

What to Fix Before Selling

CHICAGO NORTHWEST SUBURBS — ROI GUIDE

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Not every repair increases your sale price. Some fixes are mandatory (safety, function). Others are high-ROI cosmetics. Many renovations sellers think are necessary are actually money pits. Here's the honest breakdown.

FIX-OR-SKIP DECISION TABLE

ITEM	DECISION	EST. COST	WHY
Fresh neutral paint (interior)	DO IT	\$800–\$2,500	Highest ROI of any prep activity. Buyers can't see past bold colors. White/greige makes rooms look bigger in photos.
Carpet cleaning or replacement	DO IT	\$200–\$1,800	Stained carpet = inspection credit demand. Steam clean first; replace only if visibly worn or stained.
Kitchen full renovation	SKIP	\$20k–\$60k	You'll recover 60–70 cents on the dollar. Buyers want to choose their own finishes. Paint cabinets + new hardware instead (\$500–\$2k).
Bathroom full renovation	SKIP	\$10k–\$25k	Same as kitchen — low ROI. Re-caulk, re-grout, replace fixtures (\$300–\$1,200). Looks fresh without the cost.
Leaky faucets / running toilets	DO IT	\$100–\$400	Inspectors always flag these. Buyers use them to demand credits 5x the actual repair cost.
Roof repair (if leaking or end-of-life)	DO IT	\$500–\$15k	A flagged roof kills deals. If your roof is 20+ years old, expect a

buyer to ask for a credit anyway
— fix it and price it in.

HVAC service / cleaning	DO IT	\$100–\$250	Provide the service receipt. Inspectors check HVAC every time. A clean filter and service tag = no red flags.
Adding a bathroom	SKIP	\$15k–\$40k	Unless your home is severely under-bathed for the market (e.g., 3-bed 1-bath), additions rarely pencil out pre-sale.
Landscaping / curb appeal	DO IT	\$300–\$1,500	First impressions form in 7 seconds. Mow, edge, mulch, plant cheap annuals. Power-wash driveway and front door.
New windows	SKIP	\$8k–\$20k	Buyers value new windows but won't pay dollar-for-dollar. Only replace if they're broken or have failed seals that show on inspection.
Finished basement	MAYBE	\$15k–\$40k	Depends on your price tier and neighborhood norms. In \$500k+ markets, an unfinished basement is a liability. In \$300k markets, less expected.
Electrical panel upgrade	MAYBE	\$1,500–\$4,000	Required if inspectors flag it as unsafe (Federal Pacific, Zinsco). Otherwise, disclose and price it in — buyers may prefer a credit.
Professional cleaning	DO IT	\$200–\$500	Highest-ROI item on this list. A dirty home signals neglect to buyers. Clean windows, baseboards, appliances, and vents.

Before you spend anything — call me first

I walk through every home I list before we touch anything. I'll tell you exactly what to fix, what to skip, and what to price in as a credit. Sellers who work with me before calling contractors save an average of \$3,000–\$8,000 in unnecessary pre-sale spend. (832) 787-2523

