

Local Real Estate



Step-by-Step: A Realtor's Words of Wisdom for Surviving a Home Renovation

Chrissy Neumann, a Cobb County real estate agent who was recently named Real Estate Magazine's Rookie of the Year, takes pride from making clients feel comfortable throughout the home buying or selling process. More importantly, Neumann loves helping people "feel at home."

Through it all, Neumann has seen homeowners face bumps in the road when it comes to tackling homes that need renovation. Whether you're seeking a project of your own or you're hoping sell a home in need of some TLC, here's what Neumann recommends.

Cobb Living: What are your top 10 pointers for potential buyers seeking a home to renovate or remodel—whether for their own home or investment purposes?

Chrissy Neumann:

Before you buy:

- Decide whether you want to take on only cosmetic repairs or reconstruct an entire home.
- Understand the market in the neighborhood. Know if your renovation will be supported by comparable homes.
- Don't buy the most expensive home in a neighborhood, and then sink a lot of money into it.
- Be familiar with the various mortgage options available for "fixer uppers."

Once you've purchased a home:

- Select neutral colors to create a "blank canvas" for buyers of your renovated home.
- Upgrade the kitchen first.
- Painting is the fastest and most inexpensive upgrade. Paint everything.
- Focus on the floors. Whatever the surface, make sure the floors are inviting and not cracked or discolored.
- Start one project and finish it before moving on.

Cobb Living: What are the most common problems buyers need to watch out for?

Neumann: I always tell my clients to stay away from homes that have had previous water or structural damage! Other potentially big problems include:

- **Poor drainage.** This is the most common problem discovered by home inspectors. Improving drainage may mean adding a new system of roof gutters or re-grading the entire lot.
- **Faulty wiring.** Older homes, especially, often have insufficient or out-of-date electrical systems. Because this is potentially hazardous, the issue should not be taken lightly. You may have to replace the

entire system, or part of it, to bring a home up to code or make it safe.

- **Leaky roof.** If the roof has water damage, look for old or damaged shingles or improper flashing. Shingles and small amounts of flashing are generally inexpensive to repair. However, if the roof is old, replacing the entire thing is a big and expensive project.
- **Unsafe heating system.** Old or poorly maintained heating systems are a serious health and safety hazard. If the system operates on anything besides electricity, install carbon monoxide detectors in the house. New furnaces are a major expense, but they are more energy efficient.
- **Plumbing problems.** Commonly, in older homes, piping materials are simply old or faulty and may be fixed with simple repairs. But some require more expensive measures such as replacing the entire system.
- **Poor ventilation.** Too much moisture can wreak havoc on interior walls and structural elements. Install ventilation fans in all bathrooms. Regularly open the windows in the home. Damage from poor ventilation may mean replacing drywall, but structural repairs will be more expensive.
- **Environmental hazards.** Watch for lead-based paint (common in homes built before 1978), asbestos, formalde-hyde, contaminated drinking water, radon and underground oil tanks that leak. Special inspections are needed to identify these issues, and they are usually expensive to fix.

Neumann, who often helps clients purchase investment homes such as the one seen in these photos, says that realtors can not only lead buyers to great investment opportunities, but they can also help buyers decide what to renovate in order to recoup the most money.