

FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT



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Pro Comfort Control: Transforming Homes into Green Energy Sanctuaries of Comfort

**Business
spotlight**

Imagine walking into your home and feeling an immediate sense of comfort—where every room is perfectly heated or cooled, the air is fresh and clean, and every detail has been meticulously crafted for your peace of mind. This is the experience that Pro Comfort Control, a rapidly rising name in HVAC, promises to

and a deep commitment to energy efficiency.

Ryan, who grew up in Westwood working alongside his father, a prominent local builder, brings a deep understanding of quality craftsmanship to every project. His pursuit began as a licensed plumber, which ignited his passion for the mechanical craftsmanship that the heating



deliver. Founded by Ryan and Alexandra McKernan, this Framingham-based business is transforming homes across Massachusetts with a unique blend of quality craftsmanship

and air conditioning industry offers. With his extensive hands-on experience, Ryan ensures that each installation is performed with the highest level of precision and care—a

hallmark of Pro Comfort Control's operations.

Alexandra, after graduating from college, embarked on a remarkable career in the heating

and air conditioning industry. Now a licensed contractor with over 15 years of experience, she brings a wealth of expertise and a passion for green energy solutions. Her extensive knowledge not only complements but elevates Ryan's exceptional craftsmanship. Together, they lead a highly skilled team dedicated to delivering unparalleled home heating, air conditioning, and water heating services.

Pro Comfort Control is built on a foundation of shared values and a clear mission: to transform home comfort through the power of precision and energy efficiency. "We believe that a comfortable home is about more than just temperature control—it's about creating an environment where every detail counts," Ryan explains. "Our systems are crafted to elevate your living experience, transforming your whole home into a sanctuary of efficiency and beauty."

The team also specializes in hot water heating, water filtration, and maximizing indoor air quality. Each system is designed to meet the highest standards, ensuring that your home is not only comfortable but also environmentally friendly.

Alexandra highlights the importance of guiding homeowners in choosing the best so-

lutions for their needs. "We're here to help our customers make informed decisions," she says.

Ryan points out the significant opportunities available to local homeowners, stating, "With federal tax credits and Mass Save incentives, energy-saving equipment is more affordable than ever, making it a smart investment."

Their difference lies in their genuine care for the community. "We are your neighbors, and we want what's best for your home as if it were our own," Alexandra adds. This dedication has earned them a strong reputation for exceptional service, with clients valuing the team's sincere customer care.

Pro Comfort Control is transforming what it means to live comfortably, making every home a sanctuary of comfort, quality, and efficiency, one step at a time. If you're a homeowner looking to improve your home's heating, cooling, or water heating systems, give us a call for a free in-home evaluation—we'd love to help!

Call us today! (508) 301-3955. Visit our website for more information, procomfort-control.com.

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8 steps to a more functional kitchen

A kitchen is often the most utilized room in a house. Meals may be prepared, cooked and often eaten in kitchens, and the room is often utilized as a homework spot or a makeshift place to pay bills and stay on top of household needs. By enhancing the organization and functionality of the kitchen, homeowners can enjoy these popular spaces even more.

Homeowners have increased their spending on home improvements in recent years. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, project spending rose to \$472 billion in 2022 from \$328 billion in 2019. It was estimated consumers will have spent \$485 billion by the end of 2023. Kitchen renovations were the most popular upgrade and accounted for the highest budgets in 2021, according to Houzz. When the time comes to renovate a kitchen, homeowners can take steps to make these spaces more organized and therefore functional. Here are eight tips to creating a more functional kitchen.

1. Increase storage, and then

invest in more. Make the most of corner cabinets and other potential dead spots in a kitchen. Various products can be used to organize awkwardly angled or shaped areas. Kitchen designers

away, make loading and unloading the dishwasher that much easier by locating commonly used items next to and above it. Similarly, place frequently used saucepans, baking dishes and

coordinate storage around those items so everything fits perfectly. Pull-out shelves and Lazy Susans also can facilitate access.

4. Add shelves to cabinets. If you can afford to have a custom-

5. Organize the garbage. Have a pull-out drawer or cabinet to store trash bins. Separate compost, trash and recycling needs.

6. Create continuity in the room. Many open concept homes will have kitchens open up to another room in the home. Mirror the design scheme from elsewhere in the house, and make sure that the flow between spaces is not obstructed.

7. Create a beverage station. A beverage station can minimize the time needed to make a cup of tea or coffee or for the kids to grab juice or chocolate milk.

8. Have a workspace in the kitchen. Whether paying bills, making a grocery list or leaving notes for the family, a dedicated workspace can add more function to the room. Be sure there is task lighting nearby and ample overhead lighting to ensure that all kitchen needs are illuminated properly.

A more functional kitchen can make this already popular space even more so.



also can work with you to reconfigure cabinets and kitchen layouts.

2. Organize utensils and dishes around the sink/dishwasher. Rather than traversing the kitchen to put clean dishes

other items near the oven or food preparation area.

3. Utilize drawer and cabinet organizers. Make a place for everything in the kitchen. Take out all items and see what you need and use all the time. Then

built kitchen, by all means design cabinets according to preference. If you're using standard cabinets, you may have to reconfigure shelves and spacing to fit the items you have. This also will help you maximize cabinet space.

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Under Pressure Marks 25 Years of Excellence, Launches Popular HOME+ Program to Prepare Homes for the Seasons

As Under Pressure celebrates 25 years of serving the community, we remain committed to providing exceptional exterior cleaning services that help homeowners prepare for every season. With the fall bonfires, winter holiday gatherings, and cold weather ahead, Under

Pressure is busy sprucing up homes with our trusted services, ensuring homes are ready for the elements.

“Our work is like a tune-up for your house from top to bottom,” says Mercer, founder and CEO. “From roofs and gutters to patios and outdoor furniture, we make sure your home is ready for the changing weather ahead.”

To enhance our service offerings, we are proud to highlight our new HOME+ program—a comprehensive, year-round home maintenance solution. This program provides homeowners with exterior cleaning services like house washing, gutter cleaning, roof treatments, and more. With the added convenience of seasonal check-ups, HOME+ ensures homes stay in peak condition through every season.

As the colder months approach, we’re also gearing up for



one of our most popular seasonal offerings: holiday lighting installations. Under Pressure brings homeowners’ holiday visions to life with custom light designs that cater to their imaginations. From Halloween to Christmas, Hanukkah, New Year’s, or any holiday celebration, our team ensures

homes shine with festive lights. “The designs are only limited by homeowners’ creativity,” says

Mercer. “Holiday lighting creates a special feeling; there’s just something about the warmth it

Business spotlight

brings to a place.” And when the season is over, homeowners don’t have to worry about a thing—Under Pressure takes down the lights and stores them until the next year.

With 25 years in the home service industry, Under Pressure continues to set the standard for home maintenance, offering solutions that meet the unique needs of every home. From pressure washing to holiday lights, our team is here to make home care hassle-free.

To learn more about the HOME+ program or get a custom quote for your home, visit underpressurewash.com, call 508-944-6644, or email office@underpressurewash.com.

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Did you know?

Homeowners with an eye on home improvement projects should know that kitchens and bathrooms tend to be the most costly rooms to renovate. An affiliate of the National Kitchen and Bath Association told Architectural Digest in 2023 that kitchens and bathrooms require the most labor-intensive renovations, which contributes significantly to the high costs of such projects. Labor is indeed a significant cost when renovating a home, as the Construction Labor Market Analyzer indicates labor cost percentages in construction are between 20 and 40 percent of the total budget of a given project. The final cost of any renovation project will depend on a host of variables unique to each home, including the square footage of the room being remodeled and the materials homeowners choose. However, homeowners looking for less costly renovations may want to consider revamping their dining rooms and closets, each of which are projects that can make a difference and tend to require a less significant financial commitment than projects like kitchen and bath remodels.

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How to recognize when it's time to replace your windows

Windows are a major component of a home. Window installation professionals will tell homeowners that the average life span of residential windows is between 15 and 30 years. Most well-maintained products can last 20 years, so homeowners who have windows approaching that age may want to schedule a window assessment and possible replacement.

Replacing windows is a job that requires advanced skill, and this is not a do-it-yourself project. There are many qualified professional window installation companies that will work with homeowners to measure, order and install windows that will fit with the style of a home and local weather, all while providing features the homeowner desires.

For those wondering when to replace windows, Pella and Renewal by Andersen, two of the premiere window manufacturers, offer these guidelines.

- Difficulty opening and closing windows. A window that does not operate as it should can aggravate homeowners. If windows are sticking shut or cannot be securely closed, it's probably time for something new.

- There's apparent window damage. Accidents happen, and if a rock is kicked up from a lawnmower and cracks a window or if baseball practice has gone awry with an errant throw, windows may require replacement.

- Drafts in the window are common. If heating and cooling systems are working overtime, drafty, poorly insulated windows could be to blame. Various agencies can perform energy efficiency tests in a home. Windows that are determined to be the weak spots should be replaced.

- Dated windows are present in the home. Older windows may pose safety hazards, especially those in older homes. A larger window may be needed to comply with fire safety codes allowing for window egress. Dated windows also may simply look "old" and compromise the aesthetics of a home.

- Outdoor noises are noticed quite readily. Newer windows can help reduce noise transmission. So those leaf blowers, airplanes, barking dogs, and kids playing basketball up the street won't disturb homeowners as they try to enjoy some peace and quiet indoors.

- Fading indoors is noted. Windows that do not feature low-emissivity (Low-E) glass coatings will not block UV rays. Those rays can cause fading to wood floors and furniture or pretty much anything the sunlight touches. Replacing existing windows with Low-E coating alternatives can safeguard belongings and improve window efficiency.

Finally, window replacement may be necessary when existing windows are showing signs of aging or damage.

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Tips when hiring a contractor

Contractors perform important work for millions of homeowners every day. Home improvement projects are complicated undertakings, and the experience of skilled contractors can ensure jobs are completed on time and within homeowners' budgets.

Homeowners have undoubtedly heard horror stories from neighbors about projects that have gone awry. Projects can go sideways for a number of reasons, but a skilled contractor can help homeowners navigate such situations successfully. That underscores how important it can be to find the right professional for the job. The following are some tips homeowners can consider as they look to hire a contractor.

- Identify which professional you need. Some contractors are of the jack-of-all-trades variety, but many specialize in a particular line of work. It's important that homeowners identify which type of contractor they should work with prior to starting a project. This requires homeowners to define the goal of the project (i.e., new wood floor installation), which can serve as a springboard into finding the right type of contractor.
- Prioritize building safety. Safety should be the utmost priority for homeowners and contractors alike. Prior to hiring a contractor, home-

owners should identify any safety restrictions that might be enforced by local governments and take note of all the permits necessary to get a job done. Homeowners can then discuss those restrictions and permits as they interview contractors. Projects that do not adhere to code are illegal and can compromise homeowners' ability to sell their homes in the future. So it's vital to

indicating what will be done and how much the project will cost should be provided. Homeowners should insist on receiving written estimates and interpret an unwillingness to provide one as a significant red flag.

- Know your rights. Laws vary by region, but in general homeowners have a right to a written contract and contrac-



work with contractors who are familiar with local codes and aware of which permits are necessary to ensure a project can go forward.

- Insist on written estimates. Handshake agreements offer no protection to homeowners or contractors, so estimates

tors are obligated to provide a copy of that contract signed by both parties. That contract must be provided prior to the start of the project. The contract should provide a detailed account of the work that will be done, as well as a timeline indicating important dates that components of the project will begin and be completed. The contract also should detail materials and who is providing them. Details regarding payments, guarantees and warranties also should be cited.

- Do not pay in cash. Some contractors may suggest that the project will cost less if they're paid in cash. However, home improvements should never be cash transactions. Cash does not indicate proof of payment, which can be problematic if a dispute arises.

Contractors help homeowners turn dream projects into reality. Homeowners can employ various strategies to ensure they find the right professional for their home improvement project.

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How DIY can be bad for homeowners' bottom lines

Homeowners know it can be tempting to go the do-it-yourself (DIY) route when starting a home improvement project. Home repairs and renovations can be costly, and the notion of saving money on such projects compels many homeowners to try their hand at home improvements. However, the DIY approach can be costly as well, and if things go awry, homeowners may end up with empty pockets and unfinished projects.

Online tutorials and advertisements for home improvement retailers can make DIY seem like a snap. However, there are potential pitfalls to consider that could make the ostensibly less expensive DIY route far more detrimental to the bottom line than homeowners may recognize.

- **Permits:** Permits ensure work is done in accordance with local codes, which are designed to ensure the safety of residents and their neighbors. Licensed contractors know which permits are necessary for projects they're hired to

work on, and many even procure permits for their clients (homeowners are urged to read estimates and contracts to determine who will be responsible for acquiring the appropriate permits). DIYers may not know about local permits, and therefore go ahead with projects without procuring any. That can be harmful in the short- and long-term. In the short-term, a failure to procure the appropriate permits can make a home less safe and potentially lead to costly fines and necessitate a complete do-over of the project. In the long-term, homeowners who did not secure the appropriate permits may not be given a certificate of occupancy (CO) when putting their homes on the market, which can make it very difficult to sell the home.

- **Ancillary costs:** The ancillary costs of DIY are not often noted in online tutori-



als. However, such costs can dramatically increase the amount of money DIYers shell out in order to complete projects on their own. Ancillary costs include but are not limited to the price of tools and equipment; disposal fees

for materials that will need to be discarded; and the cost of permits. These costs are

often included in estimates provided by contractors, but they're easily overlooked by novice DIYers.

- **Repairs:** Even experienced contractors make mistakes, so DIYers, particularly novices,

can anticipate making a few errors along the way. Minor mistakes may not prove too costly, but more significant mishaps can quickly negate any cost savings associated with DIY renovations. The cost to fix DIY mistakes varies depending on the project, but a 2019 survey from Porch.com found that the average DIY mistake cost homeowners \$310 and added five and a half hours to the overall time spent to complete a project. It's worth noting the Porch.com survey was conducted prior to the dramatic increase in materials costs related to inflation in recent years. So it's reasonable to assume that fixing DIY mistakes in 2024 could end up costing considerably more than a few hundred dollars.

Before diving into DIY, homeowners may want to consider the real costs associated with forgoing professional experience in the potentially misplaced hopes of saving a few dollars.

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Robert Roofing & Gutters

Fall in New England comes with (at least) two guarantees: a beautiful fall landscape and a countdown to snowfall.

With the seasons changing, Norfolk-based Robert Roofing & Gutters Inc. has been helping local homeowners prepare and maintain their homes for the elements since 1980. The full-service second-generation



“They’ve completed two jobs at our house. Easy to deal with. Good communication, Robert is a straight shooter. We recommend them.”

-Adam Burch

roofing and home improvement company has been in business for more than 30 years, and provides “speedy and reliable service when you need it most.” They pride

themselves on being honest and reliable, and they are focused on providing their customers with the most cost-effective solution.

Their services include all types of roofing, anything related to gutters and soffits, expert siding installation, chimney repointing and flashing, and custom window trim. They also provide energy saving services such as a high quality underlayment (an ice and water shield) that protects the

roof from possible water damage due to ice dams, which is then topped with a premium underlayment which is breathable and waterproof.

The team at Robert Roofing & Gutters includes founder Robert “Rob” Greene, and his son Foreman Robert Jr., as well as Foreman Stiles, plus an amazing crew, all of whom have been with the company for 9+ years.

We are experts at roof re-

placement,” Rob says. “If we can restore your roof, we will not sell you a new one. If you are looking to replace your roof, our expert installers will make sure the job is done right the first time...Our focus on structural integrity, energy efficiency, and visual appeal makes us your best choice for all of your roofing needs.”

Their motto is “ONE CALL SENDS A ROOFER, NOT A SALESMAN” so when customers call for a free estimate, it is founder Rob who shows up at the door.

Rob says, “Our typical customer is anyone who has a 15-20+ year old roof, to first-time buyers whose first thing on their to-do list is to replace the roof; so, we have a wide range of customers.”

Rob says, “This fall, homeowners need to be aware of any damage and/or wear and tear on their roof, and they should have it fixed or replaced before any damage occurs. Once the snow comes, the damage could become devastating - like a roof leak that penetrates into the ceiling which could then cause wall, window, and/or floor damage.



Business spotlight

A homeowner’s best bet is to call me to come out and evaluate their roof before the harsh weather arrives.”

Robert Roofing & Gutters’ service area is south of Boston, including Westwood, Medfield, Dover/Sherborn, Walpole, Norfolk, Norton, Stoughton, Easton,

“Robert Roofing & Gutters is everything you want a contractor to be: honest, reasonably priced, expert in what he is doing. Nothing flashy, just good work.”

-David Williams

and most other towns from Hopkinton to Seekonk.

For more information, or to receive a free estimate, call 857-247-8709 or visit www.robertroofingandgutters.com (where you can also experiment with shingle and color pairings).

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Renovations that help sell homes

The adage “there’s a lid for every pot” suggests that, even in relation to the real estate market, there’s bound to be a buyer for every home on the market. Price is a significant variable in the minds of potential buyers, but there are additional factors that can affect the impression people get of a given home.

Certain home features can tip the scales in favor of sellers. In fact, various renovations can help sell homes more readily. And these renovations need not cost a fortune. Putting a home on the market can be stressful, but these renovations may help it sell fast.

- A fresh coat of paint: Although painting is relatively inexpensive and a job that some do-it-yourselfers can tackle, it’s not a task relished by many. Painting is messy, it takes time, and requires moving furniture. In fact, prepping a room for painting often is the toughest component of any painting job. But fresh coats of paint can create a strong first impression. Choose a neutral color and

get painting. Jennie Norris, chairwoman for the International Association of Home Staging Professionals, says gray is a “safe” color that has been trending in recent years.

- Minor bathroom remodel: Remove dated wall coverings, replace fixtures, consider reglazing or replacing an old tub, and swap old shower doors for fast fixes in a bathroom. If there’s more room in the budget, replacing a tub, tile surround, floor, toilet, sink, vanity, and fixtures can cost roughly \$10,500, says HGTV. You’ll recoup an average of \$10,700 at resale, making a minor bathroom remodel a potentially worthy investment.
- Redone kitchen: The kitchen tends to be the hub of a home. This room gets the most usage and attention of any space, and it’s a great place to focus your remodeling attention. The National Association of the Remodeling Industry estimates that

homeowners can recover up to 52 percent of the cost of a kitchen upgrade upon selling a home. Buyers want a functional and updated kitchen. Trending features include drawer-style microwaves and dishwashers, commercial ranges, hidden outlets, and even wine refrigerators.

- Updated heating and cooling system: Better Homes and Gardens reports that homeowners may be able to recoup 85 percent of the cost of new HVAC systems when they sell their homes. Heating, cooling and ventilation components are vital to maintain. You don’t want buyers to be taken aback by an older system, and many millennial buyers are not willing to overlook old mechanical systems.
- Fresh landscaping: A home’s exterior is the first thing buyers will see. If they pull up to a home with eye-catching landscaping and outdoor areas that are attractive yet functional, they’re more likely



to be intrigued. Often buyers will equate a home that features an impressive exterior with upkeep inside as well. The American Nursery Landscape Association says the average homeowner may

spend \$3,500 for landscaping.

Improving a home’s chances to sell quickly and at a higher price often comes down to making smart improvements that catch the eyes of buyers.

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