

Budget for home maintenance

By ANNA CHANG-YEN | Green Shoot Media

Your mortgage payment is only the beginning of the true costs of owning a home.

One expense you should factor into your budget is routine maintenance.

According to U.S. News and World Report, homeowners can expect to spend 1-4 percent of their home's value annually on maintenance and repairs. The repairs fall into a few notable categories.

FURNACE AND HVAC

The government-run Energy Star program recommends having a contractor perform a checkup on your home's heating and cooling system once a year. According to Angie's List, a tune-up should cost about \$70 to \$100. In addition, air filters should be changed once a month, as a dirty filter can cause the system to function inefficiently and cause damage.

Since the cost of having your HVAC vents cleaned can get into the hundreds of dollars, weigh this decision carefully.

The Environmental Protection Agency recommends having your ducts cleaned only if there is visible mold growth or a vermin problem in your ducts, or if the ducts are clogged with excessive dust and debris.

PEST CONTROL

Pests in the home can hit your nerves and your wallet. ImproveNet.com lists the price of a pest control service at \$250.

The types of pests you may find in your home vary greatly by region and



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Don't forget the costs of routine home maintenance — including maintaining your plumbing and air conditioning systems and roof — when you're budgeting for a new home.

your home's immediate surroundings, so contact a service provider for a quote tailored to your home.

BATHROOMS/ PLUMBING

Even minor plumbing problems can get expensive quickly. You may want to stay ahead of trouble by having a plumber give your home a once over annually.

Aside from checking fixtures and pipes for leaks or conditions that could lead to a leak, the plumber also will check all appliances that use water,

such as the water heater and dishwasher. ImproveNet.com lists the average price of hiring a plumber at \$259.

EXTERIOR

It's a good idea to have a professional check the condition of your roof each spring. A routine inspection and minor repairs (such as replacing a few missing shingles) should cost \$100 to \$150, according to Houselogic.com.

A lush, green lawn can be a beautiful thing, but it comes at a cost. The expense of fertilizing, winterizing, aerating and mowing can add up.

REAL ESTATE 101

Consult a cost guide

ImproveNet.com offers cost guides for hundreds of common household repairs. For example, the average cost to clean HVAC vents and ducts is \$309, according to the site, and repairing a bathroom exhaust fan costs \$217 on average. Painting your home's exterior will run you \$2,394 on average. Know before you owe by searching the site to find out how much you can expect to pay for your project.

ImproveNet.com lists average costs of \$61 for mowing, \$170 to \$333 for tree maintenance, \$12 to \$40 for weeding and \$404 for winterizing. Fertilization can cost an average of \$.26 per square foot, plus an average of \$32.71 per hour for a landscaper to apply the fertilizer.

Experts recommend having your home's gutters cleaned at least once a year (or more often if you have pine trees). Homeadvisor.com lists the average cost of window cleaning at \$207.

An annual chimney inspection runs about \$75, according to Angie's List, while a cleaning costs about \$178. Sealcoating an asphalt driveway, which you may want to do annually or every few years, costs an average of \$385 but varies with size.



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HOMESWISE GLOSSARY

Second home a ONE-unit residential Property owned by the Borrower, occupied by the Borrower for some portion of the year, and is not subject to any timesharing ownership arrangements.

Tradeline: The type of credit obligation and its associated information, such as date opened, balance and periodic payment history, that is typically listed on a credit report.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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