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### The Different Ways To Repair A Driveway

Asphalt driveways do not last forever. Over time, weather and general usage can degrade the driveway surface, resulting in cracks, pitting and more. Ultraviolet rays, salt and automotive fluids also can affect the appearance and functionality of a driveway. An unsightly driveway can adversely affect curb appeal and resale potential. Homeowners have to consider various factors when it comes to repairing driveways. They may have the option of getting the driveway resurfaced, resealed or repaved, and each project is unique.

**RESURFACING**  
According to the home improvement price comparison site Kompare It, resurfacing is simpler and faster than installing a new asphalt driveway. With resurfacing, any cracks are filled in to create an even base. Then a new layer of asphalt is applied over the existing one. That new layer can range in thickness from 1.5 to 3 inches. A heavy rolling machine will then smooth and flatten the layers together. If the driveway has minor pitting or cracking, then resurfacing can be a cost-effective strategy, as it may be a \$3,000 to \$6,000 job as opposed to \$5,000 to \$10,000 with repaving.

**RESEALING**  
Resealing a driveway, also

called sealcoating, is another repair strategy. HGTV says resealing can be a do-it-yourself project. Resealing helps the driveway last longer. The driveway needs to be clean and dry, with holes and cracks filled prior to sealcoating. Start at the far edge of the driveway and seal that area by "cutting-in" by hand for a neat edge. Afterward the rest of the driveway can be sealed using a squeegee or broom. This project can be completed within two or three days if no precipitation is forecast.

**REPAVING**  
A project best left to professionals, repaving typically involves the removal of an existing driveway and the installation of a new one. The sub-grade layer is essential in the process for a smooth look. Contractors also will assess soil and grading when doing work. The construction blog Main Infrastructure says the new asphalt driveway can vary in thickness between two and six inches, depending on budget and need. The contractor also can advise if full-depth asphalt application or an aggregate base is practical. Assessing the condition of driveway can give homeowners a better idea about which type of repair project best suits their property.



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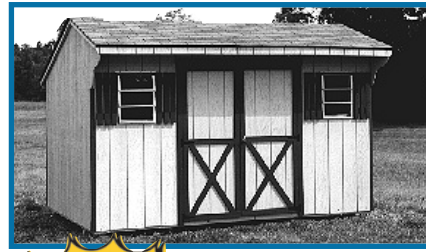
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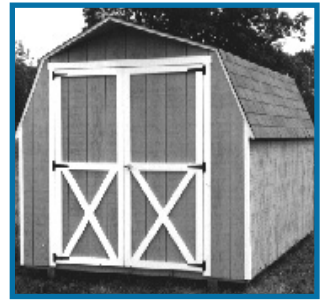


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### Pros And Cons To Open-Concept Homes

Open-concept homes have become increasingly popular in recent years. An open-concept home is one in which the rooms flow into one another with limited obstruction from walls or other barriers. According to the National Association of Home Builders, 84 percent of new single-family homes have fully or partially open layouts.

While they may seem like a new trend, open floor plans are anything but. Early American homes featured open, often one- or two-room units built around the central kitchen/hearth. This maximized warmth and functionality. Homes evolved as incomes grew, and soon homes had several smaller rooms with specialized functions.

What's old has become new again. However, before diving head first into a new home purchase or a big renovation to realize an open-concept dream, consider the pros and cons of



this type of setup to determine if it's really right for you.

#### ADVANTAGES OF OPEN FLOOR PLANS

Open floor plans facilitate the flow of natural light throughout a space and can promote air

flow, helping to reduce warm or cool pockets of air in otherwise closed-off rooms.

Open homes make socializing easier, even when people are doing different things. While someone is cooking dinner in the kitchen, he or she can still interact with someone else playing video games in the family room or paying bills in the home office. Entertaining also is easier, as mingling with guests is much more convenient when walls are not getting in the way.

A smaller home can feel much larger if it employs an open concept. The square footage is not divided into smaller quarters, which sometimes are rooms (such as formal dining rooms) that are only used a few times per year. This eliminates under-used spaces and opens up sight lines in the layout.

The value of real estate has risen dramatically since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and prospective buyers may prefer an open-concept plan because it can help them minimize building costs.

#### DISADVANTAGES OF OPEN FLOOR PLANS

Open layouts are not for everyone. The same sense of space that occurs when walls are taken down may make rooms feel cavernous and less cozy, particularly in homes with ample square footage. In addition, privacy can be hard to come by when all rooms feed into one another.

When the kitchen is not separate from the family room space, that makes it easy for noise to compromise the area's comfort levels. There is no hiding from noise in an open floor plan, as sounds from voices, television shows and appliances tend to echo and blend together. And if the home is a single-story layout, those noises from the main living areas also may carry to adjacent bedrooms. Smoke and smells are another

thing to consider. When something on the stove spills over, a small range hood will not be practical for clearing smoke from a large space. Though the aroma of freshly cooked food is enticing, it can make it hard for cooks to keep guests out of the kitchen.

Open-concept homes are popular, but homeowners should weigh the pluses and minuses to see if this trend is truly right for them.

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### Outdoor Improvements That Boost Home Value



Whether home improvement projects are design to improve the interior or exterior of a house, focusing on renovations that make the most financial sense can benefit homeowners in the long run. The right renovations can be assets if and when homeowners decide to sell their homes.

So how does one get started? First and foremost, speak to a local real estate agent who is knowledgeable about trends in the community. While a swimming pool may be something coveted in one area, it may impede sales in another. It also helps to study generalized trends and data from various home improvement industry analysts to guide upcoming projects.

The following outdoor projects are just a few renovations that tend to add value.

- FIRE PIT: A fire pit is a great place to gather most months of the year. Bob Vila and CBS news report that a fire pit realizes a 78 percent return on investment, or ROI.
- OUTDOOR KITCHEN: Many buyers are looking to utilize their yards as an extension of interior living areas. Cooking, dining and even watching TV outdoors is increasingly popular. Outdoor living areas can be custom designed and built. In

addition, prefabricated modular units that require a much smaller commitment of time and money are available.

- PATIO: Homeowners who do not already have a patio will find that adding one can increase a home's value. Patios help a home look neat, add useable space and may help a home to sell quickly. The experts at Space Wise, a division of Extra Space Storage, say that refinishing, repairing and building a new patio offers strong ROI.
- DECK: Deck can be as valuable as patios. A deck is another outdoor space that can be used for entertaining, dining and more. Remodeling magazine's 2018 "Cost vs. Value" report indicates that an \$11,000 deck can add about \$9,000 in

resale value to the home, recouping around 82 percent of the project's costs.

- DOOR UPDATE: Improve curb appeal with a new, high-end front door and garage doors. If that's too expensive, a good cleaning and new coat of paint can make an old door look brand new. These easy fixes can improve a home's look instantly.
- NEW LANDSCAPING: The National Association of Realtors says an outdoor makeover that includes well-thought out landscaping can net 105 percent ROI. Installing a walkway, adding stone planters, mulching, and planting shrubs are ideas to consider. Many different outdoor projects can add value to a home.

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Signs A Roof Needs Repair Or Replacement

Many homeowners believe a roof is a once-in-a-lifetime investment. But roof damage can force homeowners to replace a roof regardless of how much time has lapsed since the roof was installed. The average life span of a roof depends on when the roof was installed and the materials it is made from. According to Central Homes Roofing, three-tab shingles may last between 10 and 15 years, architectural shingles can endure for 15 to 20 years, and tile may last between 35 and 50 years. RPS Metal Roofing indicates a metal roof may last as long as 70 years. However, climate and color of the roof also will affect its longevity. Homeowners would be wise to consider these factors when determining if a roof is in need of repairs or replacement.

- **ROOF AGE:** The age of the roof is a major factor in determining if it will need to be replaced or if repairs can be



made to isolated damage. Individuals who live in neighborhoods where neighbors are now replacing roofs will likely find it is time to consult a roofing company. Homeowners also can check to see if they have any receipts that indicate the

roof's installation date so they have an idea about its age.

- **GRAIN IN GUTTERS:** Roofing shingles are designed to overlap, and sealant keeps them steady. Friction, weather and atmospheric changes can impact sealant and cause degradation. Gutters with grainy material in them could indicate worn out sealant and shingles.
- **RIDGE DAMAGE:** Ridges are spots where two separate areas meet and often are important to the structural integrity of the roof. If the roof ridge is showing signs of wear, it could be time to repair or replace it.
- **CURLED SHINGLE EDGES:** If shingle tabs are curled or cupped, the shingles may need to be replaced. But if curling is extensive, a whole new roof may need to be installed.
- **BALD SPOTS OR LOST PORTIONS OF THE ROOF:** Missing granules and missing shingles are reasons to consult a pro for a roof evaluation.
- **LEAKS INDOORS:** Homeowners who find dark streaks or moisture in the attic may discover that water is penetrating the roof underlay. Water often comes in around chimney flashing. Other water signs are blistering and bubbling in walls.
- **INCOMING LIGHT:** Look up through the attic and see if any light is coming through the roof, which may indicate there are cracks or holes in the roof.
- **AESTHETICS:** If a homeowner doesn't like the look of the roof from a design standpoint, a replacement also may be warranted.

Roofs can last many years, but the presence of certain signs indicates replacement or repairs will be necessary.

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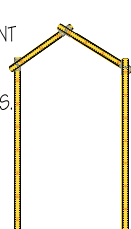


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**Signs Of Winter Lawn Damage**

Mother Nature can be harsh on a lawn, and it's up to homeowners to nurse their lawns back to health after they endure the elements. That's often the case when winter ends and homeowners uncover signs of damage to their lawns. Homeowners cannot begin to repair winter lawn damage until they learn to identify it, and the following are some telltale signs that winter took a harsh toll on a landscape.

- **WILTED GRASS:** Many things can cause grass to wilt over the course of winter, so homeowners may have to put on their sleuth's cap to determine why grass that was healthy as recently as late fall is now wilted as the spring bloom begins. Grass that's adjacent to walkways and driveways might have wilted due to the application of de-icing solutions. Such products can prevent the formation of ice on driveways and walkways. However, when they're tracked onto the grass by people or animals or blown there by winter winds, grass can wilt. A deep watering in spring can flush any lingering solution from the lawn. In future winters, homeowners can be as careful as possible when applying de-icing solutions, making a concerted effort to avoid spreading any onto the grass and limited applications to areas of the driveway and walkways that are not close to the grass.
- **BROWN PATCHES:** The National Association of Landscape Professionals notes that brown patches in a lawn often develop after heavy snowfall. Such patches tend to develop where large piles of shoveled snow were deposited, so homeowners can inspect alongside driveways and walkways. The NALP advises homeowners to rake away part of the brown patches first. If green tissue is emerging beneath, then the lawn will likely be fine in due time. However, if the area beneath is not green and surrounding areas are already turning green, homeowners may need to rake up dead tissue before applying topsoil to the affected spots. Once topsoil is spread, some grass seed can be spread and the grass should regain its green glory.
- **GRAY OR PINK GRASS:** Another indicator of winter lawn damage linked to snow is gray or pink grass. The NALP reports that this is a byproduct of snow mold caused by lingering snow. Action may be unnecessary, as the NALP notes these circular patterns often go away on their own. If not, raking the affected areas might be enough to get the lawn on the road to recovery. If the issue continues to linger after raking, a topsoil application and subsequent seeding may be necessary. These are three common signs of winter lawn damage in areas where snowfall is significant during the coldest months of the year. Homeowners concerned about their damaged lawns are urged to contact a local landscape professional to correct any issues that linger into spring.



Bathrooms can benefit from updates that improve their form and function. While styles and color patterns may inspire bathroom renovations, improvements to safety also should be considered. Bathrooms can be one of the most dangerous rooms in a house. Bath and shower areas account for about two-thirds of accidental injuries in these spaces. Many other injuries involve the toilet. In 2008, a thorough investigation of bathroom dangers conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that mishaps near the bathtub, shower, toilet, and sink caused an estimated 234,094 nonfatal injuries in the United States among people aged 15 years and older. Seniors are particularly vulnerable in the bathroom due to reduced mobility and flexibility, visual impairment and other factors. However, some key modifications can make bathrooms much safer for aging populations.

- **RAISED TOILET SEAT:** Install an ADA-compliant raised toilet seat. Standard toilet seats are roughly 15 inches high, but elevated seats can raise the bowl an additional two to four inches. Another option is to invest in risers that can be attached to an existing toilet.
- **GRAB BARS:** Seniors may use towel holders as grab bars,

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which don't have stability and can dislodge from the wall. Install secured side grip bars by the toilet and inside the shower to make maneuvering easier.

- **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Seniors may be vulnerable to hot water temperatures. Lower the water temperature setting on the hot water heater. StaySafe.org recommends 120 F.
- **FAUCETS:** Change faucet handles to paddle-style handles rather than knobs. Knobs can be challenging to grip for those with arthritis in their hands. Also, handles that are easier for seniors to use can reduce the risk of the elderly losing their balance as they attempt to gain leverage to turn the water on and off.
- **NONSLIP MATS:** Nonslip mats or tape strips can be used in showers and tub bottoms, as well as outside of the shower to reduce the risk of slips and falls. Rugs should have rubberized, slip-resistant backing.
- **ROUNDED CORNERS:** Choose counters and fixtures with rounded corners. Should a senior fall against something, the rounded corner may prevent serious injury.
- **SHOWER BENCHES AND TRANSFER SEATS:** Benches and transfer seats make it easier getting in and out of the shower. Also, sitting while showering reduces the risk of becoming light-headed or losing balance.

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### Planning Ahead Is Vital To A Successful Renovation

Remodeling projects are significant undertakings. Homeowners must consider a host of variables before any such project can begin. While planning ahead may take time, it is essential to ensuring successful completion of a renovation project. Consider these pre-renovation planning pointers to help any job go smoothly.

**DETERMINE YOUR MOTIVATION FOR RENOVATING**

Renovation projects often involve balancing needs and wants, and determining if a project is a necessity or a luxury can set the timeline and course of the project. Is the roof leaking? If so, immediate action is necessary. Could the kitchen be a bit more functional? If the kitchen is still manageable, a homeowner may be able to wait a little bit to get better prices on appliances or contracting services.

Separating needs from wants helps homeowners map out a viable timeline that maximizes productivity and affordability.

**GET PROFESSIONAL ADVICE**

Many homeowners are under the impression that doing the work themselves can save a considerable amount of money. This may be the case for homeowners with renovation experience. But by and large, professional contractors are an asset to any renovation. They can provide a realistic overview of the project, map out projected costs, point out areas that could be troublesome, and may have industry contacts that can keep supply costs low. Even if a homeowner will do a portion of the job, a contractor can do the bulk of the work and keep the project on budget.

**GET NECESSARY PERMITS**

Permits are designed to ensure the work is being done to code and in a safe manner. However, they are not without additional costs and processing time, and that can cause some homeowners to skip this step. According to the home information site The Spruce, building permits cost anywhere from \$400 to about \$2,200 for new home construction. Building permits for smaller projects can cost \$100 or less, and typically are based on a percentage of the anticipated cost of the project.

A permit may be issued the day the application is submitted,



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while other cities and towns may issue permits up to two or more weeks later. Factor permit fees and processing times into the renovation plan. If it comes to light a homeowner did work without a required permit, he or she may face penalties; may have to tear out work done to have it inspected

or redone; some may be unable to sell a home until permits have been obtained and work has been done to code. Homeowners insurance coverage also may be affected if homeowners do not obtain the proper permits. Other considerations when planning a renovation include

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writing out a strict budget, gathering inspiration, drawing up to-scale renovation plans, pouring over material reviews, and getting recommendations for reliable professionals to do the job. While not every obstacle can be avoided, planning is a good way to start successfully.

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### House Powerwashing Tips

Powerwashing, also known as pressure-washing, utilizes a high-velocity water spray to remove dirt and residue from the exterior surfaces of a home. It is frequently used on vinyl siding, concrete and sometimes wood decks to treat mildew and other growth that accumulates over time. Powerwashing can be a great way to remove grime without having to scrub by hand. But it requires a delicate touch to get it right. Sometimes it is best to leave the job to professionals. But homeowners willing to give it a go can try powerwashing themselves, as various stores rent power washers.

The home improvement website ImproveNet says that, until very recently, pressure washers were almost exclusively commercial machines sold to professionals or rented to do-it-yourselfers. Lately manufacturers have targeted homeowners looking to buy with lightweight options. For those who see powerwashing as a routine venture, purchasing a unit may be worth the investment. It is important to exercise caution when operating a powerwashing machine. The high-velocity spray can tear through skin. It is key to get a feel for the washer, and try less pressure first to get a handle on the magnitude of the tool. Don safety gear prior to using a pressure washer. Gloves, eye protection and ear protection can be handy. Most units will connect to a standard garden hose. Choose old clothing and expect to get wet. Never point a powerwasher hose at anyone and do not attempt to rinse feet or hands in the spray. The renovation resource The Family Handyman suggests starting with a wide-degree nozzle to test out the spray on the surface that needs to be cleaned. A 15- or 25-degree nozzle is usually the wand for general cleaning and paint stripping without damaging the surface of the home. Experiment with an optimal distance of the washer wand to get the desired cleaning effects without causing any damage. Work using a horizontal and slightly downward angle to avoid driving water up under the siding of a home. Avoid spraying any electric wires or components on the home. Also, try not to spray upward, and angle the spray away from doors, windows and vents.

Some washers have reservoirs that will hold a detergent solution. Choose the right detergent for the job. Keep in mind that cleansers containing bleach can damage surrounding plants, so they may need to be covered while the washing takes place. Avoid the use of ladders when operating a powerwasher. The push-back from the wand can cause falls. Instead, opt for an extension wand to address the upper reaches of a home. Powerwashing a home is an effective way to remove stubborn grime and refresh the look of a home's exterior.

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