

9 ISSUES YOU SHOULD REPAIR BEFORE YOU SELL YOUR HOME

Before you list your home for sale, you must be aware of all its potential problems. Major and minor issues inevitably crop up on inspection reports, and fixing the big ones (and some of the small ones) will help you get your money's worth on a home.

Home condition is the new location when it comes to salability—especially in colder markets. Homes in better condition close at or above their list price 20% faster than comparable homes in worse condition.

The cost of upgrades and remodeling has more than doubled in the past five years, which explains why most buyers are reluctant to pay for them. Still, agents say it's important to fix what you can before selling to get top dollar.

Buyers start to mentally chip away at your sale price, the more defects they see in a home. Before you list, make sure you fix anything that will be noticeable to potential purchasers.

Why Fixing Major Problems Matters

When assessing your home or conducting a walkthrough with a real estate agent, be vigilant for significant problems that may require your attention. It might be advantageous to obtain a pre-inspection report. This report provides a comprehensive view of both major and minor repairs your home might need. A pre-inspection report serves as an early warning system, revealing potential issues that you might not uncover until a buyer raises them during negotiations.

You can spend a few hundred dollars now and see the items that need to be addressed or wait to see the buyer's inspection report later and spend thousands because they now have a punch list of items in disrepair and demand a reduced price or a lengthy list of itemized repairs. Fixing major problems up front is often the wise financial choice.

If a homeowner waits and problems show up on the inspection, the buyer dictates any sort of deduction or credit at closing. Usually those numbers are higher than if the seller addressed them prior to listing.

What Are Major Problems?

So, what exactly constitutes a major problem? Any concern tied to health or safety falls squarely into this category. The health and safety issues such as roof repairs, water leaks, HVAC

cleaning and maintenance can't be ignored; these are serious and costly items to replace and definitely worth addressing before listing.

Plus, those repairs can boost your home's value. Immediately, the seller can market all of these new improvements, giving the house additional value. Appraisers take this information into account as well.

Of course, if you want to skip the hassle of fixing these things before selling, keep in mind you can always list your property for sale as-is.

In the current market, you don't have to fix anything. Disclose it, state that seller will not address, and we have cash buyers that will still overpay.

What's Considered a Minor Problem?

While major issues are usually related to health and safety, minor problems are often cosmetic in nature. Just because a problem is considered minor, that doesn't mean you should ignore it. Addressing smaller issues can be super helpful when listing your home.

In general, people are averse to doing home renovation work and prefer turnkey properties. When you address the minor things, the buyer can look at the property as a blank canvas, whereas if you don't, it may present in disarray or as if it has not been properly taken care of.

In addition to creating the image of a blank canvas, fixing the smaller projects is easier on your wallet. Addressing minor items is a way to create a good impression, without spending much money.

9 Things You Should Fix Before Listing

Getting your money's worth on a home sale is best achieved by proactively addressing the major issues. Here are some problems that real estate experts agree you absolutely should repair before listing your home.

1. Water Damage and Mold

Water damage and any resulting signs of water damage, including mold, are a must-fix when listing a home. Homeowners should absolutely fix any remnants of water damage in their home—even if it is just a cosmetic stain on the paint from a previous leak that has been repaired.

Not only is water damage a significant problem for a home, but it can also trigger a series of doubts for potential buyers about the property's overall condition.

Signs of water damage open up a can of worms for a buyer. As soon as buyers see evidence of water damage, they start to worry about what else is not working, whether it was ever properly repaired, whether there is mold and mildew inside the walls, and why the homeowner couldn't be bothered to fix something so important.

2. Faulty Smoke Detectors

The health and safety of all occupants is paramount whether you're selling or buying, and making sure smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and radon systems are working is crucial.

Always test smoke detectors and install them according to local code. Carbon monoxide detectors are encouraged but may not be required.

3. Busted Plumbing

Plumbing is an essential component of a safe home, and ensuring that everything from your toilet to your sink and septic tank works is essential for potential buyers.

Leaks should be fixed as soon as possible. Left unchecked, they will normally cause more damage or cost you more in your water bills.

A licensed plumber should make any plumbing repairs.

4. Malfunctioning HVAC Systems

You can't live safely in a home without heat or cool air. Having an HVAC system that's in working order is a must when you sell.

When your HVAC works efficiently, heat and cool air are distributed throughout the home with good circulation. Common system breakdowns are a result of dirty HVAC filters, thermostat settings, a pilot light being out, or a faulty thermocouple.

Preventative maintenance is key to avoiding major repairs. Changing your HVAC filter once every 30 to 90 days is ideal. You can also schedule a biannual tune-up to ensure you're never without heat.

5. Structural Issues

Any essential repair that implies a structural issue and compromises the integrity of the structure could deter potential buyers.

Structural issues include leaning walls, sagging roofs, and cracks in the walls, ceilings, and fireplaces.

Structural and foundational issues are a tough sell because they imply other issues could be behind the walls.

6. Foundation Problems

The seriousness of a foundation problem is self-evident in the word itself: A solid foundation is vital for a good home.

The ground around your home may shift, causing changes to how the home rests on the foundation.

Before listing, check for cracks that are larger than 1/8-inch in width—the thickness of two pennies—or are actively getting bigger.

To help identify movement, you can monitor a crack over time by placing a piece of masking tape over it and seeing if it shifts. Consult a foundation expert when serious damage is identified.

Foundation problems spell danger on an inspection report, so addressing them before you sell will ensure a clean bill of health from your buyer's inspector.

7. Roof Damage

A bad roof can lead to major problems for your entire home. If you can spot these problems before selling, it's wise to address them.

A poorly maintained roof can lead to deterioration, damaged shingles, and other issues, such as moss buildup, making it easier for water to seep into ceilings. A slow roof leak can turn into a huge backlog of moisture in your ceiling or attic. This can eventually proliferate into mold that grows on walls and framing, leading to poor air quality in the home and damage to your home's structural framing.

To spot a damaged roof, look for missing, worn, or damaged shingles while inspecting the roof from the ground. Klosterman suggests trimming trees that are hanging over gutters or rooflines to prevent further damage.

8. Broken Light Fixtures

Light fixtures are easy fixes that go a long way when it comes to staging your home and selling it.

Make sure that all your lightbulbs are working; this not only helps from a staging perspective by keeping rooms as bright as possible, but it also allays any fears buyers have of anything possibly wrong with the electrics.

You should also address other, more serious lighting issues that have major implications on safety and meeting code.

9. Broken Appliances

Like signs of water damage, nonworking appliances could make a buyer wonder whether other systems in the home have been neglected. If you have a broken washing machine or oven, some agents say it gives a buyer pause that your home's appliances aren't working. This fix is relatively affordable.

If a fridge, range, or other kitchen appliance is on the fritz, replacement may not be necessary. Much of the decision on whether to replace is contingent on the pricing of the home and its closest comparables. In some cases, a buyer may prefer to pick out a replacement. An allowance or price reduction could be an attractive approach to broken appliances.

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