Factors such as moving walls, installing new flooring, product inventory can lengthen project timelines for popular renovations

By Sharon Stone

Home renovation projects are significant undertakings, especially during a pandemic. Working with skilled and experienced contractors can ensure projects go smoothly and are completed promptly. Timing is a big consideration for homeowners as they begin renovating their homes, and the home improvement experts at HomeAdvisor say that the following are some general timelines for popular renovation projects.

- **Home addition**: Short of a full-scale demolition and rebuild, home additions are the most time-consuming projects homeowners can undertake. HomeAdvisor has found that its survey of customers who recently completed home addition projects reported that the average time from start to finish was between three and four months. Certain variables, including the scale of the project and the local permits process, can extend the time it takes to complete a home addition.

- **Kitchen remodel**: Scale is a big factor to consider when estimating the time it takes to complete various home improvement projects, and kitchen remodels are no exception.
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Variables to consider when choosing a media room

- **Location, shape, windows and lighting and wall color should all be factors when designing**

Compiled by Sharon Stone

The term “home theater” once made homeowners who love movies and sports dream of the day when they could dedicate a large area in their home to watching the big game or their favorite films. Such rooms are now widely referred to as “media rooms.” Though the terminology may have changed, media rooms are not all that different from home theaters.

Before choosing an area of the home as a designated media room, homeowners must consider a host of variables to ensure they get as much out of the room as possible.

- **Location and shape:** The location of the room is of the utmost importance. Media rooms tend to be more social settings than traditional home theaters, which were often designed to be isolated from the rest of the home so noise and natural light did not adversely affect the film-watching experience. Homeowners may not want their media rooms to be in high traffic areas of their homes, but they needn’t be completely secluded, either.

  The renovation experts at the DIY Network note that the shape of a room should be considered before designating it as the media room. In general, square rooms are not ideal, as such rooms can produce harmonic distortions. A rectangular room likely won’t produce such distortions, especially when homeowners place their screens and primary speakers on short walls. It’s important that homeowners do not downplay the importance of sound, as media rooms, unlike traditional home theaters, may be used for listening to music just as much as they are for watching films or sports. Viewers may not recognize distortions when watching something, but people may notice these abnormalities when listening to music.

- **Windows:** Media rooms are multi-purpose rooms, so homeowners don’t need to remove rooms with windows from consideration. But the experts at the DIY Network note that windows are hard surfaces that can reflect sound and distort audio, and the light that gets in through windows can produce reflections on the viewing surface. Each See MEDIA ROOM on SHI Page 5

Before choosing an area of the home as a designated media room, homeowners should consider a host of variables to ensure they get as much out of the room as possible.
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MEDIA ROOM
Continued from SHI Page 3

of those factors can adversely affect your listening and viewing experience. A room with windows can still make for a good media room, but you may want to invest in some blackout curtains to mitigate some of the disadvantages of having windows in the room.

• Wall colors: The colors of the walls in the room is another variable homeowners will have to consider. Homeowners won’t want to host guests for the big game in rooms with darkened walls, as that can create a dreary atmosphere and potentially make people tired. But especially bright colors will reflect light and adversely affect the viewing experience. Neutral colors should not affect the colors on the screen, making them the ideal color choice for media room walls.

Media rooms are high on many homeowners’ renovation lists. Considering a host of variables prior to designating an area for a media room can ensure the finished product is as enjoyable as possible.
How to choose the right lighting inside your home

Lighting in a home serves both practical and aesthetic purposes. It’s easy to maneuver around a well-lit home, reducing the risk of slips and falls, and the right lighting can help homeowners create their desired ambiance, which typically changes depending on which room you’re in.

When choosing lighting for their homes, homeowners must walk a fine line between appearance and functionality. A fixture in the foyer that instantly impresses visitors likely won’t prove as awe-inspiring if it’s installed in the living room. When choosing lighting for a home, some general rules about what works in each room can help homeowners make the most informed decision.

**Kitchen**

Kitchens are often the busiest room in a home, so lighting here can be especially important. A kitchen often benefits, both practically and aesthetically, from different types of lighting. For example, pendant lighting above kitchen islands can make meal preparation easier and safer, but such lighting likely won’t work in breakfast nooks and informal dining areas in the kitchen. Recessed lighting works best in such areas. In kitchens with no island, under-cabinet lighting can be used to illuminate countertops and simplify meal preparation.

When choosing lighting for a home, some general rules about what works in each room can help homeowners make the most informed decision.

**Formal dining room**

Many people enjoy the look of chandeliers in formal dining rooms, and such fixtures can be installed directly above the dinner table. The interior design experts at Better Homes & Gardens advise hanging chandeliers roughly 33 inches above the table in dining rooms with 8-foot ceilings, adding 3 inches for each additional foot above 8 feet. Darkened dining areas may be ideal in restaurants, but homeowners may want to split the difference at home and choose dimmable chandeliers for their dining rooms. This allows homeowners to dim the lights for romantic dinners but turn them up for family gatherings with lots of people around the table.

**Living room**

Adaptability also is important in the living room, where homeowners may host anything from movie nights to book clubs to parties for the big game. It can be a tall order to accommodate such a wide range of activities, and many homeowners come down to deciding between recessed lighting and track lighting. If the living room currently has neither style, homeowners should recognize that it will cost considerably less to install track lighting than recessed lighting. Flexible track lighting provides ambient, task or accent lighting, and track lights can even be moved to change lighting schemes at any time, making them a budget-friendly option for homeowners whose living rooms are multi-purpose spaces. Recessed lighting also works well in living rooms, especially ones with low ceilings. That’s because recessed lighting is installed into the ceiling, meaning it does not take up any visual space in the room. That can help living rooms feel bigger.

See **LIGHTING** on SHI Page 15
Benefits of working with an interior designer

Interior designers can help homeowners avoid costly mistakes and get it right the first time

Compiled by Sharon Stone

Home is where the heart is, and it's also where homeowners express their style. Though interior design may come naturally to some homeowners, many more can benefit from a little help defining their style and translating that style into a beautiful home. In such instances, interior designers can be the most valuable investments homeowners make in their homes.

Homeowners may hear “interior designer” and immediately hear the sound of cash registers ringing in their heads. However, many interior designers offer various services, including hourly consultations that can make them cost-effective, especially for homeowners who are still trying to define their style and decide just how they want their homes to look.

Many interior designers offer various services, including hourly consultations that can make them cost-effective, especially for homeowners who are still trying to define their style and decide just how they want their homes to look. That's just one of the many benefits of working with interior design professionals.

• Interior designers can save homeowners money. Much like it's best for homeowners with no DIY experience to hire professional contractors when renovating their homes, paying an interior designer when you have little experience with design can help you avoid potentially costly mistakes. Interior designers are skilled at transforming homeowners’ visions into finished products, and that's a valuable skill homeowners don't necessarily have.

Trial and error when designing a home's interior can be costly, even if you're not knocking down any walls or swinging any hammers. For example, after renovating on their own, homeowners may find they need to replace a new couch or dining table that they realize contradicts their design scheme. Interior designers can help homeowners avoid such costly mistakes and get it right the first time.

• Interior designers can help you coordinate your style. Each and every component of a home's interior says something about its owner. Whether

See DESIGNER on SHI Page 13

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Learn the right way to clean patio furniture

Mild cleaners and a bit of elbow grease can go a long way to brighten things

Compiled by Sharon Stone

Once the days begin to grow a little bit longer and the numbers on the thermometer creep a tad higher, outdoor entertaining season is right around the corner. Homeowners may be eager to once again return to the comforts of their backyards. However, their patio furniture may not be ready for lounging just yet.

Some simple cleaning strategies make it easy to brighten outdoor furniture made of metal, glass, wood, and plastic. Before homeowners know it, their backyards will be ready for outdoor entertaining season.

Proper storage
Storing outdoor furniture during the colder months of the year is a great way to protect items from the elements. This may involve careful shrink-wrapping and keeping items outdoors, or by moving furniture indoors to a shed or garage. Cleaning the furniture one last time before storing it also can be handy.

Remove stuck-on debris
Inspect furniture and be prepared to remove any stuck-on debris, such as bird droppings, sticky food residue or even cobwebs and insect nests. Be sure to use a cleaning tool that is safe for the material you are cleaning. Test an inconspicuous area of the furniture first to ensure your tools don't damage the furniture. For example, many scrub brushes can scratch glass or aluminum.

Make a thorough cleanser
Clean stains off of furniture with a

See EXPERTS on SHI Page 13
Tools that can keep your family safe at home

- New and improved alerts and shut-off systems can save your property and your wallet

Compiled by Sharon Stone

Homes should be sanctuaries for their inhabitants. Keeping homes safe and sound requires both maintenance and some caution designed to make homes less vulnerable to potentially costly issues.

Promptly addressing maintenance issues around the house can reduce the risk of accident or injury.

In addition, various items can alert homeowners to problems they may not otherwise recognize before issues jeopardize residents’ health or take a turn for the costly.

Auto shut-off features

Who hasn’t left the house only to worry an hour or so later about whether the coffee pot was turned off or the straightening iron was unplugged? When shopping for personal care items or appliances, seek out models that have automatic shut-off features. This safety feature will power down the unit after a certain amount of time, which can reduce the risk of overheated products and house fires.

Flood and leak detector

The financial information and wellness resource Canstar says leakages, burst pipes and other water-related issues in a home are one of the more common home emergencies. Water damage can cost between hundreds and thousands of dollars depending on how invasive the water problem is. Catching a leak or flood in a home early on is essential.

Water leak detectors are designed to detect a potential flood or leak at an early stage so homeowners can take action. Sensors may sound an alarm or be connected to a WiFi system to send an alert to a mobile device.

Carbon monoxide detector

It is vital that homeowners install carbon monoxide detectors in their homes. Carbon monoxide is odorless and colorless, and can cause poisoning that slowly suffocates a person. It also is combustible.

Carbon monoxide devices cannot detect a gas leak, but gas detectors can. They are a wise addition for people who have a significant number of natural gas appliances, or those who have older, gas-powered appliances

Sump pump alarm

A sump pump can mean the difference between a flooded basement and a dry floor. Homeowners may not recognize a sump pump malfunction during a power outage, and clogs also may not be detectable until the basement floods. Sump pump alarms alert homeowners that something is amiss.

Homeowners can rely on devices and other tools to prevent their homes from being damaged.
Home renovation trends are ever-changing. Renovations that might have been essential 20 years ago may seem dated now. Recognizing the potentially popular trends of tomorrow is a great way for homeowners to give their homes a fresh new look and put themselves in position to capitalize on popular trends when they put their homes on the market.

That’s especially so after 2020, a year when millions of people spent more time at home than ever before. All that time working from home and relaxing at home gave millions of homeowners ideas about what they like about their homes and what they hope to change.

The following are some renovation trends that various experts suspect could emerge in 2021.

• Eco-friendly living: Urdesign, an online magazine that showcases creative trends in design, architecture, art, technology, and fashion, predicts that eco-friendly living solutions figure to be hot commodities in 2021. Eco-friendly appliances, furniture and designs can help to conserve energy and reduce waste.

• Large windows: Large windows can provide stunning views of the outdoors and allow ample natural light into a home. It may not be a coincidence if large windows prove to be a hot trend in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic that dominated much of 2020 forced many people to spend considerably more time at home. Darker homes without much natural light can adversely affect mood, especially when people are spending more time at home.

• Minimalism: The anticipated popularity of minimalism in 2021 may also be connected to the pandemic. As professionals were forced to work from home and many families spent more time together inside their homes than ever before, they may have recognized a need to cut back on clutter, including extra furniture. A minimalist approach is both simple and clean, which can make homes feel less claustrophobic.

• Multi-functional spaces: Homeowners asked a lot of their homes in 2020, as rooms were transformed into multi-functional spaces seemingly overnight. According to the experts at HGTV, spending more time at home showed homeowners that it may not make sense to dedicate entire rooms of a home to a single purpose. Renovations that can help homeowners transform rooms into multi-functional spaces figure to be hot commodities in the years ahead.
Addressing mold after a flood

Floods can quickly turn lives upside down. According to the World Health Organization, more than two billion people were affected by floods between 1998 and 2017, and those people no doubt recognize just how unsettling floods can be.

The damage caused by flooding can linger long after water levels have subsided. Mold left in the wake of a flood poses a significant threat, and WebMD notes that mold can be especially dangerous for people with respiratory issues like allergies or asthma. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, one of the organization’s chief concerns was to let those affected by the storm learn how to safely clean up mold.

Mold cleanup must be done with a sense of urgency, as WebMD indicates that mold can grow very quickly in damp environments. That said, it’s vital that homeowners only reenter flooded properties when it’s safe to do so. Reentering too quickly and before government officials say it’s safe to do so can put residents in serious jeopardy.

Once it’s safe to reenter a home, the CDC recommends the following approach to address mold after a flood.

- **Wear personal protective equipment.** Gloves, masks and goggles should be worn to protect the eyes, nose, mouth, and skin. While personal protective equipment can be highly effective, anyone with mold allergies or preexisting respiratory conditions like asthma should leave mold cleanup to the professionals.
- **Discard certain items.** Items that are wet with flood water but cannot be cleaned and completely dried within 24 to 48 hours should be discarded. People with flood insurance policies may need to take photos of items prior to discarding them if they hope to be reimbursed.
- **Open doors and windows.** The Federal Emergency Management Agency notes that airing the home out by opening the doors and windows can inhibit mold growth when humidity levels are lower outside than inside.
- **Circulate air around the house.** If it’s safe to turn the electricity back on, circulate air inside the home with fans. In addition, use a dehumidifier to remove moisture from inside the home.
- **Do not mix cleaning products.** The CDC notes the dangers associated with mixing cleaning products. For example, mixing bleach with ammonia can produce toxic vapors.
- **Scrub surfaces.** Use clean water and detergent to remove all visible mold from surfaces around the house. Dry the surfaces immediately after cleaning them.
- **Avoid refurbishing until all mold has been removed.** Mold can grow even if it’s been painted or caulked over. The CDC urges anyone tasked with addressing flood-related mold to make sure surfaces are completely cleaned and dried prior to refurbishing rooms.
- **Dry the home as quickly as possible.** Drying the home as quickly as possible, and ideally within 24 to 48 hours of the occurrence of flooding, can inhibit further mold growth. However, it’s imperative that residents only reenter a home after getting the go-ahead from local authorities.
Addressing backyard pet waste

Washing down areas where pets urinate can help dilute urine and prevent damage to lawn

Compiled by Sharon Stone

Pets benefit households in so many ways.

According to the Animal Health Foundation, being around pets can decrease cortisol levels — a hormone activated by stress. Pets also may inspire their owners to engage in physical activity, such as walks around the neighborhood or play sessions in the backyard, and a physically active lifestyle can reduce a person's risk for various diseases.

To reap the rewards of a pet, owners must be willing to put in the effort to care for companion animals. This includes those tasks that can be unsavory, such as cleaning up pet waste. Not only is pet waste messy, if left out and about it can be an eyesore, a health risk and affect the quality of the soil in one's yard.

Regular removal of pet waste benefits the environment as well as pets and their owners. There are a variety of solutions that can help people rid their lawns of pet waste.

- **Put it in the trash.** If allowed, placing waste in a trash receptacle is an option. However, certain areas of the country do not allow feces disposal in landfills. Bacteria found in animal excrement also can leach into the environment if not handled properly.
- **Flush it.** Another solution is to flush waste down the toilet. But that is not always convenient and it requires owners to bring waste indoors. Do not flush cat waste that is covered in litter.
- **Utilize a sewer line attachment.** This disposal system is connected directly to a septic tank or sewer line. It will require washing out debris and waste that gets stuck in the plumbing.
- **Use an enzymatic dog waste dissolver.** Soaking waste and using an enzymatic product can dissolve it more safely than using lime or another chemical. It can be used out in the open, or applied to waste stored in a receptacle.
- **Create a septic-style composter.** Some people create a mini septic station in their yards in which the waste can break down and then dissolve into a predetermined corner of the property, away from where it can affect the landscape.
- **Use a hose and water.** Solid waste is not the only concern in the yard. Concentrated urine may contain high levels of nitrogen as well as salts and other compounds, according to The Spruce: Pets. These components alter the pH of the soil and cause patches of grass to die and turn yellow or brown. Females cause more damage because they squat and make a puddle of urine, while males tend to lift their legs and disperse the spray. Washing down areas where pets urinate can help dilute the urine and prevent damage.
**DESIGNER**
Continued from SHI Page 7

It’s their choice of lighting fixtures, furniture or even appliances, homeowners make a statement any time they choose a design component for their homes.

Interior designers can help homeowners coordinate their styles so each room seamlessly transitions to the next one. An ultra-modern living room may stick out like a sore thumb in a home that’s predominantly rustic, and interior designers can help homeowners avoid such mistakes.

- **Interior designers recognize what’s trending.** Interior designers tend to be up-to-date on the latest trends. That can be incredibly valuable, especially for homeowners who are anticipating putting their homes on the market in the near future. In such instances, designers can help homeowners invest in updates or renovations that will appeal to today’s buyers, increasing the likelihood that their homes will sell more quickly, and potentially for more money.

- **Interior designers are well-connected.** Interior designers often collaborate with contractors. Those professional relationships can help homeowners avoid the headaches of finding the right professionals to work with when renovating their homes.

Many a homeowner has benefitted from working with interior designers. Such partnerships can help homeowners transform their residences into the home of their dreams.

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**EXPERTS**
Continued from SHI Page 8

A versatile cleanser. A mild cleaner can be made by mixing 1/2 cup baking soda with 1 gallon of warm water, according to the experts at Better Homes & Gardens. Regular dishwashing detergent also can be mixed with water, as it has a mild bleaching agent. This cleanser can be used on plastic resin furniture or metal furniture, which are popular patio furniture materials.

**Patio fabrics**

Check the cleaning instructions of outdoor fabrics, as there might be specific instructions on the tags. In some cases, fabric may be removed and washed in a washing machine on a gentle setting. A solution of dish soap and warm water also is a gentle way to clean outdoor fabrics. Once items are clean, HGTV advises applying a water-repellent fabric protector to minimize staining and maintenance.

**Strip or sand**

Wood furniture may need specialized care. If stains cannot be removed with a mild cleaner, then hard woods like teak can be surface-sanded to restore items’ original look.

Pressure washers can often do more harm than good to patio furniture, so it’s best to look for an alternative way to clean them. Usually a bit of elbow grease and a cleanser is all that’s needed. Give the cleaning product time to work. Wipe down and dry the furniture thoroughly to prevent the growth of mildew.
Transform your garage into a functional, useable space

By Sally Rummel

It’s time to let go of our messy garage habits from winter and bring a breath of fresh air into one of our most cluttered spaces.

Once you have the clutter removed and can see what you have to work with, you may decide to take your garage makeover one step further and create a convenient space for crafts, gardening or other hobbies.

However, if you need actual functional living space, you can also find that kind of space in your garage. Insulation, a sub floor and heat will be needed to potentially transform the space into photography studios or and arts and crafts space.

Whatever your garage dreams might be, it all starts with a clean slate. Home expert Bob Villa advises homeowners to break the task into three steps:

1. Clear the clutter. Take everything out of the garage and group the items you’re eliminating into four piles: toss, recycle, donate or sell. Get rid of anything you haven’t used in the past year. Have a garage sale, donate to a church rummage sale, or arrange to move everything from appliances to tires and trash, donating and recycling whatever is possible. Find local recycling centers where you can safely dispose of paint and chemicals.

2. Make a plan. Now that the garage is empty, decide whether the space could benefit from a fresh coat of paint. Then begin to group items by task or interest — from garden tools and containers to sports equipment. Other logical groupings include holiday décor, kids’ stuff and a workshop area with space for a sturdy bench, plus a pegboard or cabinets.

3. Choose tailored solutions. Use smart organizational products like wall systems, storage cabinets, adjustable shelving, workbenches, hooks, bins and tubs.

Once you’ve determined what zones you need, work logically to fit them in for easiest access.

Think vertically, to use a ton of wasted space. In addition to hanging rakes and tools, consider hanging bikes and a wheelbarrow on hoists and overhead racks.

3. Choose tailored solutions. Use smart organizational products like wall systems, storage cabinets, adjustable shelving, workbenches, hooks, bins and tubs.

Once you have cleaned out your space, you can decide to dream big or to dream small, in redefining your garage. Creating new storage systems in your garage will certainly be a big step in the right direction, without costing a lot of money. A bigger dream might be to make that space into a family room, an extra bedroom, even a master bedroom suite.

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TIMELINES
Continued from SHI Page 1
exception. Some HomeAdvisor users reported projects taking as long as four months, though the average time reported was roughly six weeks. Projects that require major overhauls like rearranging the plumbing and moving walls will likely take longer than more cosmetic projects that are limited to replacing cabinets and countertops.

- **Bathroom remodel**: More than 1,000 homeowners surveyed by HomeAdvisor reported that bathroom remodels took about 4.5 weeks from start to finish. Small-scale remodels that focus on painting the walls a fresh color and replacing existing tiles can be completed in less than two weeks. But like with kitchen remodels, bathroom remodels that involve replacing plumbing fixtures and removing walls figure to take much longer than that.

- **Siding installation**: HomeAdvisor users report that new siding projects take roughly two weeks from start to finish. That estimate is the same regardless of which materials homeowners are replacing and installing.

- **Replacement windows**: Homeowners who want to replace all the windows in their home can expect such a project to take roughly three weeks. HomeAdvisor notes that such a timeline need not concern homeowners worried that they will be forced to brave the elements during the length of the project. Much of a contractors’ time during a window replacement project will be spent on upfront measuring and then ensuring a tight fit once the windows have been installed.

When asked how the pandemic has affected the construction industry, Patrick Widing of Patrick Widing Custom Homes said the pandemic has affected lead times for getting product both internationally as well as domestically. It has slowed it down from the average (normal) 5-7 week lead time to now, anywhere from 8-12 weeks and in some cases even longer than that.

He advises everyone, regarding COVID, that it’s a matter of understanding the project and what’s coming up and being mindful of planning ahead. “We can no longer assume that ‘normal’ time frames are in play these days,” he said. “The further ahead you can look and start putting the pieces in motion, and getting product such as building materials, finish materials, appliances, fixtures etc., onsite for the trades and subcontractors, the better.”

Good communication between builder/contractor and suppliers, as well as clients and their expectations is important.

Dan McNeill, president of McNeill Construction, said, “Some orders are taking months. Fireplace inserts, appliances, electrical suppliers that are mainly made in China have very low inventory. Prices for materials are up. He said lumber prices are over 100 percent price increase.”

McNeill said for the most part, his clients are understanding of the pandemic and circumstances. “More than likely, they have some personal experience with short supply of something,” he said. He added that he expected business to slow down due to increased prices, but he is not having any issues staying busy or keeping his customers happy.

LIGHTING
Continued from SHI Page 6

**Bedroom**

The home improvement experts at BobVila.com say that bedroom lightings should provide enough light when getting dressed, but also be able to be toned down as residents prepare for their bedtime routines. Both portable and installed lighting can be used in bedrooms to serve these various functions. Recessed fixtures that dim can ensure there’s ample light to get dressed in the morning, but they also can be dimmed at night as residents try to get ready to sleep. Portable nightstand lights can make it easier for couples sharing a bedroom, allowing one person to stay up and read while the other goes to sleep.

Homeowners have many options and many needs when choosing lighting for their homes. A professional consultation with a lighting expert or interior decorator can help homeowners find lights that provide both practical and aesthetic appeal.