



Project Spotlight

A freestanding tub featured in a West Des Moines master bathroom renovated by the AIM team. Click [here](#) to see more of this beautiful new space.



Fall Maintenance Checklist

- Service furnace/chimney & clean vents
- Seal cracks and gaps around doors & windows
- Drain & turn off sprinkler system
- Clean gutters
- Remove & store garden hoses
- Prune plants, trim trees, aerate & fertilize lawn
- Clean/cover/store patio furniture & yard equipment
- Wrap exposed pipes
- Test snowblower



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Smart Renovations. Smart Investments.

Andrew Springer, one part of the [Springer Brothers Team](#) with Iowa Realty, sat down with us to discuss the current housing market and return on investment on renovations.

When thinking about where to invest in your home, which rooms typically get the biggest return on investment?

Hands down kitchens, bathrooms and finished basements. Having a sweet den or gorgeous dining room is nice, but that's not where you spend the majority of your time. Usually when you have guests over, people tend to congregate in the kitchen (it's where the food is!) or the basement. I'd also say bathrooms have big ROI because every home needs them and the average person doesn't want to mess with having to remodel them on their own. Simple things (i.e. layout, storage and lighting) can make a world of difference in a space without breaking the bank.

What are buyers are looking for in a home?

Every buyer has that base criteria they're looking for: number of bedrooms, style (ranch, two story, etc), location of home. But once those items have been checked off the list, I'd say the kitchen and basement finish. Right now, the "in" thing seems to be white kitchens. Seeing honey oak or cheap cabinets, to name a couple, can be a quick way for the buyer to move on to the next home. A cabinet is a cabinet. Whether it's white or honey oak, it holds the same amount of stuff, but how it looks is important to people. Same goes with having that extra space in the basement. Whether your family has grown (or is growing) to the point that every nook and cranny is utilized, or you just want that extra entertaining space or place to unwind, people rarely get mad about having too much space. I'd also say that in those rooms, when people are looking to pay top dollar, they're expecting top dollar finishes, too. Don't skimp on the finishes!

How much value is added to your home with a finished basement?

Any time you add finish space to a home you're going to add value. How much value depends on what you do with the space. Simply throwing down some carpet and framing in a bedroom will add value, but it won't add as much value as it would to add a bedroom, bathroom, bar and media room. In addition, the way you finish out the space will add value, too. I liken it to the difference between a Ford Taurus and Chevrolet Corvette. Both can get you where you need to go, but one will be a little more fun in getting there. One definitely is more valuable than the other, too. You should also factor in your home's location when it comes to the amount of work you do in the basement. Creating a space that is unlike anything else in the neighborhood can be enjoyed but may have a difficult time selling if it's priced too high for the area. Overall, in the last five years in the Des Moines metro, resale homes with finished basements sell for 53% more than homes that don't have any (\$259,408 finished vs \$169,769 unfinished). I'd love to chat more with you about what those figures look like for your specific home and area.

What would be your advice to someone who is thinking about updating their kitchen or bathrooms? Is there one that should be remodeled before the other?

Do it! Start with the rooms that get used the most, and, again, it's important to know what demand is like for homes in your area. There are definitely things you can do to improve your space, regardless of what your area home values are. A good design can change everything. Same goes for the kitchen. And in my opinion, it doesn't matter where you live, you can never have enough storage! With cabinets, go taller (if possible) or add an island (if space allows). Islands are great for adding surface space for food prep/serving, and meal eating. In addition they provide additional seating for meals as well. You don't need a formal dining room AND a kitchen table when you've got a functional island.