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Maintaining the Value of Your Home

The great thing about a new house is that everything is, well, new. Nothing is scratched, stained, or worn out. It's wonderful: Everything works! That's one of the main attractions of buying a new home.

But, as any homeowner knows, the rigors of day-to-day living can cause that blissful new-home feeling to fade. It's an inevitable process, but one that can be stemmed or slowed with proper maintenance of key systems and finishes.

Once owners take possession of a new house after the closing, they become responsible for maintenance of the entire structure and all its systems. A professional builder will ease that transition with a reasonable warranty and an after-sale service package, but ultimately the baton is passed to the homeowners to protect their investment, enjoy the comforts, and maintain (or increase) the value of their new home.

The thought of staying on top of everything in a home can seem daunting, but really, it comes down to common sense, some diligence, and a short list of critical products and systems, including:

Heating and cooling. It's a simple thing everyone has heard before. Changing the furnace filter every three months goes a long way toward maintaining the proper operation of a home's entire air distribution system. A clean filter keeps dust, moisture, and other allergens out of the ductwork to help ensure fresh and healthy indoor air. Clean filters and ducts also put an easier load on the furnace, prolonging its life, and allow it to use less energy. Beyond that, homeowners should have the ducts and carpets professionally cleaned every 2-3 years.

Drainage. Rainwater and melting snow runoff, among other sources of water, must be directed away from the structure to maintain the structural integrity of the foundation. To maintain the drainage and watershed design of a house, gutters should be cleaned and repaired in the fall (once the leaves have all fallen) and in the early spring. Downspouts should have extensions and/or splash blocks to direct or disperse runoff away from the house, if they are not already installed. As new landscaping is added, the dirt against the house (called "backfill") must be checked again to be sure that it continues to slope away from the structure. Plantings should be set at least 18 inches away from the foundation, as well.

Roofing and siding. A new home's exterior finishes -- mainly it's roofing and siding materials -- are designed to last for at least 20 years and usually longer. That being said, any cracks, voids, or other damage to these finishes can lead to leaks and related moisture problems. Visually inspect the roof and sidewalls of the house at least annually for the first five years of ownership, and then semi-annually after that. And, of course, make any repairs immediately. There are other chores that, combined, further help to protect the value of a new home and, perhaps more important, maintain its comforts and conveniences. The basic maintenance tasks outlined above, however, are the key components in retaining the 'newness' of a house. Whether they continue to live in the house or whether they put it on the market, homeowners will get the best return on their investment if they have performed this work on a regular basis.

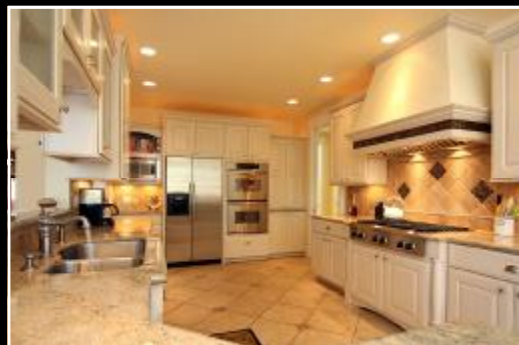


FOR SALE

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