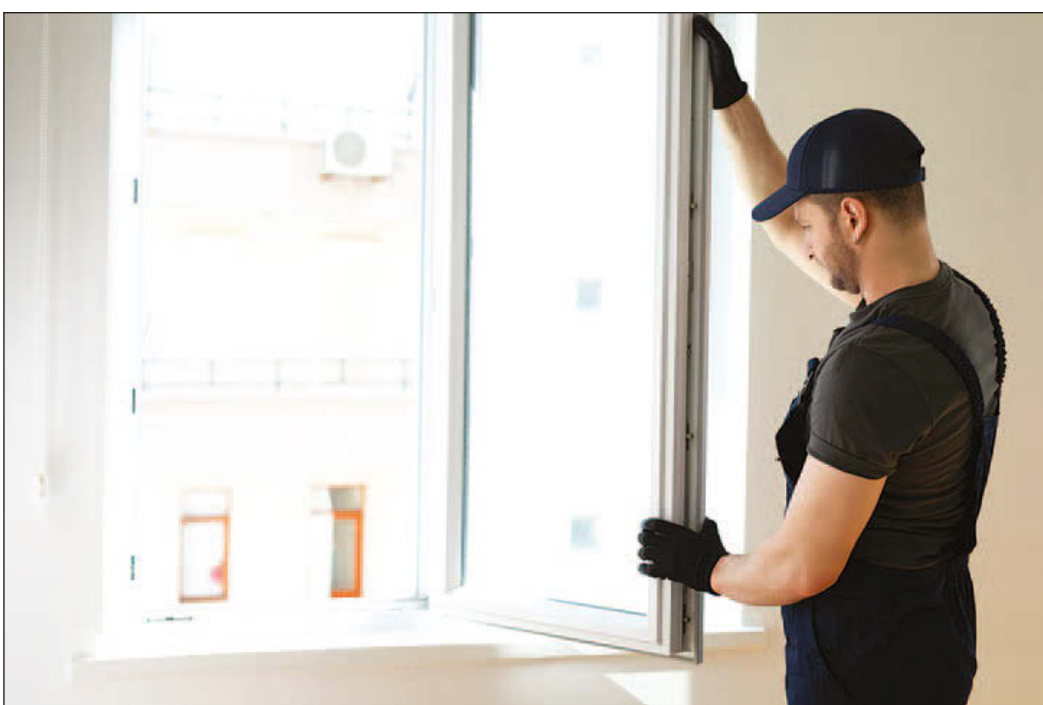
■ There's apparent window damage. Accidents happen, and if a rock is kicked up from a lawnmower and cracks a window or if spring baseball practice has gone awry with an errant throw, windows may require replacement.

■ Drafts in the window are common. If heating and cooling systems are working overtime, drafty, poorly insulated windows could be to blame. Various agencies can perform energy efficiency tests in a home. Windows that are determined to be the weak spots should be replaced.

■ Dated windows are present in the home. Older windows may pose safety hazards, especially those in older homes. A larger window may be needed to comply with fire safety codes allowing for window egress. Dated windows also may simply look "old" and compromise the aesthetics of a home.

■ Outdoor noises are noticed quite readily. Newer windows can help reduce noise transmission. So those leaf blowers, airplanes, barking dogs, and kids playing basketball up the street won't disturb homeowners as they try to enjoy some peace and quiet indoors.

■ Fading indoors is noted. Windows that do not feature low-emissivity (Low-E) glass coatings will not block UV rays. Those rays can cause fading to wood floors and furniture or pretty much anything the sunlight touches. Replacing existing windows



Advocate file photo
Windows provide safety, comfort and style to your home. Recognizing when they need to be replaced is easily done by gathering some information about your home and observing the conditions of the windows using your senses.

with Low-E coating alternatives can safeguard belongings and improve window

efficiency. Window replacement may be necessary when existing

windows are showing signs of aging or damage.

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Factors to consider when mulling a garage renovation

Garages may rank below kitchens and bathrooms in the home renovation pecking order, but these unsung heroes of suburban dwellings deserve their day in the sun. It's easy for garages to become convenient, if crowded and disorganized, storage spaces, but scores of homeowners are embracing the idea that renovated garages can serve a more functional purpose.

Prior to beginning a garage renovation, homeowners can consider a host of factors that will guide the direction of the project and ultimately produce a more functional space.

■ **Appeal:** Though many homeowners understandably want to ensure their homes are amenable to their own lifestyles without worrying about the effects a given project might have on resale value, it's best that they do not completely ignore the latter variable. A 2019 analysis from the National Association of Home Builders found that 65 percent of

newly constructed homes included two-car garages. That suggests a traditional two-car garage remains widely appealing. However, it's worth noting that the NAHB analysis was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, when fewer people were working from home. Now that more people work from home, some may see a garage converted into a home office space as more functional. Homeowners can speak with a local real estate agent to learn more about local buyers' preferences before beginning a garage renovation project.

■ **Function of the space:** It's important to consider why you want to renovate the garage. Is it to build a designated home office space? A fully outfitted home gym? A home theater? An extra bedroom? An in-laws suite? Each of these options are popular reasons to renovate a garage, and each may require a different approach during the project. The desired function also may affect the cost, so



Advocate file photo

Renovating a garage space can be beneficial in many ways. Consult with a professional to explore possibilities to maximize storage and create a space that could be used for alternate uses.

it's best to identify precisely what the room will be used for post-renovation.

■ **The existing space:** When mulling a garage renovation, contact a local garage conversion expert to audit the space. Such a professional

can assess the existing space and determine what will need to be done beyond the design of the room. Will additional electrical outlets need to be installed? Will the room require additional ventilation? Will a new doorway need to

be created to allow for easier access? These are questions a qualified expert can answer. Some may estimate the cost as well, but it's likely the garage expert will defer estimates regarding electric and ventilation to contractors who

specialize in those areas. ■ **Storage:** The home renovation experts at Angi estimate that the average garage remodel costs around \$18,000. That's considerably less than a home addition project, which can easily exceed six figures. So a garage remodel might be more budget-friendly than a room addition. However, homeowners should consider what's currently in their garages and where those items will end up if the room is repurposed. If it's primarily lawn care items and kids' toys, a new shed with ample storage space might work. But if the garage currently holds more items than can reasonably fit in a shed, homeowners should determine where those items can be stored once the garage is repurposed.

Garage renovation projects can make these spaces more functional, making them worthy of consideration among homeowners who feel like they need some additional space at home.

Renovations that help sell homes

The adage "there's a lid for every pot" suggests that, even in relation to the real estate market, there's bound to be a buyer for every home on the market. Price is a significant variable in the minds of potential buyers, but there are additional factors that can affect the impression people get of a given home.

Certain home features can tip the scales in favor of sellers. In fact, various renovations can help sell homes more readily. And these renovations need not cost a fortune. Putting a home on the market can be stressful, but these renovations may help it sell fast.

■ **A fresh coat of paint:** Although painting is relatively inexpensive and a job that some do-it-yourselfers can tackle, it's not a task relished by many. Painting is messy, it takes time, and requires moving furniture. In fact, prepping a room for painting often is the toughest component of any painting job. But fresh coats of paint can create a strong first impression. Choose a neutral color and get painting. Jennie Norris, chairwoman for the International Association of Home Staging Professionals, says gray is a "safe" color that has been trending in recent years.

■ **Minor bathroom remodel:** Remove dated wall coverings, replace fixtures, consider re-glazing or replacing an



Advocate file photo

Some renovations can yield a higher selling price when it comes time to sell your home.

old tub, and swap old shower doors for fast fixes in a bathroom. If there's more room in the budget, replacing a tub, tile surround, floor, toilet, sink, vanity, and fixtures can cost roughly \$10,500, says HGTV. You'll recoup an average of \$10,700 at resale, making a minor bathroom remodel a potentially worthy investment.

■ **Redone kitchen:** The kitchen tends to be the hub of a home. This room gets the most usage and attention of any space, and it's

a great place to focus your remodeling attention. The National Association of the Remodeling Industry estimates that homeowners can recover up to 52 percent of the cost of a kitchen upgrade upon selling a home. Buyers want a functional and updated kitchen. Trending features include drawer-style microwaves and dishwashers, commercial ranges, hidden outlets, and even wine refrigerators.

■ **Updated heating and cooling system:** Better Homes

and Gardens reports that homeowners may be able to recoup 85 percent of the cost of new HVAC systems when they sell their homes. Heating, cooling and ventilation components are vital to maintain. You don't want buyers to be taken aback by an older system, and many millennial buyers are not willing to overlook old mechanical systems.

■ **Fresh landscaping:** A home's exterior is the first thing buyers will see. If they pull up to a home with eye-catching landscaping and outdoor areas that are attractive yet functional, they're more likely to be intrigued. Often buyers will equate a home that features an impressive exterior with upkeep inside as well. The American Nursery Landscape Association says the average homeowner may spend \$3,500 for landscaping.

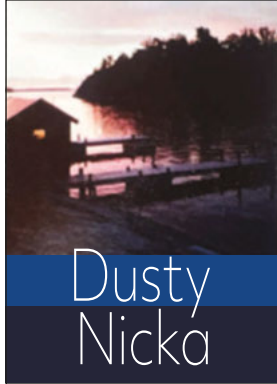
Improving a home's chances to sell quickly and at a higher price often comes down to making smart improvements that catch the eyes of buyers.

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Turn your bedroom into a relaxing retreat

Bedrooms are more than places to lay our heads at the end of the day. Bedrooms serve different functions, and not all are conducive to relaxation.

People who use their bedrooms as a work space may find they're compromising their well-being by introducing activities into the bedroom. The Sleep Foundation says having an office in the bedroom blurs the lines between work and personal life, which can have serious effects on sleep. Rather, people should be looking to turn their bedrooms into relaxing retreats that offer a respite from the outside world.

■ Remove blue-light emitting devices. Computers, tablets, smartphones, and other electronic devices emit blue light, which can compromise natural melatonin production in the body that contributes to sleep. Such devices should not be used at night in the bedroom.

■ Use a neutral color palette. Neutral color palettes evoke a spa feeling. Walls can be painted white, beige or a light shade of gray. This can help the room feel calming and welcoming.

■ Declutter the room. A sense of calm can be achieved simply by removing excess clutter. There is some evidence that the brain is more calm near an empty dresser,



Advocate file photo

Bedrooms are a respite from the hectic tasks of the day. Creating a space that encourages rest and relaxation can reduce anxiety, stress, and instill a sense of well-being.

desk or clothes hamper. Therefore, removing excessive items from the room is a first step to making a nice retreat.

■ Add soft lighting. Adjust the intensity and the color of the lighting in the bedroom. It should be subtle and warming. Dimmers enable homeowners to adjust lighting as needed.

■ Install an electric fireplace. There is something to be said for the relaxing effects of gazing into the flames of a fire. A crackling (faux-wood) fire is an added layer of

indulgence in a bedroom.

■ Add an area rug. Even in rooms with carpeting, an area rug under the bed can further define the perimeter of the bed and add extra plushness underfoot.

■ Invest in aromatherapy diffusers. Certain smells can create a relaxing mood. These may be sandalwood, lavender or jasmine. Utilizing their preferred scents, homeowners can employ reed diffusers in their bedrooms to enjoy the aromas of natural oils.

■ Used closed storage. Open shelves and visible

closet interiors may not hide a mess. Exposure to clutter can contribute to feelings of anxiety. Store items that shouldn't be on display behind closed doors or drawers.

■ Bring in luxury linens. Homeowners should not skimp on comforters, sheets, duvet covers, and pillows for their beds. A cozy bed to dive right into can serve as the centerpiece of a bedroom retreat.

Turning a bedroom into a relaxing space can help individuals sleep better and reduce anxiety.

Warning signs of electrical problems

Homeowners know that owning a home provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Home ownership also can increase the chances individuals view their homes as a sanctuary where they can relax and enjoy creature comforts they've personally chosen.

The comfort people feel inside their homes can be compromised when they begin to suspect certain safety issues, including electrical problems. The Electrical Safety Foundation estimates that home electrical fires account for roughly 51,000 fires and 500 deaths each year. Electrical problems will not always cause home fires, but it's still wise for homeowners to learn the potential warning signs that something is amiss with their home electrical systems.

■ Flickering lights: Flickering lights are more than a mere nuisance. Bulbs sometimes flicker because they become loose, which can be remedied by turning the fixture off, waiting for the bulb to cool down to the touch and then tightening it. However, if the bulb was already tight when it was flickering, then the ESFI warns this could be a sign of an overloaded circuit. The tech experts at CNET advise homeowners to contact a



Advocate file photo

Electrical problems can be identifying the cause can be difficult, but recognizing potential problems can help avoid costly damage from faulty wiring.

certified electrician if they suspect their home electrical circuit is overloaded.

■ Frequently tripped circuits: In a day and age when people rely so heavily on electronic devices like routers, desktop computers, tablets, smartphones, and more, a tripped circuit that cuts power to a home can be a major nuisance. But frequently tripped circuits indicate the presence of an electrical problem that's greater than a suddenly shut down computer or disconnected

router. Tripping is actually a safety net that shuts down the electrical current of a home in order to let homeowners know something is wrong with their electrical system. Frequently tripped circuits should be brought to the attention of a licensed electrician, who can identify what's causing the system to alert homeowners something is amiss.

■ Warm or discolored wall plates: It may not be common practice to touch wall plates, but the ESFI notes this can

be a good way to determine if a home is having electrical issues. Discoloration on the wall plates should be enough to draw homeowners' attention. Some wall plates may even appear to be melting. Each of these issues could be a byproduct of various problems, including damaged wiring. A certified electrician can determine what's behind warm and/or discolored wall plates.

■ Burning odor emanating from outlets: The unpleasantness of this warning sign of electrical problems is enough to compel an immediate investigation. Homeowners who detect a burning odor in their homes but aren't sure where it's coming from are urged to inspect their wall outlets. If the odor seems to be coming from an outlet, it could be due to various factors, including exposed wiring, poorly installed wiring, damaged wiring, or a foreign object in the outlet. Contact an electrician immediately if you detect a burning odor coming from an outlet.

Electrical issues in a home pose a serious safety risk. Homeowners should learn the warning signs of such issues and report their presence to a licensed electrician immediately.



DID YOU KNOW?

While home buyers typically take their time to examine each room and space inside and outside a home before making an offer, the real estate experts at Trulia note that two rooms in particular seem to merit the closest inspection among prospective buyers. Kitchens and the bathroom in an owner's suite can dramatically increase the value of a home. Trulia recommends that homeowners consider their neighborhood and identify their target buyers prior to beginning a kitchen or owner's suite renovation, as such variables can provide direction and inspiration when refurbishing these widely valued areas in a home.

DID YOU ALSO KNOW?

Electrical fires are more common than one might think. The Electrical Safety Foundation says home electrical fires account for an estimated 51,000 fires each year, nearly 500 deaths, and more than 1,400 injuries. Certain conditions can lead to electrical home fires. The National Fire Protection Association indicates home fires can result from overloading electrical outlets and inadequate distribution of lighting equipment. When this occurs, these fires most often originate in a bedroom. Another common cause of electrical home fires is faulty wiring and related equipment malfunction. It is important for homeowners to be aware of potential electrical issues and remedy them quickly to avoid home fires. Ensuring electrical systems are up to code and addressing issues with the help of a qualified electrician can reduce the risk of electrical fires.

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A rundown of three popular flooring materials

Even though it's underfoot, flooring can set the tone for how a room or even an entire home is viewed. Perhaps that's one reason why flooring generates such strong opinions when homeowners look to refurbish or replace their floors.

Homeowners now have more choices than ever when considering new flooring for their homes. The following rundown of three popular flooring options can help homeowners as they try to decide which material best suits their homes.

Hardwood floors
Hardwood floors might once have been a relatively straightforward option, but homeowners may now choose between solid wood flooring and engineered wood flooring. According to The Home Depot, engineered wood flooring provides the look of solid wood flooring without the high maintenance of such floors. Engineered wood is manmade and created with the use of wood strands, particles, fibers or veneers of wood that are forged together with adhesives. Each engineered wood flooring plank is composed of several layers of plywood or fiberboard with a solid wood veneer on top, which is how it can provide the look of solid wood flooring. Solid wood flooring planks are made from a single piece of hardwood. Each type of flooring has its pros and cons, and homeowners



Advocate file photo

With more options than ever before, knowing about different types of flooring is key to making the right decision.

who prefer hardwood floors are urged to speak with a flooring professional about the features that make these options unique from one another.

Laminate floors
Laminate flooring is another engineered flooring product. But unlike engineered wood flooring, laminate flooring does not utilize real wood and many people can recognize that the moment

they step on a laminate floor. Flooring is such a vital and heavily trafficked component of a home that it's typically best to leave installation to a qualified professional. However, homeowners who prefer the DIY route should know that laminate flooring is viewed as among the easiest types of flooring for DIYers to install.

Vinyl flooring
The experts at Good Housekeeping report that vinyl flooring is the fastest-growing category of flooring. The Home Depot notes that vinyl flooring is made from plastic and usually consists of acrylic, PVC and similar polymers. Luxury vinyl tile is thick and durable, and it's often noted for its likeness to solid wood. Vinyl tile also is considered a versatile flooring option, as The Home Depot notes it can be purchased in planks, sheets or tiles. The Home Depot advises homeowners to consider the thickness range when mulling their vinyl flooring options. Thickness ranges between four and 40 millimeters, and a thicker layer is more resistant to water, scratches and stains. Homeowners will be confronted with a variety of options when considering a flooring project for their homes. The right option for a given home may come down to a host of factors, including cost, look and durability.

How DIY can be bad for homeowners' bottom lines

Homeowners know it can be tempting to go the do-it-yourself (DIY) route when starting a home improvement project. Home repairs and renovations can be costly, and the notion of saving money on such projects compels many homeowners to try their hand at home improvements. However, the DIY approach can be costly as well, and if things go awry, homeowners may end up with empty pockets and unfinished projects.

Online tutorials and advertisements for home improvement retailers can make DIY seem like a snap. However, there are potential pitfalls to consider that could make the ostensibly less expensive DIY route far more detrimental to the bottom line than homeowners may recognize.

■ **Permits:** Permits ensure work is done in accordance with local codes, which are designed to ensure the safety of residents and their neighbors. Licensed contractors know which permits are necessary for projects they're hired to work on, and many even procure permits for their clients (homeowners are urged to read estimates and contracts to determine who will be responsible for acquiring the appropriate permits). DIYers may not know about local permits, and therefore go ahead with projects without procuring any. That can be harmful in the short- and long-term. In the short-term, a failure to procure



Advocate file photo

Sometimes do-it-yourself jobs can cut into your bottom line, instead of freeing it up. Before starting your next DIY, look into how much any miscellaneous items may cost.

the appropriate permits can make a home less safe and potentially lead to costly fines and necessitate a complete do-over of the project. In the long-term, homeowners who did not secure the appropriate permits may not be given a certificate of occupancy (CO) when putting their homes on the market, which can make it very difficult to sell the home.

■ **Ancillary costs:** The ancillary costs of DIY are not often noted in online tutorials. However, such costs can dramatically increase the amount of money DIYers shell out in order to complete projects on their own. Ancillary costs include but are not limited to the price of tools and equipment; disposal fees for materials that will need to be discarded; and the cost of permits. These costs are

often included in estimates provided by contractors, but they're easily overlooked by novice DIYers.

■ **Repairs:** Even experienced contractors make mistakes, so DIYers, particularly novices, can anticipate making a few errors along the way. Minor mistakes may not prove too costly, but more significant mishaps can quickly negate any cost savings associated with DIY renovations. The cost to fix DIY mistakes varies depending on the project, but a 2019 survey from Porch.com found that the average DIY mistake cost homeowners \$310 and added five and a half hours to the overall time spent to complete a project. It's worth noting the Porch.com survey was conducted prior to the dramatic increase in materials costs related to inflation

in recent years. So it's reasonable to assume that fixing DIY mistakes in 2024 could end up costing considerably more than a few hundred dollars. Before diving in to DIY, homeowners may want to consider the real costs associated with forgoing professional experience in the potentially misplaced hopes of saving a few dollars.

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