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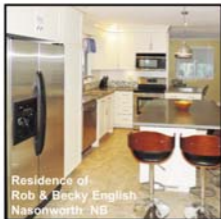
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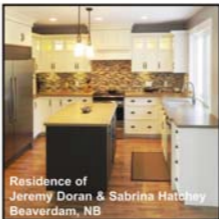
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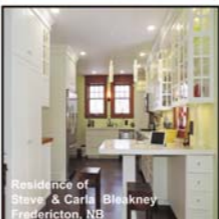
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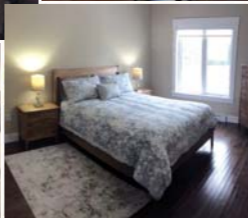
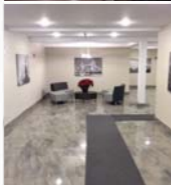
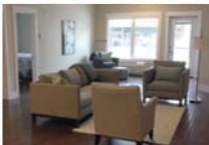
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Deciding who to hire for your renovation

(NC) You've been planning your home renovation for months, attended all the home shows and spent countless hours online looking at inspiration boards and photos. You've also interviewed numerous contractors, checked their references and received written price quotes from those you are interested in hiring. Now it's time to decide who will be doing the job.

Once you have met with the contractors who are bidding on your job, you should review each set of bid documents carefully. Compare every aspect of their bids — the description of the work, specifications (materials and products), price and allowances, deposit and payment milestones, project schedule and any additional recommendations or ideas. While overall price is important, it is only one factor. Many homeowners who have successfully completed major home renovations speak about the importance of peace of mind and working with a renovator they trust and feel confident in.



If you have a particularly strong sense of confidence in one of the renovators, they are probably your best choice, even if their price is not the lowest. In the end, you should choose the renovator based on your sense of the overall value they can provide.

If any prospective contractors suggest they can offer a better price if you pay them in cash and skip the paperwork, you should eliminate them from further consideration. They are essentially saying they cheat on their taxes and lie to the government, and you shouldn't expect they will treat you any better. You may also be implicated in future audits.

Before you hire a contractor, get informed. The Canadian Home Builder's Association offers free unbiased information on how to hire a contractor the smart and safe way. Find more information at www.getitinwriting.ca.
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Tips for your laundry room reno from Mike Holmes

(NC) An organized and well-designed laundry room can make everyday chores quicker and easier. Refreshing this space is a great project for spring. As Canada's most trusted contractor and handyman, Mike Holmes has seen it all — from faulty venting to amateur plumbing to flooring gone wrong. Here he shares his expertise so you can avoid laundry room letdown.

Make a plan and make it right. As with any home renovation, planning is the key to success. Know the timing and budget for your project, but be flexible. Leave time and money for unexpected delays and surprise discoveries once you get underway.

Think multifunction. As you prepare your design and layout, consider all the steps involved in doing laundry, and how you might want to incorporate them into the space. Do you hang a lot of your clothes to dry? Want to fold clothes right in the space? Need shelving for storage? Mapping out what you want before work begins will ensure the final product is a multifunctional room that meets all your needs.

Bring in the professionals. Wiring and plumbing are not DIY projects. Enlist the help of licensed tradespeople who have the necessary permits and qualifications to do the job right. This will help avoid any unnecessary repair costs down the road and prevent safety issues.

Select the right appliances. Spend as much time choosing your appliances as you do your paint colour, and look beyond style to find functionality that will make your life easier. Top-load laundry pairs, like GE Appliances' Designer Line Evolution, are making a big comeback because of their ergonomic design, reliable performance and the fact that they don't retain moisture, which can lead to issues with mould and mildew.

Finish with flooring. You want to choose a material that's going to give you the biggest bang for your buck. Holmes' personal pick for this room is tile because it's durable, relatively low maintenance and very easy to clean.

Find more information on appliances at geappliances.ca.

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2018 colour and design trends

(NC) Your home is a treasured place for living, relaxing and hosting guests. Give it new energy with these trending looks.

Lovely lavenders. Move over, millennial pink — this soft shade of violet is the “it colour” this year. Lavenders and lilacs are an evolution of the popular pink, and lend an air of royal sophistication to any space while bringing out beautiful, deeper tones in surrounding accents and furniture.

Statement lighting. Overhead light fixtures make for gorgeous focal points and help you set the ambiance for the room. Choose a stand-out piece that complements your décor, like an artisan chandelier or vintage sconces or pendants.

Warmer metals. Golden brass is becoming a surprisingly warm and subtle substitute for stainless steel and polished nickel. Stay on-trend with brass accents and décor, or dive in with faucet fixtures in your kitchen or bathroom in this unexpected tone.



Bold patterns. Big and bold is the way to go for patterns right now. If you want something more feminine and seasonal, go with boho-inspired florals that look like the work of an artist's paintbrush. Hard geometrics are a fun, modern alternative — think large circles in repetitive, balanced styles. Incorporate the trend with accent pillows or graphic wallpaper.

Intelligent design. Convenience is always in fashion, so look for elements that make life easier. Window treatments with PowerView motorization from Hunter Douglas allow you to operate your shades from anywhere in the world using your mobile device. This must-have feature seamlessly integrates with other whole-home automation systems, like Google Home and Alexa.

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3 secrets for a great flooring upgrade

(NC) There's more to getting new flooring than just choosing tiles you like and having them installed. Make these tile secrets part of your project and you'll get better, more beautiful and longer-lasting results.

1. Get crack-free floors.

Durability is key with ceramic and porcelain tile floors and the best way to ensure that your new tiles and grout remain crack-free is to install an uncoupling membrane underneath the tiles. These are dimpled plastic sheet materials that go down at the beginning of the installation

and work by allowing the tiles and subfloor to move slightly from side to side in relation to each other. Adding this small detail might seem unimportant, but it can make all the difference in terms of your tile floor remaining crack-free over time, especially with tiles installed over wooden subfloors.

2. Use transition strips.

Got a tile installation that won't sit entirely between walls? Will tile edges be exposed, perhaps where they meet another type of floor-

ing? This is where transition strips can help. The best are available in different metals, finishes and shapes, but all deliver the same thing — a refined, finished appearance where tile edges would normally remain visible.



3. Hire a contractor the smart way.

Need a tile contractor to make your home more beautiful? Always insist on a full written contract before the work starts. This should include the contractor's warranty on their work, so any problems that arise can be resolved properly.

Hiring someone without a contract is risky and can leave you facing expensive repairs or an unfinished job. Real professionals always put it in writing.

The Canadian Home Builder's Association offers free information on how to hire a contractor the smart and safe way. Find more information at www.getitinwriting.ca. www.newscanada.com

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Here's How.

Create the ideal cottage rental with these simple renovations

(NC) Summer is around the corner, and there are few warm-weather activities more enjoyable than spending a weekend at the cottage. For those times when you can't possibly get away, why not generate some extra income by renting it out? To increase your cottage's appeal to potential renters, consider adding some desirable amenities.

Refresh your dock.

There's no time better than the summer to fish, swim, and soak up the sun. Your dock can be a central location for activities, however, there's nothing worse than coming away from a weekend up north with slivers from an old dock. Take time at the beginning of the season to smooth out old wood by sanding and sealing it. Consider installing a new dock if you notice any safety hazards, like loose boards or jagged edges – vinyl and plastic options offer low-maintenance solutions.

Expand your entertaining space outside. Part of the fun of staying at a cottage is enjoying the great outdoors, so be sure to create a comfortable exterior where your guests can relax. An outdoor cooking and entertaining space adds an extra touch of luxury. Make it complete by adding a preparation and cleanup station, including a functioning sink. Complement a rustic faucet with Saniflo's Sanivite, a compact drain water pump that's easy to install and designed to handle the hard water that often comes with cottage living.

Ensure excellent functionality. Most cottages are based in somewhat remote locations, meaning their water and waste systems use cisterns and septic beds. To avoid any issues when renting your place, plan ahead by regularly scheduling water delivery and sewage removal services. Give your cottage an update with the Sanibest Pro, a complete plumbing system designed for heavy-duty use. This unit can easily be installed above the floor allowing cottage owners to install a complete bathroom or laundry room in as little as one day, without breaking the concrete or the bank.

With a few simple changes, you and your renters can make the best of cottage season. www.newscanada.com





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Top 5 DIY projects to help you live better

(NC) Household chores and endless projects can seem like a thankless job, but regular home maintenance is important to ensure your home's safety, comfort and long-term durability. If your to-do list is ever growing, there's no need to feel overwhelmed. Focus on this list of must-tackle jobs to not only improve your home, but your daily living, as well.

Insulate well. Ensuring your home is well insulated will improve your comfort, while saving you money by keeping heating and cooling costs in check. The right insulation — ideally a non-combustible, inorganic product — can also improve your home's fire safety and air quality. A dense insulation with non-directional fibre composition will also help control sound for a more peaceful space overall. Many contractors recommend Rockwool stone wool insulation, like Comfortbatt and Safe 'n' Sound. Both resist fire up to 1,177°C and, because they repel moisture, aren't susceptible to mould, mildew or rot. They also offer excellent sound absorption and are easy to install.



Add storage. This is an easy DIY project that can tremendously improve the way your home functions. Built-in's are especially popular because they can create an impressive focal point. Assembling store-bought units can also work with a tight budget. Ultimately, the goal is to give everything a place and to decrease clutter.

Paint. It's amazing how transformative paint can be. It can completely alter the way you feel about your home, creating an instant refresh and a foundation to anchor other updates.

Establish "me" space. Consider your interests and hobbies, then work on creating a special place in your home where you can truly relax or unwind. Whether this means turning your bathroom into a spa-like oasis with some new tile or fixtures or creating a recreational retreat, having a room that helps you recharge is great for your mental health.

Extend your living space. This doesn't have to mean an expensive addition. Consider simple improvements like refinishing unused areas of your home, like the basement, or re-purposing existing space, like a cluttered storage or laundry room that causes you stress. You might also bring an indoor feel to your outdoor space by building a patio or deck with comfortable seating and lighting to create somewhere that you can rest or entertain.

Ultimately, home improvements that help you live better can seemingly provide double the return. The ROI can be measured in enjoyment, as well as equity. www.newscanada.com

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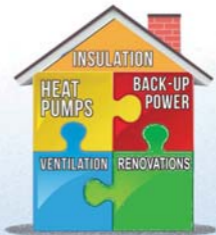
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Top 5 ways to turn your bathroom into a spa-like retreat

by Scott McGillivray

(NC) Today's busy lifestyles leave many of us craving a quick recharge. And there's no place like home to relax and unwind, so why not create a spa-like sanctuary where you can do just that? Here are some top tips on how to make it amazing.

Start with what's behind the walls.

There's nothing less relaxing than dealing with a mould problem — a common issue in bathrooms. The wrong type of insulation can be especially vulnerable, so look for one that contractors trust just for this purpose. I recommend an insulation called Rockwool Safe 'n' Sound. It's made from stone, so it repels water and won't promote mould, mildew or rot. It'll also help create a peaceful retreat, thanks to excellent sound absorption.

It's all about the water feature.

Whether it's a multi-head rain shower set against a backdrop of luxurious stone tile or a large, free-standing tub, nothing melts tension away and relaxes the muscles like water. Options abound and can be pricey, but remember, the water feature is the centrepiece of the space, and you'll use it every single day for years.

Create a warm space. A cold floor can abruptly end your calming experience. Radiant in-floor heating is one feature that, once you have it, you'll never know how you lived without it.

Let nature inspire. Recreate a spa aesthetic with natural materials like teak, bamboo or stone.

Lighting and music. Incorporating waterproof wireless controls for music and lighting let you set the mood and tone for the ultimate unwind. If you're on a budget, add a pop of elegance with a beautiful light fixture on a dimmer and complement with aromatic candles.



Accessorize.

From plush towels and robes to fresh flowers or greenery, add some

elements that make your bathroom feel like a five-star hotel. Reduce visual clutter by storing toiletries or other items in decorative baskets or jars.

My advice is to relax, unwind, and tune out the world for a little while. Make it a guilt-free indulgence, because after all, we take better care of others when we take care of ourselves, too.

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Scott McGillivray is the host of the hit HGTV series *Income Property* and *Moving the McGillivrays*, a full-time real estate investor, contractor, author, and educator.





Perfect your perennial garden this spring

(NC) Repairing your garden after an extreme winter can take some time and effort. But consistency is key to keeping your blooms fresh and full year after year. Mark Beaty, live goods merchant at The Home Depot Canada, shares tips on how to prepare your garden and help your perennials thrive.

Preliminary cleanup. Fluctuating temperatures, frost and salt can all damage your garden throughout the winter, so you want to act quickly to help your plants recover. Once the ground has thawed, clean up any fallen braches, twigs and debris from flowerbeds. Remove any frost-burned leaves and, on a warmer day, soak the soil in your garden with a hose or sprinkler to help flush the salt and any lasting winter residue.

Picking your plants. Perennials can be planted as soon as the ground is workable. Each variety has a distinct blooming period lasting several weeks, so choose plants with different bloom times to ensure continuous colour. While regional assortment varies, some of our most popular perennials are hostas (easy to grow and perfect for shaded gardens), lavender, daylilies (great for attracting hummingbirds and butterflies), dianthus, iris and phlox (with a beautiful fresh fragrance).

Maintaining your perennials. In the first few weeks, newly planted perennials require daily watering to thrive. Keep soil moist to one inch below the surface by watering every day before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m. throughout the summer. Prune older, dried flowers to encourage new growth, and at the end of the season, cut your perennials back to 6 to 12" above the soil level. This will help encourage growth the following season.

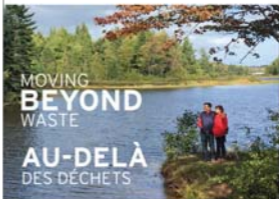
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3 tips for designing your dream kitchen island

(NC) From bold patterns to stand-out pieces, the kitchen is getting a lot of attention from designers this year. Whether you are planning a reno or new build, these tips may inspire you to create the perfect trendy kitchen island you've always wanted.

Make it the focal point

A kitchen island is a natural place for family and guests to congregate, so make it the centerpiece it deserves to be. Not only do marble and granite countertops look luxurious and add significant value to your home, but the natural stone accents also provide a durable workspace that is easy to maintain. Consider completing the aesthetic with a stand-out light fixture to really make a statement.

Make it double-duty

Adding an island to your kitchen is an excellent solution for creating extra storage and counter space for cooking and food preparation. With a few chairs, it often doubles as a breakfast bar, but why stop there? Add an integrated beverage fridge and shelving to store your cocktail glasses for a built-in bar – convenient for frequent entertainers.

Make it functional

Add more function to your basic kitchen island with the addition of a cooktop, sink or dishwasher. Don't let complicated or expensive plumbing work stand



in your way. The Sanivite drain water pump from Saniflo is ideally suited for use anywhere in the home where additional plumbing fixtures are needed. This above-floor pump is small enough to fit conveniently within a cabinet without taking up too much space, making it the perfect plumbing solution for your kitchen island.

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Benefits abound with this top home improvement

by Scott McGillivray

(NC) If you're looking for a renovation project that will provide excellent return on investment, there's one improvement that's hard to overlook: better insulating your existing home. It's not as flashy as some upgrades, but provides a whole host of advantages to the home and homeowner.

First and foremost, proper insulation levels help regulate indoor temperatures year-round, providing greater comfort to occupants. This can have many benefits from improved mood to better sleep.

A well-insulated home will typically cost less to heat or cool, providing monthly savings that can really add up over time.

Hate disruptive outdoor noise or indoor sound that seems to travel from room to room? Soundproofing insulation can help create a quiet, more relaxing environment, lowering stress levels and improving your sense of well-being.

Many older homes harbour mould, often as a result of moisture that has condensed inside the walls or attic. When renovating or building, always opt for an insulation made of inorganic materials. I suggest insulating with a quality stone wool insulation like Rockwool Comfortbatt. It will repel water and resist the growth of mould and mildew, protecting your air quality and your investment.

Did you know insulation can add important passive fire protection to your home? Choose a product made from natural materials, like stone, which have a high melting

point. In my own renovations, I use Rockwool Safe 'n' Sound because it can resist fire up to 1,177°C. Installed in walls and between floors, non-combustible insulation can protect escape routes during a fire and provide critical extra time to get to safety.

There are few improvements that can simultaneously increase safety, quiet, comfort and savings. So, think about the places in your home where you can insulate to instantly create a better, more efficient indoor environment.

Scott McGillivray is the host of the hit HGTV series *In-come Property* and *Moving the McGillivrays*, a full-time real estate investor, contractor, author, and educator. www.newscanada.com



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How to customize design trends for your home

(NC) Each year we are presented with new and innovative trends in design and home décor. But many of us often wonder how to translate these daring styles into our own homes for livability.

Here, Sharon Grech, Benjamin Moore colour and design expert, shares her tips for incorporating bold trends into your home.

Touch of velvet. While you may remember velvet as a popular mid-century fabric, it has recently made a resurgence in home décor. Known for its distinctively smooth, rich texture, velvet is a popular way to make a space look and feel luxurious.

"Whether you want to invest in a striking velvet sofa or velvet accent pillows, either option will add that sophisticated feel to a space. Another great way to incorporate velvet into a room is by using premium, soft-touch matte paint on a feature wall," suggests Grech.

Benjamin Moore Century is a first-of-its-kind paint that creates a tactile experience, similar to that of a soft leather glove. Bedrooms, dining rooms and powder rooms are all great spaces to consider making a bold statement with a feature wall.

Gorgeous geometrics. When it comes to geometric shapes and patterns, a little can go a long way, so you want to ensure the pattern isn't competing with other elements in the space. Incorporate this trend without



going overboard by using accents.

Backsplashes are the perfect place to be daring with geometric patterns. Kitchens and bathrooms are ideal for adding geometry in design as they contain relatively small and focused areas. If you are looking for an option that requires a little less commitment, try incorporating accessories with a geometric structure or pattern. Geometric-inspired coffee tables and mirrors can emulate that same modern look without having to make a big commitment in your space or budget.

Marvelous metals. Gone are the days of choosing between silver and gold. We've expanded our metallic palette to include even more metals like chrome, rose gold, copper and brass. The art of mixing metals and metallic tones is being applied in details throughout the entire home to add depth and intrigue into a space.

"Metals are no longer reserved for faucets and fixtures," says Grech. "One of the reasons I love this trend is because of its adaptability. Metals complement so many different hues, which make them easy to add into a space and coordinate with existing décor."

Find more information at www.benjaminmoore.ca.
www.newscanada.com

Top 10 ways to revive your dated house

(NC) Our homes are where memories are made, our retreat from the world. However, daily living, growing families, and time can leave your home looking less than its best. Fortunately, there's plenty you can do to breathe new life into a well-loved space. These top DIY projects will ensure your home looks and performs its best.

Clean. A neat and tidy home instantly brightens the space, creating a great foundation for other improvements.

Paint. This is the easiest way to quickly transform the look of a dated room. Don't forget to paint the trim to really make it pop.

Consider replacing worn flooring. Update with hardwoods or choose more affordable options such as laminate or vinyl plank flooring. Eco-friendly options like bamboo or cork flooring have grown in popularity, while today's assortment of tiles can also create a stunning look.

Address the comfort factor. Taking measures to make your home more energy efficient can dramatically improve everyday comfort and save you money. The easiest way to start is by simply topping up your attic insulation. Many contractors recommend a fire-safe, mould- and water-resistant stone wool insulation like Rockwool Comfortbatt. Made from stone, it's durable and easy to install. This important update can poten-

tially save you hundreds in annual heating costs, and it only takes about a day or so to complete.

Make simple swaps. New light fixtures or hardware on cabinetry can provide your room with an instant refresh. Give cabinets a new coat of paint if they look tired or dated.

Let there be light. Replace heavy drapes with sheer window coverings or blinds to flood the home with as much natural light as possible.

Open up the space. Remove excess furniture and all signs of clutter. Organize closets and pantries. Open windows to allow fresh air inside.

Accessorize. Add inviting elements like fresh flowers, throws or toss cushions. Does your room have a distinct focal point? Carefully chosen and placed accents or artwork can really make it stand out.

Create curb appeal. Clean and pressure-wash the driveway and walkways. Cut the grass, pull weeds, and trim shrubs. Consider planting annuals to add colour. Paint your front door and house numbers.

Reboot your entry-way. It's simple, but it sets the tone. Make sure it's bright, open and functions effectively. Install some clever storage solutions — there are plenty of options even for small spaces. It should always feel good to walk through the front door. After all, there's no place like home.

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Kitchen Talk" BY Jim Lawrence

Kitchen Reno with no layout changes? Most unlikely !

As a professional kitchen designer I often hear from the homeowners that the layout has to stay the same, because they may think that is the only way it will work, or other designers has told them that, or maybe they think it cost too much to move the layout around. May I respectfully add, that all of the above being most likely is not true.

It is possible that the layout has to stay the same. I would have to say no changes would be the extreme exception , for example I have designed and installed not 100s but 1000s of kitchens, I can only think of one or two, that we did not make any changes to the layouts and those were rental units.

As a professional designer, when I look at the old kitchen, and should main layout have to stay the same, then I and the homeowner start looking at and exploring, the small changes to enhance the make over. A few small changes can add up to big impacts.

Take small changes then add Avondale's special seamless sinks and counters, these will give you the granite look and quality of granite for Formica prices, you will have a whole new kitchen with the WOW-Factor.

Do you have designers block, on your kitchen makeover? Or have you had a design done and it just does not excite you? Check out www.AvondaleKitchens.com, we have professional designers in your area every week. You may be pleasantly surprised with what they can come up with.

This article was written by Jim Lawrence
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Pro tips for larger renovation projects

(NC) Major remodels and overhauls are complex renovation projects that can involve a lot of disruption to your normal daily routines. Contractor and design professionals stress the importance of discussing these impacts and planning for how best to deal with them before the work begins.

Knowing what to expect and having a plan for coping with the inevitable but temporary inconveniences that renovation involves can make a real difference to your renovation experience.

Some renovations and additions, such as converting a bungalow to a two-storey home, will require you to move out of your home during much of the construction. There is simply no way to get the work done efficiently if you are living there.

Other projects, such as an addition above an attached garage or a refurbished kitchen, may allow you to live with the building project, but there will be inconvenience and disruption that you'll have to plan for. A professional contractor will be able to tell you what to expect and when, so that you can work together to minimize the disruption.

Be realistic about the time a project will take to get started and complete. Consider its full costs, including at least a 10 per cent contingency fund for changes and



unexpected conditions, as well as the impact the project will have on the daily operation of your household and family activities.

If your project is likely to last more than a few weeks, it's wise to discuss your project with neighbours. In addition to unavoidable noise and dirt, there will be vehicles parked on the street, disposal bins in the driveway and truck deliveries. Most neighbours will be understanding and accommodating, especially if notified first. Include a requirement for daily clean-up in your contract so that your home, street and nearby lawns don't end up resembling a construction site.

Many professional contractors are part of RenoMark, the national program that aims to set the real pros apart. Find one in your community at www.renomark.ca. www.newscanada.com

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5 tips for improving your neighbourhood

(NC) Your community is where you live, work and play. It gives you comfort and stability, but that doesn't mean you can't make changes for the better. If you're hoping to get more engaged in your neighbourhood, here are some tips to get started.

Support local organizations: Whether it's buying your groceries at farmers' markets, checking out the plays and sculptures of local artists, or shopping and dining at small businesses, use your dollars to show your neighbours that

they matter.

Volunteer your time: This can be a meaningful way of getting more involved, while also giving back. Find something you're passionate about and donate whatever time you can, whether it's an hour every month or a day every week. Your local library, retirement home or animal shelter are all great places that need your help.

Suggest new ideas: Whether it's building a new park as an

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alternative to screen time for the local kids or creating a new bus route that's sorely missing and would help your morning commute, try generating interest in an initiative the whole neighbourhood can get behind. Use census data and Statistics Canada's online tools to help your community leaders make informed decisions when they're planning their budgets and allocating resources.

Organize an event: Think about where your community could use some help, and then plan an activity that could make a difference. If people are feeling a bit down after a long winter, a community picnic in the spring could help cheer everyone up. If a treasured historical building needs repairs, a fundraiser could help restore and preserve it.



Plan a clean-up: Kids and adults alike can take pride in tidying up a local park or green space in preparation for warmer weather. Make this activity fun by playing music and having local restaurants donate food and drinks for participants.

Find more information at www.statcan.gc.ca/census.
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