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Opportunity Knocks: Now is the Right Time to Make that House a Home

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A home means a lot of different things to a homeowner. Fundamentally, it's a place of shelter, but more than that, it's a place of memories, a reflection of personality, and it's an investment. And there is no shortage of television programs that focus on improving that investment to help homeowners compete in today's challenging real estate market.

Several different options to increase the value of a home exist. But homeowners must first decide if they want to prepare their house for a real estate upturn or renovate for a longer, more permanent residence.



Pursuing either should be seriously considered – especially now. The current real estate slowdown is not permanent - there will be an upswing. In fact, the National Association of Realtors[®] predicts a steady upturn by the end of 2009 and into 2010. Additionally, with the current decrease in demand of new home construction and renovations, contractors are reducing their fees to survive through today's economic state.

Those who want to upgrade their homes for the long haul can choose from an ever increasing variety of energy efficient, low-maintenance products that make lives easier. Indoor upgrades can be costly and interfere with daily routines – be it a kitchen or bathroom renovation. A more appealing location to explore is an outdoor space that can soon become a new living space.

TimberTech – a leading manufacturer offering composite decking, railing and fencing products, low-voltage lighting and under deck drainage systems – offers a wide range of color choices and design options that meet budgets across the spectrum. Today, a deck is the foundation for an outdoor living space and retreat. With low voltage, ambient lighting, homeowners can enjoy their deck into the evening. Drainage systems under second story decks extend usability throughout the year by adding more outdoor living or storage area in previously unusable spaces.



Adding an outdoor living area such as a deck or patio increases the livable space of the home without the extensive cost and labor involved with an addition. It's also an opportunity to create a unique family setting while increasing value to potential home buyers. *Remodeling Magazine's* Cost vs. Value Report shows that a composite deck addition brings a better return on investment than projects like a

basement remodel, roof replacement or sunroom addition. A homeowner can expect to recoup roughly the same percentage of cost from a composite deck addition as they would get from a bathroom or kitchen remodel.

The North American Deck and Railing Association (NADRA) estimates that 20 million decks nationwide are in need of repair or rebuilding. Homeowners who already have a deck can add instant value by re-planking the existing deck if the sub-structure is in good shape. Alternative decking products such as wood-plastic composites (WPC) and PVC planks allow consumers a wider choice of colors, design options and superior resistance to scratching, staining, fading, warping and rotting.

It is very important to do a fair amount of research to determine the type of decking and railing that will best pay dividends over the life of the deck. Composites have become the fastest growing decking product in recent years. Consumers should look for products from companies that have a proven track record for quality and durability. Consumers shouldn't be afraid to take their research in places like professional lumberyards, as they often have a wide range of decking brand and color choices.

By choosing wisely and investing in the due diligence phase of the project, homeowners can maximize their investments, even in a down economy.

