

## **Market Ready**

**Q. Our wood floors look worn. Is it worth the cost and disruption to refinish them before selling?**

A. Refinishing wood floors can be a major undertaking when you're already settled in a home.

"It's major in that everything needs to be removed, and it can be messy," said Elena Frampton, a partner in the interior design firm Curated, which has offices in New York and Los Angeles.

If you plan to refinish your floors all at once, it may mean that you'll need to put your furniture in storage temporarily.

Whether it pays to go to that trouble and expense before putting your home on the market depends on the condition of the rest of the dwelling, said Kathy Braddock, a founder of Rutenberg Realty in New York. It also depends on the buyer.

"There are different kinds of buyers," she said. "There are buyers who are looking to do a gut renovation, and to put their own stamp on a space." For that kind of person, it's unlikely that the condition of the floors will matter.

"Other buyers are not looking for such major work, and aren't as brave," Ms. Braddock said, but would still probably be willing to undertake cosmetic work on their own, including painting the walls and refinishing the floors.

"Most buyers assume that they're going to do some amount of work" if they buy a timeworn home, she said. So "if you have to move out and put all your stuff in storage, and incur all of that cost and aggravation, I'm not sure it's worth it."

If, on the other hand, the rest of your home is in pristine like-new condition, it would probably pay to refinish the floors, Ms. Braddock said, "so the buyer has nothing to complain about."

Particularly if you're trying to create an especially chic, high-end feeling, Ms. Frampton said. In that case, beautiful floors are an important component of the interior design, and refinishing them is worth the expense.

“If you want to create a thoughtfully composed environment, then everything relies on a solid foundation,” she said. “Your floor is the grounding element in the composition, so it’s a pretty major component.”

She also pointed out that there’s an opportunity to change the color of wood floors when you refinish them. But think twice before choosing an ebonized or whitewashed finish.

While those shades are popular at the moment, she said: “anytime there’s high contrast, there’s vulnerability. If the floor is dark, it will show wear over time. If it’s very light, it will just show everything.”

The best finishes, she said, are somewhere in the middle: “We tend to propose a rich medium shade, because it will wear better over time and serve as a neutral foundation.”

And, Ms. Frampton said, it’s important to remember that not all floor-refinishing companies have equally skilled staff members.

“You definitely want to hire people where you’ve seen their work or have references,” she said. “Good workmanship is the key to avoiding potential problems.”