

Regular Home Inspections and Maintenance Are Key to Keeping Up the Value of Your No. 1 Investment

By Val Cook-Watkins

Each month, most Lamorinda residents invest three, four, five thousand dollars or more in an asset that we are counting on to grow over time and provide financial security for ourselves and our family for years to come. I'm talking, of course, about our home. But despite this big investment, we often don't think about regular maintenance on our property until it comes time to sell. And by then, we could be surprised with enormous repair bills that will lower our property's value – bills that could have been avoided with simple maintenance each year.

It always surprises me that people put off regular upkeep on their homes. We would never consider doing that with other big investments, say our new car or boat. One of the things I advise homeowners is to act like you're selling your home even if you aren't. Do regular inspections of key areas on your property and make the necessary repairs and maintenance before small problems become big ones. Here are a few areas to pay attention to:

Termite and pest inspections: You should have pest inspections done on your home every two to three years. We all know how much damage termites and other pests can do to your foundation. By having regular inspections and preventative pest control work done now you can avoid serious damage later.

Inside water damage: Moisture intrusion can be your home's worst enemy. Moisture can attack a home from any location imaginable and cause damage to wood structural members, masonry, flooring, wall coverings, stucco, and other areas. Water damage can

be extremely costly so make sure to inspect for leaks wherever water piping is located. Regular caulking and sealing can go a long way to prevent trouble.

Outside drainage: While water can do serious damage inside your home, it can be equally dangerous outside. It's important to make sure that water is draining away from your home in order to avoid cracking of your foundation and sidewalks, as well as pest and mold problems under your home.

Maintain decking: Decks are wonderful additions to your yard, but they can result in major repair bills if not maintained properly. Care for your deck with regular water sealing to prevent water damage, termite infestation and fungus decay. You may also consider installing wood deck alternatives made out of composite and plastic lumber, which are beautiful low maintenance options for homeowners.

Roof and rain gutters: Another potential water hazard comes from your roof and rain gutters. New roofs are not inexpensive, of course, but the damage that leaks can cause can be far more costly to your home. Make sure that all your rain gutters and spouts are clear of debris and working properly, and consider having a roof inspection if you haven't done so in recent years.

Yards and landscaping: We always talk about a home's "curb appeal" when it comes time to sell the property. Well-landscaped and maintained yards are a big part of a home's appeal, and beautiful yards help increase the value of a property. It's just as important to maintain the outside of your home as it is the inside even if you aren't

listing your property.

Make your home fire safe: The recent wildfires in the Tahoe area serve as a reminder to all of us how quickly fire can spread and consume a home. Flammable wildland vegetation too close to your home will make it almost impossible for firefighters to save your home in the event of a brush fire. If you haven't already done so, make sure you clear at least a 30-foot firebreak around your home.

Your home is your number one asset and just like any other asset you own, it is crucial to invest some time and money maintaining to maintain its value. Set aside a fixed amount of money each month for repairs and maintenance. A small investment in your home's wellbeing today could prevent tens of thousands of dollars in damage tomorrow.



Val Cook-Watkins, Manager of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's Orinda office, provides the above tips. A 25-year real estate veteran, Watkins oversees a talented team of 78 real estate professionals in the East Bay. Her office is located at 5 Moraga Way in Orinda, and she can be reached at 925-253-4660 or by e-mail at vcookwatkins@cbnorcal.com.

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