

A modern interior scene featuring a wooden cabinet, a coffee table, and a framed landscape painting. The background is a concrete wall. The cabinet is made of light-colored wood with a central open shelf. On top of the cabinet is a framed landscape painting of a tree and a body of water. To the right of the cabinet is a small black sculpture and a wooden cup. In front of the cabinet is a low wooden coffee table with a small stack of books and a cup on it. The lighting is warm and focused on the furniture.

RENOVATIONS THAT PAY OFF

Where to Spend (and Save)
Before Selling

Renovations are a big decision.

Many homeowners overspend in the wrong areas or skip cost-effective updates

When preparing to sell your home, it's natural to wonder which renovations will increase your property's value and which ones won't deliver much return. While some updates can dramatically boost buyer interest and sale price, others may cost thousands but add very little to your bottom line.

The key is knowing where to invest wisely and where to hold back.



This guide highlights which renovations in Nova Scotia typically provide the best return on investment (ROI), and which projects are best kept simple or skipped altogether.

A minimalist interior scene with a dark bowl on a pedestal, cherry branches, and a vase.

“The best renovation isn’t the most expensive one — it’s the one buyers notice and value.”

KITCHENS

THE HEART OF THE HOME

For many buyers, the kitchen is a make-or-break feature.



SMART UPGRADES

Painting cabinets, replacing hardware, updating light fixtures, or adding a modern backsplash can make an older kitchen feel fresh and current. Swapping outdated laminate counters for cost-effective options like butcher block or mid-range quartz can add instant appeal.



WHAT TO AVOID

Overly customized, high-end renovations (like commercial-grade appliances or luxury finishes) rarely recoup their cost in resale. Stick with updates that appeal to a broad audience.



PRO TIP

Even small touches — like replacing old faucets with sleek, modern fixtures — go a long way

A full-scale remodel can easily run tens of thousands of dollars, but you don't always need to go that far to impress.

BATHROOMS

SMALL CHANGES, BIG IMPACT

Bathrooms are another top priority for buyers. Outdated fixtures or worn finishes can turn buyers away. but



SMART UPGRADES

New vanities, modern lighting, updated faucets, and fresh caulking around tubs and showers. Swapping in a stylish mirror and fresh towels can also make the room feel like new.



WHAT TO AVOID

Luxury whirlpool tubs or overly expensive tile choices. Buyers appreciate clean and modern, not extravagant.



PRO TIP

Paint and lighting are your best friends in a bathroom refresh — they can completely transform the look without breaking the bank.

You don't need a full renovation to see results.

FLOORING

A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT

Few things date a home more quickly than old carpet or worn-out flooring.



SMART UPGRADES

Refinish existing hardwood if possible. For replacements, choose durable, neutral options like luxury vinyl plank (LVP) or laminate that mimic the look of hardwood but at a lower cost.



WHAT TO AVOID

High-end exotic hardwoods or custom inlays. While beautiful, they won't significantly increase resale value compared to more budget-friendly options.



PRO TIP

Consistency is key. If your home has multiple types of flooring, replacing them with one uniform style creates a cohesive, more spacious look.

Replacing or refinishing floors can deliver excellent ROI.

PAINT

THE HIGHEST ROI UPGRADE

A fresh coat of paint is one of the simplest, most cost-effective renovations you can make.



SMART UPGRADES

Stick to light, neutral colours like soft greys, off-whites, and warm beige tones. These shades appeal to the widest range of buyers and make rooms feel brighter and larger.



WHAT TO AVOID

Bold colours or heavily personalized palettes. While you may love a deep red dining room, buyers often see it as “something to fix.”



PRO TIP

Don't forget baseboards, trim, and doors — fresh paint there can make an older home feel instantly newer.

If you do only one thing - paint!

OTHER UPDATES

THAT MATTER

Not every renovation involves major construction. Small, inexpensive updates throughout the home can also add perceived value:

- Replace outdated light fixtures with modern, energy-efficient ones.
- Update old door handles and cabinet hardware.
- Improve curb appeal with landscaping, a new mailbox, or a freshly painted front door.

These small touches suggest to buyers that the home has been well-maintained.

RENOVATIONS

THAT RARELY PAY OFF

Some projects are tempting, but often don't add enough value to justify the cost:

- Swimming pools or hot tubs
- Highly customized built-ins (like wine cellars or elaborate media rooms)
- Overly high-end renovations compared to the rest of the neighbourhood
- Adding a sunroom or large addition, unless square footage is a major selling factor in your area



ROI ON RENOVATIONS

Which renovations add the most value before
selling?

UNDERSTANDING

ROI IN RENOVATIONS

ROI, or Return on Investment, measures how much of the money you spend on a renovation is likely to be recovered in your home's resale value. For example, if you spend \$5,000 updating a bathroom and it increases your home's selling price by \$4,000, your ROI is 80%. In real estate, very few renovations return 100% of their cost, but the right updates can make your home sell faster, stand out from the competition, and net you more overall.

The ROI percentages in this guide are based on a blend of national and regional research, including the Appraisal Institute of Canada's "Renovation Value" survey, the Remodeling Magazine Cost vs. Value Report, and REALTOR® insights from the Halifax–Dartmouth market. We've adjusted the ranges to reflect local buyer preferences and resale realities here in Nova Scotia — where practical updates like paint, flooring, kitchens, and bathrooms tend to deliver the strongest returns, while luxury additions or highly customized features often bring less value back at sale time.



KITCHENS (MINOR VS. MAJOR REMODELS)

- Minor Remodel (paint cabinets, replace counters, hardware, lighting):
- ROI: 75–100%
- Major Remodel (full gut with new cabinetry, appliances, luxury finishes):
- ROI: 50–65%
- 🖱️ Tip: In Halifax, fresh and functional kitchens win over luxury customization.



BATHROOMS

- Minor Updates (vanity, fixtures, lighting, fresh caulk/paint):
- ROI: 70–90%
- Full Remodel (new tub/shower, tile, high-end finishes):
- ROI: 55–65%
- 🖱️ Simple, modern updates typically bring the highest value-to-cost ratio.

FLOORING



- Refinishing Hardwood: ROI: 80–100%
- Replacing with LVP/Laminate: ROI: 65–80%
- High-End Exotic Hardwoods: ROI: 50–60%
- 🖱️ Buyers in HRM value durability and neutral finishes — not luxury exotic woods.

PAINT (INTERIOR & EXTERIOR)



- Interior Paint (neutrals): ROI: 100–120%
- Exterior Paint / Front Door Refresh: ROI: 90–100%
- 🖱️ Paint consistently provides the best bang-for-your-buck improvement.

OTHER SMALL UPDATES



- Lighting Fixtures: ROI: 70–80%
- Hardware (door handles, cabinet pulls): ROI: 60–75%
- Curb Appeal (landscaping, new mailbox, front door): ROI: 80–100%
- 🖱️ First impressions matter — curb appeal often determines whether buyers even walk inside

RENOVATIONS THAT RARELY PAY OFF



- Pools/Hot Tubs: ROI: 25–35%
- Highly Customized Built-Ins: ROI: 30–50%
- Sunrooms / Large Additions: ROI: 40–55% (unless square footage is critical in that neighbourhood)
- 🖱️ These are more lifestyle choices than resale drivers.

TAKEAWAY

FOR SELLERS

Best ROI:

Paint, minor kitchen & bath updates, flooring refinishing, curb appeal.

Medium ROI:

Full bathroom or kitchen remodels if modest in scope.

Low ROI:

Luxury or highly personalized renovations.

FINAL WORD

When preparing your home for sale, focus on updates that make it look clean, modern, and move-in ready.

Kitchens, bathrooms, flooring, and fresh paint consistently provide the best return on investment.

Small, strategic updates often matter more than expensive overhauls.

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