**Swing into spring: Kitchen and bath updates to make properties bloom**

When looking at home upgrades, every real estate investor is trying to find the ideal balance between cost and ROI. When considering options for interior improvements, the first two areas you should look at are the kitchen and bathrooms.
By Sulema Vela, The Home Depot

**Create a Cutting-Edge Kitchen**
Depending on the home, updating a kitchen can be a large remodeling job or a small one. For a smaller remodel, focus on simple tasks like changing the paint on the walls or updating drawers and knobs. Choose a neutral color that won’t detract buyers from the look of the room – avoid colors that are too abstract or distracting for the general buyer. If you want to focus more on savings than color choice, the Behr PRO Paint line offers a thorough range of color shades and textures. Partners like The Home Depot offer discounts on bulk paints, so group purchases together whenever possible.

If the kitchen is out of date and needs a complete overhaul, be careful to invest in the right upgrades to improve the bottom line. If neighborhood houses sell for $150,000 and you put a $75,000-dollar kitchen in, you’re not getting your money back.

According to Remodeling magazine’s 2017 Cost vs. Value Report, the baseline or standard version of a kitchen remodel is known as a midrange project and the higher-priced version is called an upscale project. The difference between them has to do with the scope of work and the complexity of the project. It also takes into account different quality standards for finishes. For example, the midrange major kitchen remodel calls for a plastic laminate island countertop while the upscale version has a stone top.

Granite countertops are still as popular as ever in the kitchen. These counters typically cost more, but having granite or another solid surface that looks like granite will attract more buyers. One way to save on counters is to avoid high end tiers – to most customers, granite is granite.

Cabinets are another excellent way to increase value to a property. In areas with more contemporary-designed properties, choose nicer amenities like hinges, soft-close drawers and cabinets that look custom-made. Also look into replacing the knobs to ones like the Delta Satin Nickel Porter Knob to make them look more luxurious. In more traditional areas, stick to updates that are classic and affordable.

**Build a Beautiful Bathroom**
When it comes to bathrooms, buyers want to feel like money has been put into renovations. With a ‘quality over quantity’ approach, simple changes to a bathroom can make a big difference. Consider cost-effective updates like a new paint job, toilet, faucet and showerhead. As this year’s Kitchen and Bath Industry Show showcased, matte black, copper, gold and other warm-colored faucets have grown in popularity in a territory that has long been primarily white- or neutral-colored. In turn, a chrome, stainless steel or brushed nickel faucet finish or non-traditional faucet style can rejuvenate the sink area. In addition, updating the showerhead with a modern product that is WaterSense certified can make a difference for buyers who are interested in sustainability features. These can give the bathroom an updated look without the high costs.

If the bathroom needs more attention, look into a new vanity. The Home Depot offers a vanity configurator to pick the perfect vanity at price that makes sense with the bottom line. For easy and efficient installation, consider Glacier Bay vanities, which come fully assembled. These products are available in stock, which saves time and money.

Now more than ever, pros are incorporating elements from across the home into the bathroom. An emerging bathroom flooring trend is tiling that breaks the long-held square and rectangular standard, with hexagon, octagon and other non-traditional geometric shapes becoming go-to’s. Shape and texture flexibility allows you to rotate and arrange tiles to form floors that tell a creative story and accent the rest of the bathroom.

Using timeless and sturdy products and concepts when updating a kitchen and bathroom doesn’t have to be an expensive task. With the ROI for both rooms at or over 70 percent, putting smart, economical changes into these rooms will help bring in buyers and deliver a better bottom line.

Sulema Vela is responsible for the Pro business in The Home Depot’s Southern Division, leading a team of more than 80 Pro Account Representatives in an area that encompasses 700 stores across 13 states. She has over 18 years of experience at The Home Depot, starting in 1999 as a part-time cashier while she earned her bachelor’s degree in business administration. During her time at Home Depot, Sulema has served in a variety of roles and capacities – including Department Supervisor, Assistant Store Manager, Store Manager and District Manager.