

Ten Great Ways to Boost Curb Appeal for Under \$500

How's your curb appeal? Don't know? If you anticipate putting your home on the market anytime in the near future, the curb appeal of your home is something you'll want to consider.

Curb appeal is the face your home presents to the world. It molds the first impression that prospective buyers form of your home. And if it's not up-to-snuff, it's also the *last* impression that prospective buyers will have of your home.

Inner Beauty Isn't Enough

The interior of your home may be pristine and picture perfect, worthy of a photo layout in *Better Homes & Gardens*. But if the *outer* beauty of your home - its curb appeal - is less-than-impressive, it's not likely that many home shoppers will ever lay eyes upon your home's inner beauty.

According to Ron Phipps, past president of the National Association of Realtors (NAR), "Curb appeal remains king - it's the first thing potential home buyers notice when looking for a home..."

In fact, nearly half of all home-buying decisions are swayed to a yea or nay based upon a property's curb appeal, according to the NAR.

But in spite of the importance of curb appeal, boosting *your* home's curb appeal doesn't have to be a big-budget proposition. Sure, there are plenty of big-ticket items that can impact your home's curb appeal - the condition of your roof, for example - but there are many low-cost and even no-cost tweaks you can make to significantly boost the curb appeal of your home.

Here are ten projects that can give a significant bump to your curb appeal without busting your bank account:

Three Free Curb Appeal Boosting Projects

There are a number of projects that can help you significantly boost curb appeal with nothing more than some cleaning supplies and household utensils - along with a liberal application of elbow grease, of course.

- 1. Spiffy-Up Siding and Decking.**

Make your moldy siding and dingy decking sparkle and shine, and you'll give your curb appeal a huge bump. To get the best results you can rent a pressure washer, but just a garden hose, a bucket of soapy water and lots of labor can do wonders. (The National Association of Realtors notes that simply giving a home a good washing can add \$10,000 to \$15,000 to the sale price!)

2. **Do The Windows.**

You're tired of looking through those smudges and smears anyway, aren't you? Even if you don't do windows, it's worth making an exception when your home is on the market.

3. **Landscape Labor.**

You knew this one was coming, didn't you? Yes, prune those trees, trim those hedges, pull those weeds - it all makes a difference.

Five Curb Appeal Boosting Projects for Under \$100

These projects will take a little bit of coin, but each can be completed for less than \$100 in materials.

1. **Mailbox Makeover.**

Does your mailbox wobble and sway in the wind? Is it dinged and dented, with paint chipping off like scabby wounds? That's a curb appeal no-no! Whether your box just needs some TLC or a complete replacement, it's worth the cost and effort. Will prospective buyers notice your sparkly new mailbox? Maybe not. But you can be sure their eyes will be drawn to your ratty *old* mailbox faster than you can say "the check's in the mail."

2. **Door Do-Over.**

Are your front door's best days behind it? If so, prospective buyers might never see the interior of your home if they're turned off by the exterior of your door. But if your door is still structurally sound, it's an inexpensive project to repaint or restain it, and to replace old hardware (hinges and knobs) with new if needed. More prospective buyers will come a'knocking!

3. **Add Some New Numbers**

Who ever thinks about house numbers? Postal carriers and delivery people do, but most homeowners don't. And over the years, those numbers can get to looking pretty sad, and sometimes less than legible. But spiffy new numbers can be had for under twenty dollars a digit. That's a bargain when it comes to boosting curb appeal.

4. **Tweak Your Landscape**

Pruning, trimming, and weeding you can do for free. But you can also spend a bit and bump up the beauty of your landscape considerably. If it's the right time of year, buy a bunch of potted flowers to add a colorful touch to your yard. If trees are sparse on your property, splurge on a few trees (transplants sold in 5-gallon containers are usually quite affordable).

5. **Upgrade Exterior Light Fixtures**

How long has it been since you've taken a look at your outside light fixtures? Probably a *long* time, unless you've recently had to replace a bulb. And while your old light fixtures might not look all that bad, consider whether shiny, bright new fixtures would look a lot better. If so, replacing them can give a nice boost to your curb appeal.

This project could move into the under-\$500 category, depending upon the number of fixtures you decide to replace and the expense of the new fixtures you choose. Perfectly fine fixtures, though, can be had for as little as twenty dollars. (Be careful to choose replacement fixtures that have the same mounting footprint as your current fixtures.)

Two Curb Appeal Boosting Projects for Under \$500

1. Paint Party

This one's iffy for this category, but depending upon the size of your home, you may be able to buy all the supplies needed to repaint your house for under \$500. That leaves you (and whomever you can con into helping you, Tom Sawyer style) to do all the labor, of course. But few things are more off-putting to a prospective buyer than a house that needs painting. And few curb appeal boosting projects will be more effective than giving your house a fresh new coat of paint.

2. Outside Ornamentation.

How about a garden trellis with climbing vines, or perhaps a stylish birdbath for a particularly homey touch? Maybe even a pair of architectural pots bordering your entryway, planted with ornamental grasses, shrubs, or seasonal, colorful annuals?

Don't be the Victim of a Drive-By

When prospective homebuyers first become interested in a house, quite often they will drive by the home just to get a quick first impression. As they ease past the home in question, they're giving it a fast once-over. From that initial impression, they'll form a thumbs-up or thumbs-down opinion about the house. And that's all about curb appeal.

If the home has great curb appeal that has the prospective buyer bumping the brakes to take a longer, longing look at the house, a sale may be imminent. They'll at least call the realtor to arrange for a closer look at the property. But if the home's curb appeal is, shall we say, less than attractive, they're likely to goose the gas instead and head to the next property on their list, with nary a look back.

If *your* home is the property in question, will it cause drive-by brake-bumping or gas-goosing? It all depends upon your curb appeal.