

# How to Add Value to Your Home Before Selling



When it comes to selling your home, setting the right price from the start is crucial. Homes listed too high tend to sit on the market, lose momentum, and attract fewer buyers over time. The longer a property remains unsold, the more buyers assume something must be wrong with it — which often leads to “cheeky offers” well below market value or forced price drops later.

It’s important to remember: **the price a home is listed at is not the price it sells for**. The market — and ultimately the buyer — determines the true value.

While factors such as location, size, condition, and market trends play a major role, many sellers misunderstand what truly adds value. Below are the most common misconceptions and the practical ways you can make your property stand out among competing listings.

## Misconceptions About Home Value

### Personal preferences

Your personal taste doesn’t always translate into market value. Bold colours, unusual finishes, or highly customised interiors may not appeal to the average buyer. When improving your home, aim for timeless and universally appealing styles.

### What you paid for your home

Your purchase price doesn’t define its current value. The property market changes constantly with supply, demand, and local trends. A buyer’s willingness to pay today is based on *current conditions*, not what you once spent.

### **Renovation costs vs. actual value**

Not all upgrades deliver a return. Pools, luxury fittings, or extravagant landscaping can improve your lifestyle, but they don't always increase the resale price proportionally. Improvements should be planned with potential buyers in mind, not just personal enjoyment.

### **Neighbourhood upgrades**

A new café, restaurant, or school nearby may enhance area appeal, but it won't always add measurable value to your individual property. However, factors such as good security and community upkeep generally have a positive effect.

### **Neighbour's asking price**

Your neighbour's listing price may inspire confidence — but it's not proof of market value. What matters is *what actually sells*, not what's advertised. The asking price reflects ambition; the selling price reflects reality.

### **Rebuild cost**

Your home's insured rebuild cost excludes land value and therefore isn't equal to market value. Buyers purchase the full property, not just the structure.

### **Potential future improvements**

Simply having "potential" to extend, rezone, or add a second dwelling doesn't justify a higher asking price. Only approved plans or completed work translate into measurable value.

## **Why Some Improvements Make a Bigger Difference**

Often, improvements aren't made to *raise* the sale price — they're made to *beat other homes* for sale in the same price bracket. A better-presented home attracts more attention online and in person, draws a stronger emotional appeal, and reduces the risk of having to cut the price or accept low offers.

Here are cost-effective upgrades that can help your home outshine the competition:

#### **1. Clean, declutter, and stage for impact**

A tidy, well-presented home looks bigger and more inviting. Remove clutter, personal photos, and excess furniture to create open, bright spaces that allow buyers to imagine themselves living there.

#### **2. Fresh, neutral paint**

A simple coat of paint is one of the most affordable ways to transform your home. Stick to neutral tones that appeal to most buyers and complement natural light.

#### **3. Improve curb appeal**

Buyers often decide in the first few seconds. Repaint the front door, replace house numbers, clean pathways, trim hedges, and ensure the entrance feels welcoming and well-maintained.

#### 4. Modernise floors and finishes

Outdated carpets or tiles can make a home feel tired. Affordable vinyl or laminate flooring, updated handles, and modern tapware can make a major difference without breaking the bank.

#### 5. Kitchen and bathroom refreshes

If a full renovation isn't in budget, focus on visible surfaces — repaint cupboards, replace handles, add a new backsplash or modern mirrors. Even small touches can modernise these key spaces.

#### 6. Lighting and window coverings

Good lighting transforms the atmosphere. Replace dated fittings with energy-efficient modern styles. Update curtains or blinds to lighter, cleaner designs that maximise light.

#### 7. Outdoor entertainment areas

Patios and decks are major lifestyle features. Consider enclosing a patio, adding a built-in braai, or using sliding/stacking doors to open onto the garden. Buyers value versatile outdoor living spaces.

#### 8. Garden and exterior upkeep

Keep gardens neat and simple. Add potted plants, repaint fences, or pressure-clean paved areas. A tidy, low-maintenance garden suggests an easy-to-care-for home.

#### 9. Energy efficiency and maintenance

Well-maintained homes with sound plumbing, good insulation, and no visible defects build buyer confidence. Ensure everything functions properly before showings.

#### 10. Avoid over-personalising

Upgrades should appeal to the *broadest audience*. Focus on features that add convenience and comfort rather than highly specific luxury touches.

## Final Thoughts

Improvements don't always add large amounts to your sale price — but they can help you *win the buyer* before your competitors do. The goal is to create a property that stands out for the right reasons, reduces time on the market, and avoids price cuts later.

By understanding what really drives buyer decisions — presentation, condition, and accurate pricing — you put yourself in the strongest position to achieve a successful sale at fair market value.

At the end of the day, **buyers decide what a home is worth**, and **sellers decide whether that's enough**.

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