.**Home Upgrades That Will Stand the Test of Time**

*These home remodeling ideas will pay off down the line.*

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J. Pickens is no stranger to home remodeling. The designer and host of HGTV’s “The Work Around” has tackled plenty of home renovations throughout his career, and he’s learned that homeowners are concerned primarily about two things: cost and style.

Both are important factors in home improvement projects. But you shouldn’t overlook another essential element when you’re renovating your house: longevity. If you’re going to spend the money to improve the look of your home, you want to make sure that you’re paying for renovations that will stand the test of time. Luckily, Pickens had some suggestions for long-lasting home upgrades that are worth the money.

**Crown Molding**

**Average cost:** $900 per room

A relatively easy and affordable way to upgrade your home is to install crown molding. “You get a lot of bang for your buck with moldings,” Pickens said. “They increase the style of your room, and they last forever.”

The cost to install crown molding will vary depending on the type of material you use and whether you hire a professional or do it yourself. On average, though, it costs about $900 to install crown molding in a 16- foot by 20-foot living room, according to Fixr, a website that provides cost guides and comparisons for remodeling projects. Given that the average duration of homeownership is about 13 years, the cost of adding molding to a room would break down to about $69 a year.

**Wooden Kitchen Cabinets**

**Average cost:** $18,600

Pickens said that an HGTV survey found one of the most popular home renovations people plan to make this year is kitchen remodels. If you’re going to spend the money to update your kitchen, he recommends installing custom-made, solid-wood cabinetry. Prefabricated cabinets made of inexpensive material will last only seven or eight years before showing wear, while solid wood cabinets will remain in good condition for at least 30 years, Pickens said.

The average cost of installing custom cabinetry in a standard-sized kitchen is about $18,600, according to Fixr. Over the course of 30 years, that breaks down to about $620 a year for this home improvement.

**Cabinet Hardware**

**Average cost:** $375 to $500

You can easily update the look of the cabinets and doors in your home by installing new hardware. “It will add a visual appeal and make your house look unique,” Pickens said. If you buy quality hardware, it should last 20 years or longer. In fact, Pickens said he has found vintage metal doorknobs and cabinet pulls that are 100 years old.

High-end cabinet handles cost about $15 to $20 a piece, and an average kitchen requires 25 handles for drawers and cabinets, according to home maintenance and repair company Mr. Handyman. So the cost of installing new, quality hardware could range from approximately $375 to $50

**Tile Backsplash**

**Average cost:** $950

Replacing a worn or dated backsplash with one made of tile is an affordable way to improve the look of your kitchen — and to better protect the space between your cabinets and countertop from water, Pickens said. And it will last at least 20 years. “That will certainly stand the test of time,” he said.

On average, the cost of installing a porcelain tile backsplash in a 10-foot by 10-foot kitchen is about $950 for labor and materials, according to Fixr. Over the 20 years or more it will last, it’s a cost of approximately $47.50 a year

**Traditional Bathtub**

**Average cost:** $500 to $3,000

If you want a bathtub separate from your shower, Pickens recommends avoiding jet tubs. They are more expensive to install and don’t stand the test of time because they can clog and require repairs. Instead, “go traditional,” he said.

A standalone soaking tub costs, on average, between approximately $500 and $3,000, according to Fixr. Pickens said you might get a better deal by purchasing a second-hand clawfoot tub and having the enamel refinished for about $150. “If you’re looking to make a renovation and make it last, an old classic tub is your best option,” Pickens said.

**Tankless Water Heater**

**Average cost:** $1,921

If you’re renovating your home, Pickens recommends replacing your hot water heater with a tankless heater. These systems can save you money because they heat water on demand rather than keep an entire tank of water constantly heated. Plus, gas-powered tankless water heaters can last 20 years, Pickens said.

The average cost to install a tankless water heater is approximately $1,921, according to HomeAdvisor. Over the 20 years it should last, that breaks down to a cost of about $96 a year.

**Light Dimmers**

**Average cost:** $144 to install

Switching light switches to dimmers are a cost-efficient home improvement because they can save energy and should last 15 years or more, Pickens said. Dimmer switches cost about $5 to $15 and an average of $144 to install, according to HomeAdvisor. If a switch lasts at least 15 years, the cost is only $9.60 a year.

**Skylights**

**Average cost:** $450 to $1,500

If you’re looking for home remodeling ideas that don’t cost a lot but add a lot of value, consider installing a skylight to brighten up a room. “No one has ever walked into a house and said there is too much light in here,” said Pickens. The skylight in his house provides enough natural light throughout the day, which helps reduce the usage of lights during the day.

A skylight will last as long as the house does if you maintain it, Pickens said. On average, the cost of installing a skylight ranges from approximately $450 to $1,500 depending on the style that is installed, according to Fixr

**Energy-Efficient Windows**

**Average cost:** $19,000 for average-sized house

Replacing windows with energy-efficient ones can be one of the more expensive home-improvement projects, but it’s money well spent, Pickens said. They can increase the value of your home and lower your electricity costs.

The average cost of installing energy-efficient windows throughout a 2,450-square foot house is approximately $19,000, according to the National Association of Realtors’ “Remodeling Impact Report.” However, over the 30-plus years, these windows should last and the annual cost would be about $633.

**Hardwood or Engineered Wood Flooring**

**Average cost:** $4,000

You’d be much better off installing wood flooring rather than carpet when remodeling a home because carpet doesn’t stand the test of time, Pickens said. One glass of spilled grape juice could ruin your carpet 10 minutes after installing it. “Your hardwood floors could last 100 years,” Pickens said. “You don’t get better value than that.”

The average cost of installing 200 square feet of hardwood flooring is about $4,000, according to Fixr. Engineered wood flooring that is made with plywood and a hardwood veneer cost about the same to install and can last as long.  Over 100 years, the cost of installing hardwood flooring is only $40 a year. For an even more affordable option, Pickens recommends vinyl composite core flooring that replicates the look of hardwood flooring.

**Exterior Siding**

**Average cost:** $6,000 to $13,000

To spruce up the look of the exterior of your home, consider installing siding. Vinyl siding is a low-cost and low-maintenance option. There also are a variety of new materials in the same price range as vinyl that will last as long — at least 30 years, Pickens said.

The cost to install vinyl siding on an average two-story house ranges from approximately $6,000 to $13,000, according to DIY Network. Over the course of the 30 years, the siding will last, the $13,000 installing cost breaks down to about $433 a year.

**Insulation**

**Average cost: $3,500 to $4,500**

**“**Insulating your house is something people try to skimp on,” Pickens said. But this home upgrade can pay off because it will help cut energy costs over time. And it should last as long as your house does. On average, it costs $3,500 to $4,500 to install blown-in insulation into a 2,500 square-foot house, according to Fixr**.**

**Deck**

**Average cost:** $7,229

Adding a deck to your home can increase its value because it can increase your living space, Pickens said. If you want a deck to stand the test of time, he recommends using composite decking materials. “A well-made deck of composite materials will last you 30 years without having it restained or repainted,” he said.

On average, it costs about $7,229 to install a 200- to 500-square foot deck in wood or composite materials, according to HomeAdvisor. That breaks down to about $241 a year over the course of 30 years.

**Landscaping**

**Average cost:** $13,200

If you want to create a good first impression when guests or potential buyers come to your home, invest in landscaping. “Always with landscaping, it’s money well spent,” Pickens said. And it will last forever if you maintain it well.

The cost of landscaping can vary greatly depending on the plants you choose and the size of the project. However, the average cost for landscape design and installation in an average-sized yard of 1,200 square feet is approximately $13,200, according to Fixr.