

Home Enhancements for the First Home Buyer

Chuck Oakes is a published photographer, speaker, consultant and author. He grew up in West Hartford in a creative family familiar with woodworking, waterscaping, garden railroads and Fung Shui. His concept of “*Sensory Supported Spaces*” is the focus of his latest book, **MAKING YOUR HOME SENIOR-FRIENDLY**. In this book, Chuck shares creative ways to support and enhance the lives of our aging loved ones as they reside in their own homes. For more information, visit www.chuckoakes.com or call 860-644-1128.

Congratulations! You just bought your first home after working so hard at saving. Welcome to the world of the homeowner! Perhaps you are fortunate to build your new place, or like most people, have moved into an older place. Either way, you might explore ways, gadgets, gizmos and devices to enhance *the quality of life* in your new space. In this article, I’d like to share some of my thoughts on home enhancements with you in mind, the first homebuyer!

When I was looking for my first home, I can remember vividly the **two words** of wisdom from my real estate agent ...“***Think resale!***” Although it’s natural to enjoy the moment and your achievement, it’s best to think long-term when it comes to real estate. Another consideration is your long-term plan. Are you thinking of staying in your new home for an extended period, or anticipate relocating within five years or so? Renovations, investments and modifications should be in concert with your overall plan. You want to maximize your return on investment when making changes or enhancements.

As for our perspective today, I will focus my ideas for applications in both new and existing homes...condos and houses.

Let's start our journey with matters of "**Safety and Security**" for your new place. Regardless of where you live, you want to begin by securing your home by doing a basic home evaluation to include:

- Fire, smoke and radon prevention and detection (affordable extinguishers and detectors)
- Locks
- Visual "accessibility" from outside (can would-be burglars see into your home without your knowledge? Assess your outside landscaping with security in mind.)

Keyless locks can be handy. Also, the combinations can be changed periodically for security purposes. It also might be advisable to ask a trusted neighbor to have your keys/combination to your locks for emergency access to your home.

Lighting

Although lighting plays an important part in the safety and security in a home, it can also create just the right *ambiance* for special moods and events.

Important considerations include:

- Emergency lighting in event of power failure
- Entryway lighting
- Motion-detector lights for safety/security/convenience inside and outside
- Whole-house lighting control systems (see *SIGHTS* below)

“**Sensory Supported Spaces**”—

Recognizing and celebrating the fact that we, as sensory beings, are stimulated and influenced greatly by our surroundings through our various senses, it makes good sense to acknowledge what other societies have known for generations... that our environment can affect our health, behavior, attitude and well-being. Let’s begin our journey into the *realm of enhancement* by looking at the following senses and how we might incorporate them into our new abode.

Scents Make Sense

For centuries, civilizations have used aromas to enhance productivity, wellness and health. The Greeks used aromas in their sails of their ships and in the mortar of their homes to enhance their quality of life! Even at the local mall, retailers are using aromas to improve sales; the cinnamon rolls, the leather items, fragrance counters, etc. In the home, there are essentially two considerations. They are:

- Air quality and purity
- Air enhancement

Leyden House has manufactured a variety of units that addresses both quality and “enhancement”. They release micro- particles of essential oils that are safe and anti-microbial. Besides creating a fresh natural aroma, the floating particles adhere to dust mites and other smaller particles in our



environment. The essential oil is released only when the circulating fan goes on. The company has different blends, some strongly anti-microbial, but with a pleasing scent. Other blends are relaxing, stimulating, romantic, or contribute to respiratory health. These room essential oil diffusers have proven themselves safe and effective in hospitals, assisted living institutions as well as private residences. The company also develops and sells custom blends of essential oils for specific needs. Upcoming for the future...a **whole-house unit**. Retail prices begin at \$80.00 for the room model (shown).

Leyden House 800-754-0668 www.leydenhouse.com

As for air quality and purification, there are several methods of cleaning the air, they include:

- Ozone use
- HEPA filtration

- Ionization
- Carbon filters
- Germicidal Ultraviolet light (UV)

Each approach has its pros and cons. For instance, HEPA filters are great and are used by many hospitals for *removing* airborne particles, however the filters can be costly. Using ozone to clean pools and the air without chemicals can be effective, but as with chemicals, using ozone can be harmful if not managed properly.

The **Surround Air** Purifier-Ionizer line of products combines all of the above techniques and a timer to specify the duration of use. The XJ 3000 shown retails for \$179.00 and is great for a large room.

(www.surroundair.com 888-812-1516)



Sights (automated lighting)

This is one of the cool items that should be included in every home. Automated lighting systems can reduce crime, (and perhaps your insurance premiums), reduce the chance of falls and injuries while adding some nice control of the ambiance of a room. As for cost, they start around \$60 at the local home improvement retailer and go up; depending upon complexity of



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capabilities and whether or not you have to install the units into the walls. If you have the luxury of designing home automation while building your home, great, if not, automated lighting might have to be limited to tabletop systems. Shown here is one of the better whole-house systems, the Neo unit by LiteTouch Inc. www.litetouch.com

Local contact: Lighting Affiliates, Ltd

Paul Charette

Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Tel: 860-721-1171

Sounds & Music

With the advent of Ipods and Satellite and Sirius radio services, the options are varied for providing mood “sounds and music”. The solutions are evident for customers with a basic knowledge of electronics and sound systems. For instance, you can use your Ipod in your house with a broadcast unit to network, or broadcast the music throughout your home on existing radio frequencies with little expense. Your cable television service can also provide satellite radio as part of their digital cable package.

Nick Perfito, of the **Stereo Shop** (860-523-7250) of Hartford specializes in higher-end sound and automation systems for the serious aficionado. He offers the following considerations for first homebuyers when thinking about home enhancements of their audio/entertainment system:

- Before investing in a new or upgrade home entertainment system, think carefully on *the purpose* for upgrading. Design the system to satisfy your anticipated needs and requirements. Take time to carefully plan. Again, think *re-sale!*

Did you know?

- That ceiling speakers are *round* to blend with round ceiling lights.
- In-wall speakers are usually *rectangular* to blend into the angles of the walls.

Let's **Heat** Things Up!

After you do what's right, safe and secure for your family and future owners, you might want to consider indulging yourself with an awesome product that truly is unique and fun while being practical.

Dean's Stove & Spa, LLC of Plantsville (860-621-5311) sells **Lopi** gas fireplaces (shown) that not only **heat** your place, but also provide **aromatherapy** for added comfort and effect. It also can "disappear" behind a one-way mirror when not in use. Practical, fun and unique! Units start at \$1,000 and go up depending upon specific options. www.deansstove.com



In closing, *home enhancements* come in various price ranges, sizes, shapes and portability. I hope I have given you some ideas to consider when building or moving into your new home.

Maximize both your enjoyment and your investment
with [home enhancements!](#)

More information on these and related items—

- Smarthome Automation for a variety of electronic devices and gadgets for the home. 800-762-7846 www.smarthome.com
- InTouch LLC home automation and networking 203-284-8875 www.intouchc.com (Local contact J.T.N. Electrical, Inc. 860-668-8854 Suffield)
- HGTV.com “*I Want That*” series
- www.sonystyle.com for the latest in Sony products (877-865-SONY)
- www.hometoys.com More info on home automation, electronics, sound systems, etc.