**Home Improvement Projects:  6 Tips to Maximize Cost-to-Value**

The time is here! So let's add some value to your biggest investment. Many homeowners use the spring season to begin working on home improvement projects that they have been contemplating and planning all winter, but anytime is great to start your project. Before you pick up that paintbrush or get out those hedge clippers, here is some expert advice on which home improvement projects will add the most value to your property.

**#1 Spruce Up the Landscaping:**
First impressions can have a significant impact in the value of your home. Landscaping plays a major roll in the outward appearance of the property. Research indicates that your return on investment (ROI) can be as high as 200% in some markets. So trim those hedges and trees to allow more natural light to reach the house. A fresh layer of mulch can also work wonders to enhance appearances.

**#2 Make the Bathrooms Shine:**
The bathroom and is one of the most important and heavily trafficked rooms in your home. Remodeling experts and realtors both agree that major bathroom improvements offer an outstanding cost to value ratio. Even simple improvements like replacing old fixtures, installing new towel racks, and removing stains from sinks, bowls, and tubs can all significantly improve the appearance and value of the home.

**#3 Get a kitchen makeover:**
The most important aspect of a kitchen is that is designed to look open and spacious. Darker flooring and wall coverings should be redone in lighter colors. The same can be done with countertops and cabinets. This will make the space look more open. New hardware for the cabinets and drawers can further improve appearances. Making sure the faucet works properly and looks to be in excellent or new shape is also very important.

**#4 Curb Appeal:**
Making your house look better on the outside can go way beyond landscaping efforts. New doors, windows, shutters, and shingles can make your home look even more attractive to potential buyers. Power washing the exterior walls and a fresh coat of paint will most certainly improve the appearance of the house. Remember, outside appearance and 1st impressions are very important to potential buyers.

**#5 Improve the energy efficiency:**
There is a direct correlation between improvements in a home's energy efficiency and increased resale value. Replace outdated furnaces or air conditioners. Fix any leaky faucets or running toilets. Use weather stripping to eliminate gaps under doors. Buyers are willing to spend more today for better energy savings in the future.

**#6 Interior Excellence:**
Many times the interior impression of a home has an even bigger impact on potential buyers than the curb appeal. A fresh coat of paint or new wall paper can make a house look brand new. Most painting and wallpaper projects can be done yourself or with minimal outside help. Make sure you don't forget about those ceilings. Replacing worn or 'not so nice looking' carpet or flooring will also have a big impact on appearances and resale value.

Remodeling and improvement projects can definitely increase the value of a home. The most important thing to consider, before deciding on which project to undertake, is the cost-to-value ratio. You want to make sure that the increase in the value of your home is maximized compared to the labor and costs associated with the project. Any renovations that bring your house up to par with the rest of the houses in the neighborhood are always good ideas. Try to stay away from projects that will make your house the most expensive or dramatically different from other homes in the area. Careful planning and research is all that is necessary to ensure that you get the highest return on investment possible for your home improvement project.