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Smart home improvements for growing multi-generational households

(BPT) - The American family continues to evolve, with multiple generations living under the same roof in more households than any time since the Great Depression. Of America's 76 million households, 5.6 percent (4.3 million) were multi-generational as of 2011, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Homeowners are finding it's more important than ever to ensure every home improvement project delivers benefits for every member of the family - children, parents and grandparents.

Whether your family grows with the birth of a child or because a grandparent has moved in with you, here are some home improvement projects that are multi-generational family-friendly:

Adding/updating a bathroom

Few household situations are as stressful as too many people sharing just one or two bathrooms. If your home population is growing, but you're still making do with too few bathrooms, adding a bath or upgrading an existing one can make life more pleasant for everyone. What's more, it's a smart investment of your renovation dollars. If you decide to sell your home down the road, you can expect to recoup about 53 percent of the construction cost for a modest bathroom addition, according to Remodeling Magazine's Cost vs. Value report. And a modest bathroom remodel recoups about 64 percent of your investment.

Finishing a basement or an attic bonus room

If you're looking for more usable living space, finishing a basement or attic bonus room is almost always easier than adding square footage to your home. A finished existing area can be a versatile investment, affording you the space to add a bedroom, bathroom, recreational room, home office or even a second kitchen a la in-law suite style. Upstairs, finishing an attic bonus room can provide a well-lit and airy retreat with the inclusion of fresh air skylights. Downstairs, advances in basement finishing technology have compressed the time-frame of this once pricey and drawn-out home improvement. Remodeling Magazine says a basement renovation pays back more than 70 percent of its cost at the time of resale.

Healthful upgrades

The quality of light and ventilation in our home speaks directly to the safety and health of its occupants. Aging eyesight often needs better lighting, and poor indoor air quality can affect everyone's health, but especially that of young children with respiratory ailments such as asthma. One improvement that addresses both concerns, is a skylight. When opened, an Energy Star-qualified fresh-air skylight, like those made by Velux America, can help exhaust stale unhealthy indoor air and bring fresh air into your home. Skylights especially make sense if you'll be creating more inexpensive living space by finishing an attic.

Add remote controlled solar powered blinds to solar powered fresh air skylights in your home and the products, as well as installation costs, are eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit. To learn more about no leak skylights that close automatically in case of rain and how they can help improve indoor air quality, visit www.veluxusa.com.

Upgrading key appliances

Whether the hot water heater shudders when your teenager takes a shower or the furnace just can't work hard enough to keep Grandma's bones warm in winter, upgrading key appliances in your home can significantly improve the comfort of its occupants. What's more, replacing older appliances with new ones can help you save money on your utility bills over the life of the product. Replacing an old water heater, furnace or air conditioner with an Energy Star-certified product can trim utility bills significantly.

For example, according to EnergyStar.gov, replacing a central air conditioning unit that is 12 years old (or older) with an Energy Star-qualified one could reduce cooling costs by 30 percent, and switching to a solar water heater could cut your water heating bill in half. What's more, between now and the end of 2016, certain energy-efficient home improvements may qualify you for a federal tax credit. If you install a residential solar water heating system, you could qualify for federal as well as state tax credits and other incentives. You can find a calculator to help tally the potential payback on a solar water heating system and a federal tax credit estimator to calculate your savings on new or replacement solar powered skylights at www.veluxusa.com.

ARTICLE IMAGE(S)



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