7 Eco-Friendly Updates To Help Sell Your Home

Being green is one sure way to attract potential homebuyers. But if you’re concerned your home is more “eco-foe” than eco-friendly, we’ve got several cost effective upgrades to make it more energy efficient.

Maybe you’ve already invested in environmentally-friendly products to protect the health of the planet. But did you know going green can also have a direct impact on the value of your home? According to the results of a 2016 study from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), homebuyers of all ages want eco-friendly upgrades in their homes. In fact, three of the survey’s top five most-wanted features were related to energy efficiency.

There are a number of eco-friendly updates that can help you sell your home, and they’re more affordable than you might think.

1 **Smart Thermostats**

Adding an upgraded thermostat can make any home appear and feel newer, smarter, and more tech-savvy. Smart thermostats are more intelligent because they interact directly with your home’s heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system to regulate the temperature. After about a week of use, the system learns to adapt to the home occupants’ behaviors and patterns, and over time, it helps minimize energy use. It’s estimated that millennials in particular will pay three to five percent more for a home with smart features like thermostats because of the ease of additional control.

2 **New Windows**

Older homes often have poorly-insulated windows. Just replacing or upgrading leaky windows means your home will lose less energy and begin to maintain a more comfortable and consistent temperature.

In fact, according to the United States Department of Energy, swapping in Energy Star-rated high-efficiency windows can lower your home’s annual energy bill by as much as 12 percent, which alone makes your home highly marketable to potential buyers.

Of course, replacing your windows isn’t exactly cheap, so consider whether the return on your investment is worth it. An annual report by Remodeling Magazine suggests you can recoup about 74 percent of your investment (the national average cost being between $15,000 and $18,000 for replacement). You may be able to save even more though. Energy Star-rated windows may qualify for a tax credit totaling 10 percent off the windows’ price, so do your research before making any purchases.
Energy Star-rated Appliances

According to that NAHB survey, homebuyers of all ages want Energy Star-rated appliances, but Gen X’ers, Boomers, and seniors consider them particularly important, ranking them first or second on their lists of most-wanted home features. Energy Star is the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) voluntary program that helps individuals and businesses save money and protect the planet through the use of energy-efficient products and buildings. Since there are actually two costs when it comes to appliances (the purchase price and the cost of operation), investing in new Energy Star-certified appliances (like washers, dryers, refrigerators and freezers, air cleaners, and dehumidifiers) will appeal to buyers. They help save money in the long run, since the appliances will lower their costs of using the products over time.

Upgraded Insulation

If your home’s insulation is old or doesn’t have the proper R-Value (the higher the R-value, the greater the effectiveness), it could mean cold and heated air are flowing in and out of your attic, leading to higher energy bills. But investing in new, proper R-value-rated insulation can be very attractive to buyers since the reduced need for heating and air conditioning will lower their overall energy costs.

And it’s a great investment. To seal a 35x30-foot attic floor and add fiberglass loose fill insulation, you can expect to spend about $1,300. But the project has an estimated value of $1,400, resulting in return of about 108 percent, or an 8 percent premium.

Tankless Water Heater

Replacing an old water heater is generally considered a good idea since most models are guaranteed to last only about 10 years. But potential buyers consider a tankless water heater as an added bonus because it only heats water when needed, unlike other models that eat up unnecessary energy to store gallons of hot water. According to Energy Star, a tankless water heater costs a bit more upfront, but it can save homeowners up to $95 a year or $1,800 over its lifetime, which is twice as long as traditional gas water heaters.

Shade Trees/Landscape

Planting trees isn’t just a great way to boost your home’s curb appeal. It also happens to be something real estate agents says is the primary thing that attracts potential buyers. But landscaping can also provide extra shade that can help keep your home cool during hot summer weather and potentially cut down on air conditioning use. And you don’t have to add a forest. Just five shade trees should do the trick.

Solar Panels

If you want to go full-on eco-friendly, solar panels are the way to go. They’re proven to increase your home’s value. According to a study from the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, which analyzed the sales of more 20,000 homes, researchers found added value in homes with solar panels across several states. The findings suggest that each watt of solar adds about $4 to a home’s value in California and about $3 in other states like Connecticut and Florida. That could equate to a $20,000 bump in price for a home in California and a $15,000 elsewhere. In some states, residents can also earn money back by selling unused energy from their panels to utility companies through solar renewable energy certificates (SRECs).

Currently, solar panels can cost anywhere between $2.87 and $3.85 per watt, and the average gross cost of solar panels before tax credits is $16,800. Since the average size for a system in the U.S. is 5 kW (5,000 watts), solar panels can range from $10,045 to $13,475 after tax credits. The price has dropped by nine percent from 2016, with the average cost of solar panels being $2.87 and $3.85 per watt, and the average gross cost being $16,800. Since the average size for a system in the U.S. is 5 kW (5,000 watts), solar panels can range from $10,045 to $13,475 after tax credits. The price has dropped by nine percent from 2016, and the cost is continuing to fall.

Whether you dive in fully with solar panels or simply update your home with a smart thermostat, a few eco-friendly upgrades are sure to appeal to potential homebuyers looking to save on their future energy costs.