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Quick Fixes, Big Impact

expert opinion

BAD DAY? Blame your condo. That's what designer Lori Ludwick might do — especially if your pad looks like it's in dire need of some TLC.

For Ludwick, the way people's homes look and function can have an impact on everything from their temperaments to their pocket-books. "I think a well-designed space influences your mood so much," says Ludwick, principle designer at Alexandria-based firm InDesign (703-582-7281, Indesignllc.net). "I want each of my spaces to reflect the owner's personality more than my own. And I want every client to want to come home to this very personal space every day."

A few years ago, when housing prices were going through the roof,

many homeowners simply fixed up their properties for the next buyers (in hopes of big returns on their investments) rather than settling in for the long haul. But as the economy prompts more owners to stay put, people are increasingly interested in creating a personal space they love. According to Ludwick, who's practiced both residential and commercial design in the D.C. area since 1994, it's as important to truly enjoy your own home as it is to add value for when it's time to move on.

And just because the emphasis these days may be more on staying put than making a profit, that doesn't mean you should stop investing in your abode. "Even if you're not selling your home, your environment impacts the way you feel about everything so much," says Ludwick. "Little improvements ... will help you live better."

We asked Ludwick for five easy fixes — all of which can be done over a weekend — to make your home a hipper, healthier place to live and appeal to future buyers down the road. **BETH LUBERECKI**



Ludwick

Try a new hue.

"A coat of paint can go a long way in freshening up your interior," Ludwick says. "Clean walls convey a clean house in good working order. Remember the ceiling; it's the fifth wall." Ludwick favors paints from **DURON** (Duron.com) and **BENJAMIN MOORE** (Benjaminmoore.com), which are both available at many stores in the area, and says there are no "awful" colors to avoid. "It's more how you use them and where."



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2 Delight in your lights. "Remove those old brass hardware-store lighting fixtures; they're not doing anyone any favors," she says. "Replace them with a fixture matching the period of your home or a more modern fixture to add interest and improve the overall feel of the space." For modern lighting, Ludwick likes **DOMINION ELECTRIC SUPPLY COMPANY** (Dominionelectric.com, several showrooms in the area). For period reproductions, she turns to the catalog from **REJUVENATION** (Rejuvenation.com).



3 Accent the architecture. "Decorative moldings around the ceiling, floor, doorways or windows can give a builder-grade house a more luxurious feel," Ludwick says. "Make sure the moldings keep with the character of your home. And stay away from standard 2 1/4" moldings; bigger is better." Ludwick likes the selection of moldings available at **SMOOT LUMBER** in Alexandria (703-823-2100, Tinyurl.com/meoqsp). "You can get moldings at hardware stores, but not the variety they have at Smoot," she says. "You're going to get something more individual there, not the same things everyone else has."

4 Warm up to modern kitchen appliances. For Ludwick, this is a way to make a big impact without much effort. Even if you're on a budget, new appliances, no matter how many bells and whistles they do or don't have, are going to be more energy efficient and function better than older ones. And in her opinion, you don't necessarily need to shell out for the stainless steel fridges or microwaves buyers on HGTV's "House Hunters" always salivate over. "A lot of people are finding stainless steel kind of cold," she says. "White is always a good classic standby, I think." Another classic: **SEARS** (Sears.com), where Ludwick finds a good selection of well-priced appliances.



5 Toss tired fixtures. "Switching out your old bathroom faucet with a shiny new one makes a big impact," says Ludwick. "Make sure you're matching the finish of the rest of the fixtures in the room. And because the faucet is something you touch every day, it's worth the money to spend a little more for a quality fixture." She recommends a matte chrome or nickel finish and thinks **FERGUSON ENTERPRISES** (Ferguson.com) has a great selection.



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