



Small Improvements, Big Impact

MEDIA GALLERY

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WRITTEN BY: KACEY LARSEN

Eight simple projects that entirely change a room and increase resell value.

As remodeling season kicks into high gear, we asked Laura Orfield-Skrivseth, co-owner of Orfield Design & Construction, Inc., to give us her list of small projects that create a big difference in a home. While she recommends many of these projects to home owners who are looking to resell their home, Orfield-Skrivseth encourages her clients to do remodeling projects sooner than later, so they can get enjoyment out of the work without the additional stress of worrying about the housing market.

"The one thing I have heard over and over from clients who do these projects to sell their homes is 'why didn't we ever do this when we lived here?' Don't wait for resell if there's no reason for it- do it now, make it tangible and then it will automatically be ready to go when the time for resell does come," she says.

Her list of small projects for big impact includes:

- Adding cabinets and upgrading appliances
- Removing outdated wallpaper, trim and window treatments
- Adding a front door awning, shutters and window box
- Changing closet doors and painting outdated trim and woodwork
- Refinishing old stairs
- Adding an egress window
- Removing partial walls, changing flooring and opening a stair wall
- Changing light fixtures and rearranging furniture



Before: Laura Orfield-Skrivseth recommended adding cabinets and upgrading the appliances. "If you just have a tiny kitchen, most people would never think 'let's add more,'" she says. "It actually goes against logic, but doing so provides clean storage space, floor to ceiling, which gets all that clutter put away."



After: Building around appliances takes the kitchen up a notch, not to mention actually creates the illusion of more space in a small room Orfield-Skrivseth says. Kitchens and baths are often the selling points during resells, so touch ups to those rooms before a home goes on the market are good projects to pursue.



Before: Orfield-Skrivseth recommended removing dated wallpaper, window treatments and trim. "I am not against wallpaper, but with design less is more," she says. "Stay away from crazy patterns because those don't appeal to a lot of people."



After: "There is such a thing as too much in a small space, and you have to be very careful," Orfield-Skrivseth says. Contrasting natural woodwork with painted cabinets makes the room look fresh, and a change to the window treatment simplifies the look and better controls the light in the room.



Before: Orfield-Skrivseth recommended adding a front door awning, shutters and window box. "A lot of people want curb appeal," she says.



After: Successfully adding curb appeal does not have to be expensive, according to Orfield-Skrivseth. Awnings, shutters and a planter box provide options in terms of styles and colors to chose from, but they take a "boring, standard thing to something cute" Orfield-Skrivseth says.



Before: Orfield-Skrivseth recommended changing the closet doors and painting the dark, dated trim and woodwork. "An entrance sets the precedence for the rest of your home, so making that a fresh, inviting space starts people with a good feeling," she says.



After: Instead of changing the flooring, which Orfield-Skrivseth says is often the first thing people look to do in older homes, her team left the slate floor alone and chose to compliment it by changing the color of the railing, trim and baseboards. The closet doors were also replaced to provide an update to the space.



Before: Orfield-Skrivseth recommended refinishing the old stairs. "Refinishing old stairs is huge, because they are a psychological transition space," she says. "If they're dirty and peeling then you don't want to walk on it or see where they lead, but when they're nice and clean then people want to see where the stairs go."



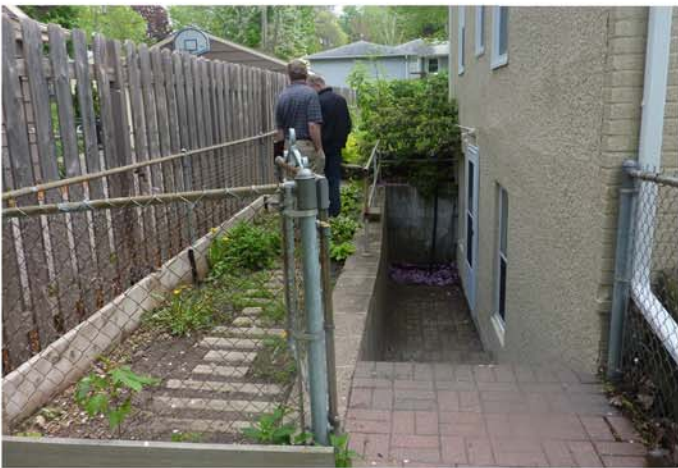
After: Once the linoleum was peeled off these existing wood stairs, all that was required was a sanding and staining, Orfield-Skrivseth says. A very cost-effective project that only takes three to four days altogether, but completely changes whether you want to walk on the stairs or not, she says.



Before: Orfield-Skrivseth recommended adding an egress window after cleaning. "Even if you cleaned up the crap, you still had that little, teeny window, which makes me feel like I'm underground," she says. "It's very psychological: you've got to feel like you have a way out, and you can see the sunlight."



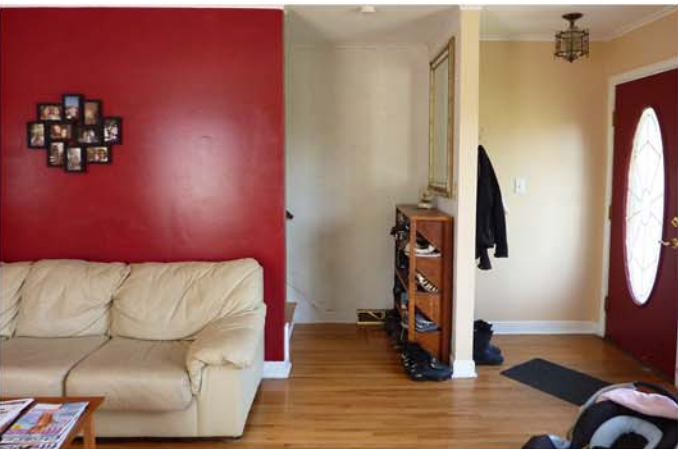
After: Adding the egress windows allowed the room to be seen in a whole different light and to be considered a legal bedroom. "Basements, I think, are an under-utilized whole free level of the home so to speak," Orfield-Skrivseth says.



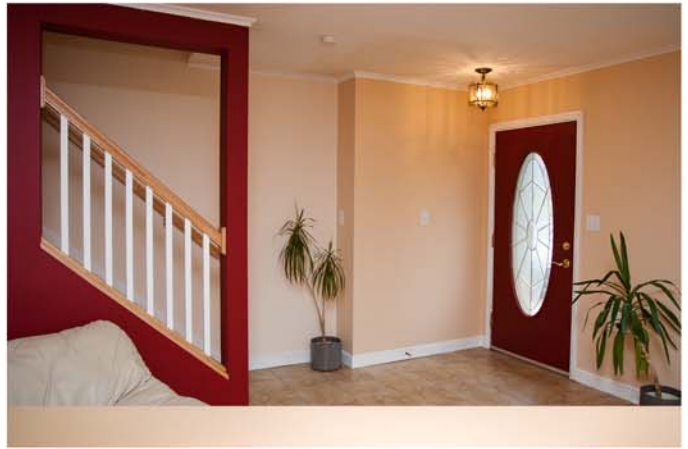
Before: Orfield-Skrivseth recommended reintroducing the yard and egress windows. "They had this concrete monstrosity, which would collect rain, dirt, never came clean and it looked like someone could be hiding there at night," she says.



After: The decision was made, says Orfield-Skrivseth, to fill the space previously filled with concrete with sod, rocks and egress windows. The galvanized window wells were chosen because they are cost-effective and are easy to keep clean.



Before: Orfield-Skrivseth recommended removing the partial wall, changing the flooring and opening the stair wall. She acknowledges that opening the stair wall cannot always be done, but it is a project she recommends whenever the opportunity arises.



After: Though this project is a bit more involved on a scale of home projects, Orfield-Skrivseth believes the results created a more inviting and welcoming entrance. Removing the wall created more space, the tiling solved the problem of guests being hesitant to walk on the hardwood floor without taking off their shoes and the opening in the wall created interest.



Before: Orfield-Skrivseth recommended changing the lighting fixture and updating the dark, dated trim and woodwork. She also recommended minor rearranging to open up the space.



After: A new lighting fixture and turning of the table change the room, according to Orfield-Skrivseth. "We have jobs where we just go through the house and change the lighting fixtures, and it's 100 percent different," she says. "Also, every single rearrangement of furniture that I've ever done for photo shoots after projects the owners have said 'leave it- it looks so much better.'"