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LIVING & LENDING

Your monthly key to smart living and lending

IN THIS ISSUE

MORTGAGEARCHITECTS
Karen Reimer, Mortgage Broker
Email: broker@karenreimer.org
Brokerage# 316728 / Broker# 315749

Hello November!

As November arrives with its spirit of gratitude and giving, we're focusing on creating meaningful spaces and making a global impact. Discover how Purchase Plus Improvement mortgages let you finance both your home purchase and renovations together—turning that fixer-upper into your dream home.

In our brand-new "Living Well Beyond the Desk," we're sharing our family's journey with Operation Christmas Child and how simple acts of love transform lives. Join us during National Collection Week (November 17-23)!

Purchase Plus Improvement Mortgages: Funding Your Renovation Dreams

For many buyers, these fixer-uppers represent incredible value. But after putting together your down payment and closing costs, where do you find the funds for necessary renovations? This is where the Purchase Plus Improvement mortgage becomes a game-changer.

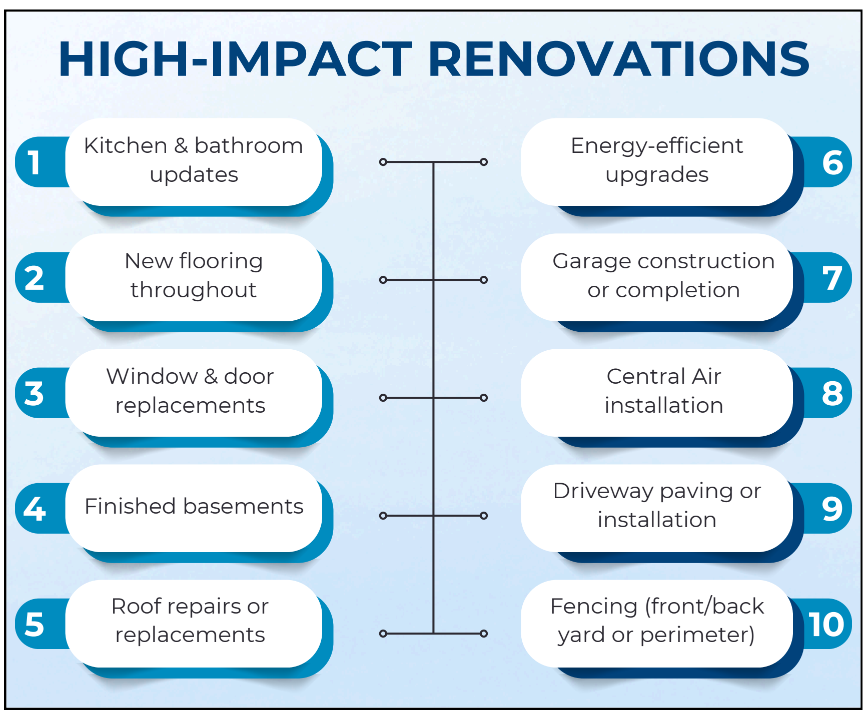
How the Program Works
Finding the perfect home often means finding the right property in the right neighborhood—even if it needs a little work. That charming older home with great bones but an outdated kitchen. The well-located property with solid structure but tired finishes. The house priced below market because it needs updates.

The Purchase Plus Improvement (PPI) program allows qualified homebuyers to finance both the purchase price and renovation costs in a single mortgage transaction. You can include improvement costs upfront with as little as 5% down on the combined total.

Real-World Example: You find a home listed at $400,000 that needs $30,000 in updates. With PPI, your mortgage covers the combined $430,000. Your 5% down payment is $21,500, and you have one manageable monthly payment covering everything.

The renovation funds are disbursed once the work is completed and verified, keeping your project on track while maintaining affordable payments.

What Renovations Qualify?
Eligible improvements must be permanent additions to the property that enhance value, comfort, or efficiency.



The PPI program works for both resale homes needing updates and new construction properties. For new builds, the program is particularly valuable when the builder's base package doesn't include features like a garage, central air, paved driveway, or fencing—allowing you to complete these additions as part of your initial mortgage.

Personal items like furniture, moveable appliances, or electronics don't qualify—think built-in improvements rather than temporary additions.

Qualification Made Simple

Down Payment Options: The program requires 5% down for properties with one or two units (10% down for three or four units) on the combined purchase price plus improvement costs. Your down payment can come from personal savings, RRSP withdrawals, family gifts, existing home equity, or proceeds from selling another property.

Credit Requirements:

- Above 80% LTV: Minimum 600 credit score
- At or below 80% LTV: Recommended 680 credit score

The mortgage insurance premium is calculated on the total amount including renovations and can be added to your mortgage rather than paid upfront.

Timeline and Process

The approval process requires coordination between you, your lender, and contractors. You'll need detailed renovation quotes outlining the scope and cost of work. The property undergoes an appraisal considering both current and "as-improved" values.

Key Timeline Checkpoints

- Initial mortgage advance covers purchase price at closing
- Renovation funds held back until work completion
- Verification required through invoices, photos, or professional reports
- Funds released once improvement are documented

For extensive projects, funds can be released in stages as work progresses, making it easier to manage contractor payments throughout the renovation.

Why Consider Purchase Plus Improvement?
This program opens doors by allowing you to purchase in your desired neighborhood even if properties need updates, avoid premium prices for turnkey homes, start renovations immediately rather than saving for years, and maintain one manageable monthly payment.

Whether you're a first-time buyer maximizing purchasing power or a family needing to customize your space, PPI provides a practical path to homeownership. The key is planning ahead—discuss the program with your mortgage professional before house hunting, get detailed contractor quotes, and ensure realistic project timelines.

Ready to explore your options? If you've been postponing homeownership because move-in-ready homes feel out of reach, let's talk. That fixer-upper could become your dream home sooner than you think.

With useful tools and calculators to help you determine your affordability, monthly mortgage payments, closing costs and more, my app has everything you need at your fingertips. ***Scan the QR Code to download the app or visit our website @ www.karenreimer.org***

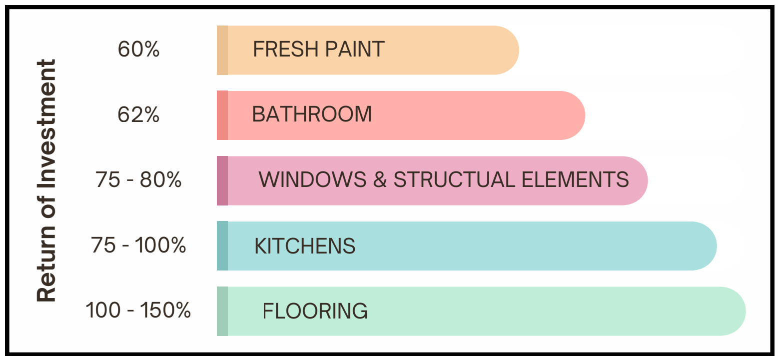
Smart Renovation Choices: Which Improvements Add the Most Value

When you're exploring the Purchase Plus Improvement program, one of the most common questions I hear is: "Which renovations should I prioritize?" This is where working with the right professionals becomes essential—experienced contractors understand the technical side of renovations, while my role is helping you understand how different improvements impact your financing and property value.

Understanding Renovation Returns

Recent research from RE/MAX Canada shows clear patterns about which renovations provide the strongest returns when it comes time to sell.

https://blog.remax.ca/best-home-renovations-biggest-roi)



Kitchen Updates: The Consistent Performer

Kitchen renovations rank among the top investments, typically returning 75-100% of their cost. When appraisers evaluate your "as-improved" value for PPI approval, updated kitchens carry significant weight. Even smaller updates—quality countertops, updated appliances, fresh cabinetry—can make a substantial difference without requiring a complete gut job.

Bathroom Improvements: High-Impact Returns

Bathroom renovations deliver strong returns, averaging around 62% when done well, and often higher depending on the scope. Adding a half bath (going from 1 to 1.5 baths) significantly improves functionality for families. Updating fixtures, improving lighting, and modernizing finishes can transform these essential spaces. These improvements show up clearly in appraisals.

Windows and Structural Elements: Protecting Your Investment

Energy-efficient window replacements return approximately 75-80% of installation costs. Beyond the financial return, buyers pay premiums for homes with solid structural elements—sound roofs, quality windows, proper waterproofing. Addressing these "good bones" issues prevents them from becoming obstacles during your purchase process or future sale.

Fresh Paint: The Most Underrated Improvement

Interior and exterior painting typically returns about 60% of investment but dramatically transforms how a home looks and feels. It's one of the most cost-effective ways to update a property, and in listing photos down the road, fresh paint creates the impression of larger, cleaner spaces.

Flooring Updates: Foundation of Appeal

Quality flooring improvements can return 100-150% depending on material choice. Hardwood remains a strong choice, while quality laminates are gaining acceptance. The key is professional installation—even expensive materials look poor if not properly installed.

Completing New Builds: Finishing What the Builder Started

Many new construction homes don't include everything buyers need—garages, central air conditioning, driveways, or fencing may be excluded from the builder's base package. The PPI program allows you to include these completion costs in your mortgage, which is especially valuable since you're already financing the purchase. Adding a garage, paving the driveway, installing central air, or completing perimeter fencing can all be rolled into your initial mortgage rather than requiring separate financing later.

What About Personal Preferences?

Here's something important to consider: when you're buying what you believe will be your forever home, renovation decisions shift. If you're planning to stay for 10+ years, you have more freedom to prioritize what makes YOU happy rather than focusing solely on resale statistics.

Love cooking and want that dream kitchen? Planning to age in place and need an accessible bathroom? Want to create a home office that suits your work style? These personal priorities matter, especially for long-term homeownership. The beauty of the Purchase Plus Improvement program is that it gives you the financial flexibility to create a home that truly works for your life.

Questions to Consider When Planning

The goal is focusing on renovations that make financial sense for your situation while creating a home you'll love. Not all improvements deliver equal returns, and this matters when you're including renovation costs in your mortgage. As your mortgage broker, I encourage clients to think through several factors:

What's essential versus what's desired?
Major systems (roof, HVAC, windows) may need addressing first. Understanding this helps us structure your financing appropriately.

What's your timeline?
Planning to stay long-term? You can prioritize personal preferences. Expecting to move within 5 years? Market-friendly improvements become more important.

What's your total budget?
Balancing high-return projects with personal must-haves ensures your PPI mortgage works within lending guidelines while creating the home you want.

Working With Experienced Professionals
Quality contractors make all the difference in renovation outcomes. Our family has worked with Conrad at Conam Developments multiple times over the years, and we consistently recommend him to clients planning renovations. He is a contractor who understands both the quality standards needed for good ROI and the documentation requirements for PPI financing which helps the entire process run smoothly. Conrad will provide accurate quotes for your PPI approval, work within realistic timelines, and deliver the quality that translates to appraised value.

My Role in Your Renovation Planning
I'm not a contractor or designer—those professionals guide the technical decisions. What I help with is understanding how your renovation choices impact your mortgage approval, ensuring your total costs align with lending guidelines, coordinating the appraisal process for as-improved value, and structuring your financing to make the numbers work.

The Purchase Plus Improvement program provides flexibility to transform the right property into your home. Making strategic renovation choices—guided by qualified contractors and your real estate team—helps you maximize the value of every dollar included in your mortgage.

Living Well Beyond The Desk

One Shoebox at a Time: The Story Behind Operation Christmas Child

Why do you do what you do?
It's a simple question, but one that can change everything. Do you do things out of obligation? Because it makes you feel good? Or because you're compelled by something greater?

For me, finding the answer led me to discover God's faithfulness in unexpected ways. In 2005, God called me to Ecuador where He opened my eyes to see the world—and His work—differently. I witnessed poverty and struggle, but I also saw something beautiful: how a simple gift could light up a child's eyes and how sharing Jesus' love could bring hope.

I returned home at 21, thinking I'd become a missionary across the ocean. But God had other plans. For nearly two decades, He's been teaching me that I can be a missionary right here at home—one shoebox at a time.

A Ministry That Reaches the World
Operation Christmas Child is a project of Samaritan's Purse, an international Christian relief and evangelism organization. Since 1993, this ministry has delivered over 220 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 170 countries and territories. But it's so much more than gifts—it's about sharing the greatest gift of all: the hope found in Jesus Christ.

Here's what makes this ministry so powerful:

Every 14 seconds a child becomes a follower of Jesus through The Greatest Journey, a 12-lesson discipleship program.	**For every 100 shoebox gifts**, an average of 21 children report making decisions for Christ.	**Every day**, approximately 29,000 children hear the Gospel at shoebox outreach events around the world.

These aren't just statistics. They're real children whose lives are forever changed; real lives changed by God's love—lives that have become deeply personal to us.

When Andy and I met Sharon and Esther, what began as a connection through ministry became a cherished friendship. Sharon received a shoebox as a 12-year-old boy in rural Sri Lanka over twenty years ago. Today, he and Esther volunteer with Operation Christmas Child, excited to give other children the same joy and hope he once received. Hearing Sharon share his story firsthand transformed this ministry from something we support into something deeply personal. We're no longer just packing boxes for nameless children across the ocean—we're continuing a story that touched our friend's life and rippled out to transform an entire community.

Join Us This Collection Week
This year, National Collection Week runs November 17-23, 2025. I'm thrilled to share that Pleasant Hill Church in Saskatoon is an official drop-off location where you can

- Pick up empty shoeboxes to fill
- Learn more about our church's ministry programs
- Drop off your filled shoeboxes during Collection Week

There are many ways you can get involved:

Pack a Shoebox – Fill a shoebox with gifts that will bring joy and hope to a child. Visit samaritanspurse.ca for packing guidelines and to find drop-off locations near you.

Spread the Word – Share about Operation Christmas Child with your friends, family, church, or workplace.

Volunteer – There are year-round opportunities to serve, from promoting the ministry to helping at processing centers.

A Global Pipeline Moving the Gospel Forward
Did you know that less than 3% of the world's population is Evangelical Christian, making them an "unreached people group"? Through Operation Christmas Child, we're part of a global pipeline moving the Gospel forward—reaching children in some of the world's most difficult and remote places with the message of Jesus' love.

When we pack these shoeboxes, we're not just sending gifts. We're partnering with the global Church to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and make disciples of all nations. We're being missionaries right where we are.

Why Do You Do What You Do?
My prayer is that through Operation Christmas Child, you'll discover—as I have—the joy of being compelled by something greater: the love of Christ and the call to share it with the world.

Every act of love makes a difference. Every shoebox matters. Every child is precious to God. Together, we can bring hope and joy to children around the world, one shoebox at a time.

Your Voice Matters:
Ask Karen or Share Your Story!

Do you have burning questions about mortgages, homeownership, or the real estate market? Or maybe you've had an experience with mortgage pre-approval that could help others on their journey? I want to hear from you!

Submit Your Questions

Got a question you've been pondering? Text or email me and I might answer it in one of my upcoming live videos! Whether it's about the current market conditions, mortgage tips, or anything related to home buying, no question is too small.

Share Your Experience

Have you recently gone through the mortgage pre-approval process? Share your story with us! Your experience could provide valuable insights for others and might be featured in a future newsletter.

How to Participate

Head over to our website & use the contact form to send in your questions or stories. I can't wait to hear from you and continue the conversation!

MORTGAGEARCHITECTS®

Karen Reimer, Mortgage Broker & Financial Advisor

Email: **broker@karenreimer.org**
Text/Call: **306-221-7493**
Visit Website: **www.karenreimer.org**

Brokerage# 316728 / Broker# 315749