How to increase (and decrease) your home’s value.

Selling your home within the next year? Find out what you can do to help increase its value… and what could actually decrease it.

How to increase your home’s value:

1. **Get an inspection.** A home inspection is a great way to catch small issues with moisture, termites, etc. before they become big, expensive issues. So first up… get the inspection, then solve the problems.
2. **Make your home more energy efficient.** Save money now and increase your home’s value by upgrading things like insulation and windows. Big investments like solar water heating are great if you can swing it, but don’t underestimate the impact of simple tweaks like low-flow showerheads as well.
3. **Plant shade trees.** Shade trees increase energy efficiency and add curb appeal. Just be sure they are far enough from the house to protect the home from branches and roots. Choose trees that require minimal clean-up as they shed leaves and blossoms.
4. **Install a water filtration system.** Permanent water purifiers or water softeners (where needed) are very attractive to home buyers.
5. **Add outdoor lighting.** Promote both ambience and safety.
6. **Keep up with regular maintenance and repairs.** Don’t wait until the last minute to repair roof shingles, tile, bricks – whatever has come loose or started to sag. And hold on to routine maintenance receipts like termite inspections and HVAC maintenance to prove upkeep over time.
7. **Make simple updates.** A fresh coat of paint on walls and cabinets can make a room look 10 years younger. New carpet (or better yet, laminate or hardwood) can also take years off your home’s appearance.

How to decrease your home's value:

1. **Fail to remove old buildings and equipment on the property.** No one wants to see dilapidated structures behind your house or old lawn equipment under the deck.
2. **Fail to properly safeguard an "attractive nuisance."** Pools and outdoor fire pits should meet or exceed all state and homeowner association safety standards.
3. **Leave ponds and fountains in a state of disrepair.** Custom landscaping, such as water features, can add value to your home, but left in disrepair or without proper maintenance, these features will detract from your home's value.
4. **Fail to keep permanent appliances in working order.** Built-in dishwashers, ranges, stoves, microwaves and refrigerators need to be functioning and clean.
5. **Fail to show proper care for wood-burning fireplaces and stoves.** Flues and chimneys should be clean and functional – free from soot, creosote, debris and wildlife. Make sure to have a professional inspection and cleaning before your house goes on the market.
6. **Avoiding yardwork in any season.** Seasonal yardwork is important to maintaining curb appeal year-round. From mowing and trimming in the summer to aerating and seeding in the fall, a healthy yard is part of a buyable home. Appropriately pruning trees and shrubs and planting seasonal flowers can attract buyers (and keep the neighbors happy).
7. **Storing too much "stuff" and lack of organization.** Buyers want to see open space and lots of storage. Taking a weekend (or six) to purge and organize will make your house seem more spacious and less cluttered.

For more information, talk to a realtor about what features are most attractive to buyers in your market, then decide what can be done within your time frame and budget.

Then, when you do move, make sure your insurance moves with you. Talk to an agent about updating your policies.