

CONSISTENT HOME MAINTENANCE PAVES THE WAY TO UPGRADES

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The purchase of a home will likely be one of the largest investments made in your lifetime. Although an integral part of the “American dream,” anyone who owns a home knows that it’s not all white picket fences and cozy nights by the fire. Home ownership requires regular maintenance to protect a home’s physical integrity and financial value. Through modest investments and strategic planning, one can save time and money in the long run. Further, instead of spending money to repair or replace, one can invest in improvements and additions to add value to their largest, most important asset.

Deferred maintenance will almost always cost more in the end. The following tips are helpful for homeowners to maintain the value of their home and protect it from the elements:

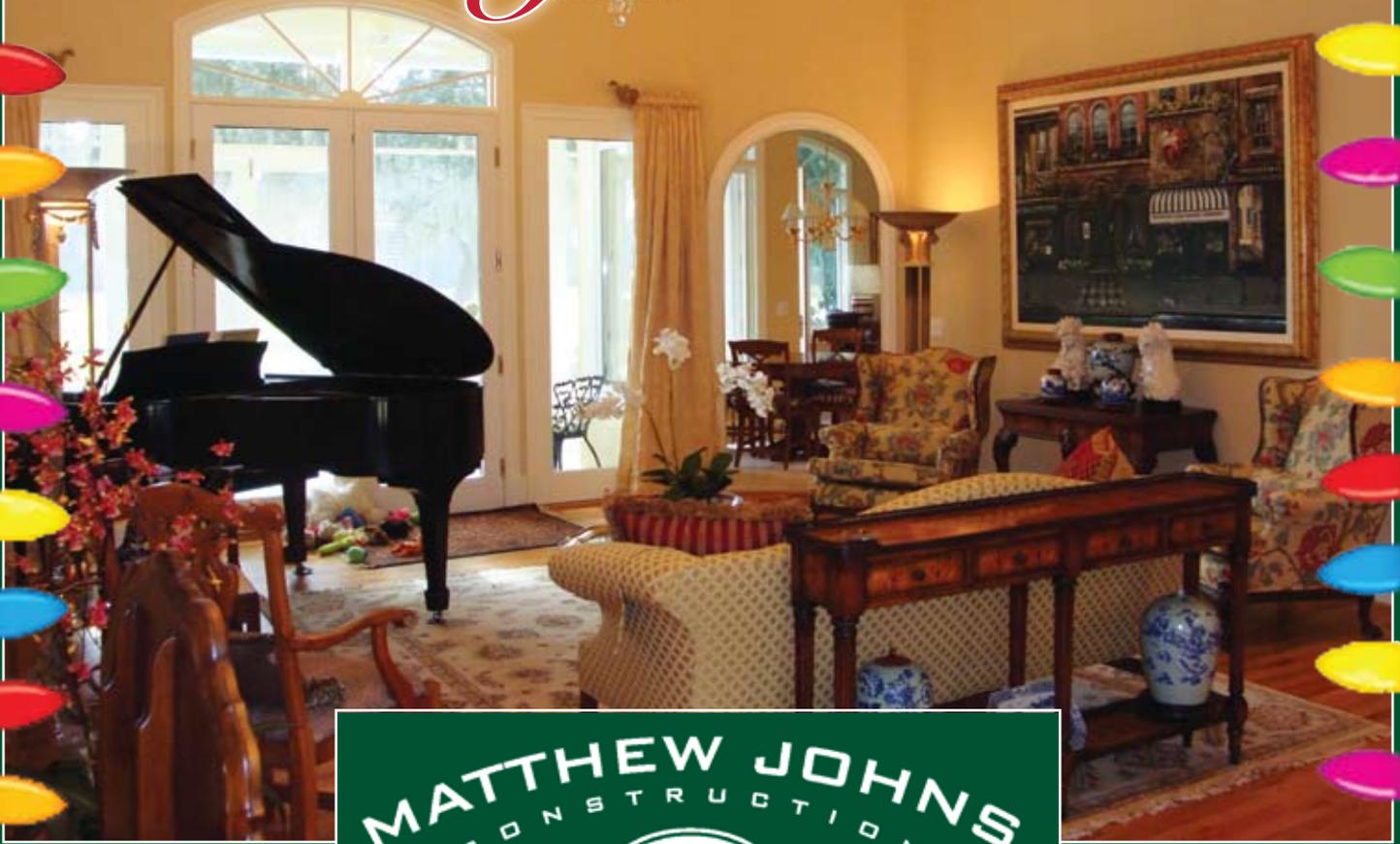
- Clean your roof and gutters regularly. Piles of pinestraw and leaves on a roof are not only unsightly, they can also cause leaks. Leaves pile up and prevent the free flow of water causing wood frames and sheathing to rot, weakening your roof. Don’t forget to clean your gutters as well to keep your roof in good condition.
- Pressure wash your home at least once per year. Savannah’s hot and humid climate is the prime environment for mold and mildew growth. If not cleaned off regularly, mildew will actually wear away at exterior paint, resulting in the need for a new paint

job altogether. If you need to re-paint, use a high-quality exterior paint and consider using a mildewcide product to inhibit mildew growth.

- Reseal your stained wood front entry once per year. No one can escape the heat of Savannah but another serious factor is direct sun exposure. Your wood front entry takes a beating from the sun each day and if not protected, it will crack and split. Seal your front entry each year to prevent having to replace it altogether.
- Replace your HVAC filters on a regular basis. To prolong the life of your A/C unit, you should change disposable filters regularly. Changing your filter each month will ensure your A/C unit is working at its peak performance.
- Keep shrubs and tree limbs trimmed away from your home. Plants that grow and touch the home promote irreversible wood rot. Similarly, limbs that fall on the roof can cause roof leaks and rotting.
- Caulk all penetrations. Properly caulking all penetrations will not only help with energy bills, it will also help protect your home from water intrusion. Caulk around lights, spigots and receptacles as well as doors and windows.

Although these tips may add more to your honey-do list,

Merry Christmas



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they will surely prevent large, unnecessary costs in the future. For more information, check out the Home Maintenance Checklist at www.bobvila.com or for general maintenance tips, www.themoneytip.com. If you feel like you can't keep up with it all, consider using a home maintenance schedule online. There are numerous free downloads that organize home maintenance tasks throughout the year on easy-to-use spreadsheets.

If you make it a habit to maintain your home, you will be more financially able to invest in value-adding improvements. The following ideas will update your home and add value but do not require a complete overhaul:

- **Kitchen Facelift:** If custom cabinets are not in the budget, consider modifying your existing cabinets. Assuming the cabinets are of good quality and you have an efficient layout, consider painting and glazing them. Upgrading to granite countertops and stainless steel appliances will further the update as well. Adding a backsplash and changing the cabinet hardware are simple and fairly inexpensive finishing touches. For updates in the kitchen as well as the rest of your home, it's good to consider smoothing the ceilings, changing out florescent lights to recess cans and swapping old receptacles and outlets for new devices.

- **Bathroom Facelift:** Again, although custom cabinets will definitely add value, modifying your existing cabinets can still update your space. Assuming the cabinets are of good quality and you have a sensible layout, think about raising the height of your existing bath cabinets to kitchen counter height for an updated appeal. Again, consider painting and glazing the cabinets and changing out the cabinet hardware. Replace bathroom fixtures and faucets with modernized materials and finishes. If natural stone is too expensive, there are numerous high-quality, stone-looking porcelain tiles that will finish a bathroom nicely. Finishing touches for a bathroom are a frameless shower door and adding trim to your mirror(s).

- **Stucco Over the Old Siding:** Old wood siding can really date your home. No matter how updated and upgraded inside, it shows its age outside. Stucco can be applied right over your wood siding. Of course it's best to consider the other homes on your street and your current and potential price point to determine if it's appropriate for your particular situation.

Updating existing rooms in your home will certainly add value and aesthetic appeal. Repurposing space and finishing square footage, however, will undoubtedly maximize your



return. The following remodels and additions are more of a financial and time investment but they will add the most value to your home. Consider these ideas to add or repurpose existing square footage in your home:

- **Create a Screened Porch:** If you already have a covered porch or patio, consider screening it in. When you have existing roofing, there is minimal work to be done to finish the outdoor space into enjoyable, bug-free, usable space.

- **Enclose Your Current Screened Porch:** Although screened porches add value, some of us can't quite stand the Savannah heat and decide to finish the space. Replacing screens with windows, heating

and cooling the space and completing the room with interior finishes creates additional living space. Additional support may also be necessary.

- **Finish the Bonus Room:** Think about finishing your bonus room to create an office, art studio, media room or guest suite. By either working with the existing roof line or adding dormers and windows, you are able to create a useful space with minimal work to be done.

- **Repurpose the Attic into a Second Story:** Many full-size homes have large attics with more storage than anyone can fill. By repurposing some of that space, one could easily create as little as one extra room or as much as an entire floor to their home. It's essential to hire a designer/architect to draw detailed plans and an experienced, insured and licensed general contractor for this type of large-scale, complicated job. Load-bearing beams, roofing issues, HVAC ductwork, trusses and other structural issues are best handled by professionals. Another important factor in this process is to consider neighborhood ordinances and architectural committees when planning to finish or add space to your home.

By keeping up with regular maintenance around your home, you are able to invest in improvements, updates and additions rather than fixing what should already be in working order. Updating older features, adding new space, and repurposing existing space will not only add value to your home's bottom line but also it will make your home a more enjoyable place to live.

For more information, please call Matthew or Christy Johns of Matthew Johns Construction at 912.356.0477.