

Brightening your bathroom for resale

By Erin K. Witt

Consumers in the market for a new home may have many different features that are important to them, such as square footage, the size and landscaping of the yard or key amenities like fireplaces.

But according to REALTORS[®], a modern, luxurious bathroom is at the top of most homebuyers' lists.

The Web site *ContractorLocate.com* recommends the following remodeling and redecorating tips to help brighten your bathroom and get it ready for resale.

Tip #1: Beautify your bathtub. Consider re-glazing a tub instead of replacing it, especially if it is still in relatively good condition. This can save more than half the cost of a tub replacement.

Tip #2: Try tile alternatives. Instead of ceramic tile, cultured marble sheets are a good choice for tub surrounds. Homeowners can expect to save considerably on labor costs, and prospective homebuyers will appreciate how much easier to clean the marble sheets are. If you feel marble is out of your budget or not to your taste, fiberglass surrounds are have all the same benefits at a less-expensive price.

Tip #3: Use available space to your advantage. Examine how the bathroom area is utilized—with only minor remodeling, you may be able tack on extra footage from a neighboring room or closet.

Tip #4: Consider combination units. If the overall space is limited, purchase space-saving units, like a jetted tub and shower combination. You could also install a pedestal lavatory instead of a vanity cabinet with a sink. But keep in mind that although pedestal lavatories do eliminate the need for vanities and save space, some models may cost more than a separate vanity cabinet and sink. A cultured marble lavatory can be a great budget choice since it is an integrated sink bowl and countertop sold in one easily installed unit.

Tip #5: Realistically assess the room's needs. Sometimes an extra bath is planned when installing a double sink in an existing bath would meet the need.

Tip #6: Don't forget utility support for new features. If adding a large jetted tub to a bathroom, homeowners should consider adding a water heater dedicated to that tub. A large jetted tub can hold up to 75 gallons or more, which can easily overextend an existing water heater and cause problems down the road.

Tip #7: Don't forget the little luxuries. Dual showerheads, body sprays and whirlpool tubs continue to be frequently asked-for luxuries in bathroom remodeling, according to a Design Trends Study conducted by the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA).

Tip #8: Use light to your advantage. Add accent lighting such as a low-voltage strip of lights around the top edge of the wall tile. Natural lighting can be a hot commodity in bathrooms, too. If your bathroom has a window, use it. Splurge on window treatments that accent the décor but don't block out the sunshine. Or consider lining an entire wall with mirrored cabinets. They will make the room look significantly more open and make the most of natural or artificial light.

Tip #9: Be creative with cabinetry. According to the NKBA Design Trends Study, consumers spend an average of 31 percent of their bathroom remodel budget on cabinets, and nearly 25 percent on installation/labor for the job. Some creativity and elbow grease can help create the look of custom cabinetry at a considerable savings. Colorwash wood cabinets, or instead of paint, try a colored stain to revive cabinets or a vanity. Homeowners can also mix and match colors by using a light-colored stain for the background, and then applying a brighter color to some of the drawers. Select new drawer fixtures in unique shapes or finishes to complete the look.

Tip #10: Finishing touches can go far. Decorating accents can help set your bathroom apart from the utilitarian rooms prospective homebuyers may have seen in other homes. The Web site *A Bathroom Guide.com* recommends adding a simple detail, such as a picture rail or shelf along one wall, to display framed prints or small collectibles like perfume bottles. You could also fill antique bowls or shaving mugs with pretty toiletries, such as soaps or bath salts. Or if you have room, consider adding a piece of outdoor furniture like a wicker chair or table. Add fresh flowers or flowering plants to the room. Seek out unusual vessels, such as wall vases, old watering cans or window boxes to hold your favorite flora.