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What you'll get back on those home improvements.

The littlest home improvements can sometimes bring the biggest payoffs. For instance, replacing an entry door with a steel model can garner a whopping 239.3% return for homeowners, according to *Remodeling Online's* 2009-10 Cost vs. Value Report for the West South Central region, which includes Texas.

If you have more money to spend, an attic or basement remodel will also give you a pretty decent return. (Of course that means you have to have a basement to begin with.) However, most of the home improvements that reap the highest rewards are smaller projects—those that cost less than \$20,000. Here's a look at the top 10 projects that recoup the most, judging by the annual study that compares the cost of construction to likely return on investment at resale*

*** 2009-10 Averages for West South Central region**
(Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma)

| | | Est. Return | Job Cost |
|-----|---|-------------|----------|
| 1. | Steel entry door replacement | 239.3% | \$1,043 |
| 2. | Attic bedroom remodel | 97.7% | \$41,389 |
| 3. | Basement remodel | 92.6% | \$52,931 |
| 4. | Upscale siding replacement – fiber cement | 86.4% | \$12,874 |
| 5. | Upscale siding replacement – foam-backed vinyl | 83.4% | \$11,671 |
| 6. | Minor kitchen remodel | 82.5% | \$20,077 |
| 7. | Midrange bathroom remodel | 81.7% | \$14,109 |
| 8. | Midrange deck addition – wood | 81.1% | \$9,773 |
| 9. | Midrange siding replacement – vinyl | 79.0% | \$9,365 |
| 10. | Upscale window replacement – vinyl | 78.9% | \$11,888 |

Other projects you may be interested in:

| Project | Type | Job Cost | Resale Value | % of Cost Recouped |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|
| Bathroom Remodel | upscale | \$46,865 | \$33,724 | 72.0% |
| Bathroom Addition | mid-range | \$33,188 | \$22,955 | 69.2% |
| | upscale | \$66,720 | \$44,807 | 67.2% |
| Major Kitchen Remodel | mid-range | \$52,405 | \$39,346 | 75.1% |
| | upscale | \$105,621 | \$69,898 | 66.2% |
| Deck Addition | composite | \$35,322 | \$23,990 | 67.9% |
| Windows Replacement | Wood, mid-range | \$10,168 | \$7,802 | 76.7% |
| | Wood, upscale | \$15,899 | \$11,875 | 74.7% |
| | Vinyl, mid-range | \$9,285 | \$6,859 | 76.6% |



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What's so great about Texas?

A lot, apparently. Texas, and more specifically, the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, is recognized as a top place to do business by numerous media and analyst reports. Twenty-five of the Fortune 500 companies call the area home, giving DFW the fourth-highest concentration of such companies in the nation.

The area also added more people last year than any other metropolitan area in the United States. Census estimates shows that some 6.45 million people lived in the DFW area as of July

1, 2009, up 146,530 or 2.3% over 2008, placing it as the nation's fourth largest metro area, behind New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

As far as the housing market goes, Dallas-area home prices rose 3 percent from a year ago in the most recent Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller Home Price Index. Dallas was one of only six of the 20 markets Case-Shiller tracks that saw prices rise in March from February. March's report was the fifth consecutive year-over-year gain in local home values.

So here's to the Lone Star State.



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