

7 Proven Ways to Make your House Work for You

The Quick Guide To Getting The Most Out Of Your Home

Whether you have recently bought a home and it just doesn't fit your needs any more, have grown in your home over the years and are wondering whether you've outgrown it, or are dealing with unexpected challenges, or may be contemplating selling your home, this guide will help you ace the options and choices ahead.

Common Challenges for Homeowners

Some people move into their first home and then find health, life, finances, or property conditions change quickly. Others wake up to an empty nest decades later or perhaps have relatives move in: there are a variety of common challenges homeowners can face whatever their situation.

This includes:

- Deferred maintenance
- Unexpected appliance breakdowns
- Major plumbing leaks
- Fires
- Aging structural elements like roofs and foundations
- Pest infestations
- Weather related damage (snow storms, floods, etc.)
- Personal mobility challenges and health issues
- Changing household dynamics (adding or losing members)
- Major changes in finances (job loss, loss of a primary income earner)
- Rapidly rising housing and living costs

These things happen to all of us. The difference is in knowing how to prepare, handle them, and who can help.

Here are seven solutions for making it work no matter how small or large these issues become.

1. Managing Home Maintenance



There is a lot involved in even basic routine home maintenance.

This can include:

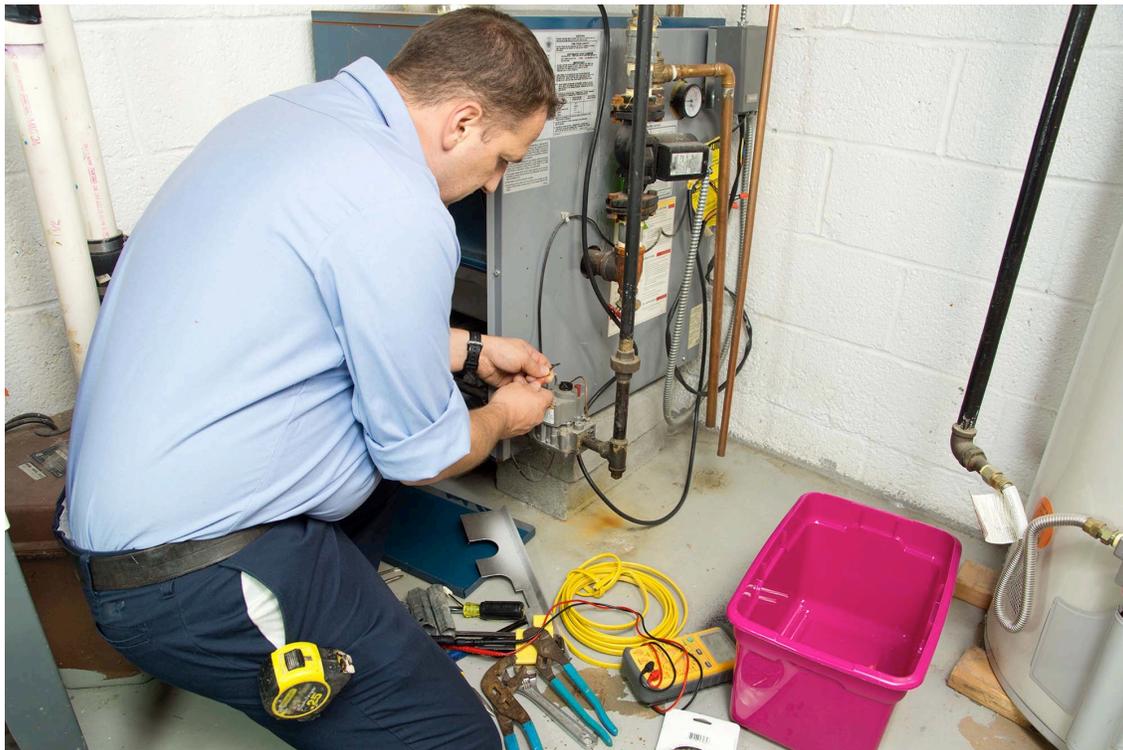
- Lawn care
- Cleaning and maintaining gutters
- Updating plumbing and electrical
- Maintaining major appliances (washer, dryer, dishwasher, pool pumps, etc.)
- Pressure washing siding and roofs
- Walkways and sidewalks
- Regular cleaning
- Irrigation
- Lighting

Staying ahead of maintenance can make a big difference. If neglected deferred maintenance can turn into huge structural problems and major repair bills. In some cases this can result in code violations, big fines that accrue interest daily, HOA penalties, liens and even preventing you from selling your home or refinancing to get the money you need to make improvements.

New technology has brought a lot of new solutions to help with maintenance. Smart home systems can help identify leaks before they become big issues. Smart irrigation can keep your yard at its finest, without waste. Getting home warranty plans in advance can help minimize the cost of maintaining appliances or having to replace them.

It is also wise to draw a line in the sand in advance. This makes it easier to be objective and make the best decision about when it is smarter and wiser financially to sell and move to a property with less maintenance, than just waiting and waiting and trying to hold on. This is especially true when a spouse is widowed, health challenges compound with age or a home is inherited. Know when to hold and when to move on to something which can offer a lot less stress and probably more surplus income as well.

2. Keeping Up with Repairs



Every part of a home wears out over time. Over the term of a 30 year home loan, virtually the entire home will need to be replaced. There may be some exceptions if there are really good bones and foundations, but don't be surprised.

This may lead to a point when it makes more sense to move than fix. Or it could present great opportunities to optimize your home for the rest of your life there.

Unfortunately, most homeowners don't budget for the constant need to replace and repair their homes. They don't budget for painting in and out every five years. They don't account for needing new roofs every 20 or so years, new major appliances, gutting the bathrooms, redoing the driveway and so on. If you have, congratulations!

If these repair needs mount up, and you probably aren't going to stay there for another 5 to 30 years, or they will be sunk costs which don't actually add value, consider selling before the condition gets worse and you get less money for your home. Your money may be better used on customizing a newer home that you will stay in.

There are other ways to optimize and reduce these expenses as well. For example, doing an overlay on the roof instead of a tear off and complete replacement. Or patching instead of replacement.

Foundations which are taking a beating from rainwater runoff or melting snow could be better protected with gutters or correcting the roof now, extending the life of your basement and entire structure.

Another common item to wear out and need repair is shower enclosures and tubs. All glass shower enclosures and intricate tile floors were popular a few years ago. They can be really expensive to replace. One day you notice a drip from the ceiling, and then the contractor wants to dig out your whole bathroom to figure out where the problem is. Expect that to set you back at least \$6,000 at a minimum. If you are aging, or expect to remain in the home long term, you may find this a great opportunity to put in a smarter tub configuration, or at least a bench and handrail in the shower, and to choose smarter materials that won't be as costly to replace in the future.

Garages and carports aren't immune to needing repairs either. This can start to look ugly fast, and really take away from your neighborhood and home's appeal. Carefully consider your need for this structure, the value of replacing it or repairing, and what may be more important in another decade from now. Taking out an old carport and adding an attached garage may be a huge blessing for not having to deal with the snow and ice in winter. It may add more value too. Or perhaps you won't be driving anymore and a shed is a perfectly fine fix for storing what you need.

Know the math on improvements, how long they will last and how long you plan to stay before you make any commitments or start tearing things up.

3. Layout Issues



LAYOUTS are one of the biggest issues to tackle as you grow with your home. Some floor plans and features just aren't going to cut it as your life and household dynamics change. There may be some limitations due to structural elements and supporting halls and columns. There may also be more freedom to make changes than you've envisioned yet.

One of the most significant challenges isn't always downsizing and having to maintain more space than you need, but when you add more people under your roof. You could sell, and downsize, and use some of your equity to gift a down payment for children (and lower inheritance taxes) or pay for parents care in a nicer living facility in Florida. Or you can make adjustments and stay in place.

Finishing attics and basements could be a smart option for creating enough space for you all in one home, without driving each other crazy. This can be easier than you think. How well it works may rely a lot on plumbing and whether these rooms will have their own en-suite bathroom facilities.

In other cases you may choose to reconfigure your home with a 'mother-in-law suite' with its own entrance. There are lots of creative ways to integrate new entrances you

might not have thought of. This doesn't just have to be for the in-laws either. It could be for college age kids, your grandkids, or even as a separate rental space that can bring in income to lower your housing costs or augment your retirement checks.

Mobility is the other main factor which causes layout frictions. What happens when you can't easily or comfortably make it up and down those stairs anymore? If installing a stairlift isn't really appealing, then consider whether a ground floor master suite can be configured.

4. Additions, Extensions & Conversions



If you have the funds and time, and plan to stay long term, then an addition, extension or conversion could be just what you need.

You can build out and extend your home's footprint, build up and add an extra floor (or two). For those on more of a budget, a sunroom could offer extra living space, at far less cost, and done right, could add just as much to the value of your home. If budget isn't an issue, there may be the opportunity to acquire a lot nextdoor and build something new.

Garage, attic and basement conversions are also popular choices. Garage conversions do need to be approached with care. Without the right plans and permits, an illegal

conversion may block your home from being able to be resold and even incur very, very expensive fines and accruing daily interest penalties.

Do note that while extending the footprint or bedroom and bathroom count of your home may increase the value, it can also trigger higher annual property taxes. While extreme, for this same reason, some might actually purposely reduce these rooms in order to lower their annual property taxes instead.

5. Reducing Your Living Expenses



The cost of living keeps going up over time. Typically faster than our incomes do. All types of taxes, utility bills, food, gas, transportation, healthcare, interest rates, and more. So, even if you did your math really well when you bought your home, and could comfortably afford it, that can change over time. Then if income declines with age, there are unexpected bills, medical expenses, bailing out of grandchildren, or job gaps, it can be even harder to keep up.

It may not be that way forever, though things are constantly changing. In good times there is a lot that can be done to lower housing expenses for later on.

Installing energy efficient appliances, better windows, superior insulation, regularly replacing weather stripping, and even different window coverings, smarter flushing

toilets, and the materials you use when you replace flooring can all make a big difference over time.

You may even choose to go with solar power or install a rainwater harvesting system so that you can better control your own utility expenses.

In tougher times you can still challenge your annual property taxes and get them lowered. Consider optimizing your insurance policy regularly too. If you've paid off a mortgage or local property prices are lower than they once were, or you've put in a home security system, you maybe able to reduce premiums and qualify for new discounts.

6. Optimizing Your Home for Resale



If your home just isn't going to work for you as it is, or where it is, it can still put in some more work for you to help you get more of what you want and need.

If you are not under pressure to sell your home immediately, and have the luxury of waiting, you can work to optimize it, increase the value and its appeal to others, and list it for the highest reasonable price. Then take your proceeds and buy a home that fits you better.

Some of the key steps in this process include:

- Making needed repairs and touching up blemishes
- Clearing out the clutter and depersonalizing the space for house shoppers
- Improving curb appeal with new decor, front door accents, new mailboxes, etc.
- Staging the home with new furniture and decor to look new and make it more spacious
- Commissioning high quality real estate photography and video to make your home look amazing and attract the most and best potential buyers

7. Sell Your Home for Cash



If you don't have an endless amount of time to wait it out and hope you get a bite on a listing with an agent, then selling fast for cash can be a great option.

This enables you to take advantage of the current market, cash out, and move onto somewhere that fits your lifestyle, needs and budget better right away.

ReStart Homes has been helping local homeowners in this way every month. We don't require sellers to do any clean up or repairs. So, you can forget about having to invest more into the property your are leaving, and save it for your new home.

You can even get help with relocating and finding another place to buy or rent. Whatever suits you best. This can be even more valuable if you are out of the area and need someone to handle coordinating the last of your belongings, forwarding the balance of your mail, and who can send a notary out to you so you can close from the comfort of where you are now.

Many problems and challenges can be fixed with adjustments to your current home. Some can't be. In these situations it typically makes more sense to stop dumping dollars into something you are not going to keep and to retain everything you can to begin enjoying your new start in a place that works just right.

Summary

Life can be unpredictable. What was meant to be the perfect dream home may not fit or stay that way forever. That can be due to the weather, economy, household changes or just maturing and growing up. Whatever the change and reason, there are ways to make your home work for you. That may be getting better at maintenance, making smarter repairs and looking for ways to reduce your expenses. It could be renovating your home, or selling it.

ReStart Homes specializes in helping local homeowners who just don't feel as at home in their homes as they wanted to. We provide a variety of solutions, including working with you to redesign rooms and whole homes, to planning and preparing your property for sale, and even buying homes with fair cash offers to help homeowners get the ReStart they need.

We'd love to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Scott and Jessica Holwick

What's Next

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If you'd like to know what you can get for your home in a quick all cash sale give us a call today to find out.

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