



## Resources for Home Maintenance and Improvement

### Neighborhood Housing Services

Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) offers low-interest, fixed-rate home improvement loans through their Neighborhood Lending Services. Approved projects will be assigned an NHS Construction Specialist to help guide residents through the construction process. Income eligibility and restrictions may apply.

- North Side Hub: 1279 N. Milwaukee Ave., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Chicago IL, 60622
- South Side Hub: 639 E. 87<sup>th</sup> St. Chicago IL, 60619
- West Side Hub: 3601 W. Chicago Ave. Chicago IL, 60651
- South Suburban Hub: 1920 W. 174<sup>th</sup> St. East Hazel Crest, IL, 60429
- (773)-329-4111, [www.Nhschicago.org](http://www.Nhschicago.org)

### Chicago Bungalow Association

Membership with the Chicago Bungalow Association is free and comes with homeowner benefits that include resources and information for people living in vintage homes (50+ years). You do not need to own a bungalow to sign up for membership. The CBA also provides a list of trusted referrals for contractors and services related to home repairs and upgrades. Income-qualifying homeowners in Chicago may be eligible for the Energy Savers Program, in which the CBA provides free weatherization services and energy-saving products.

- 53 W Jackson Blvd, Suite 740, Chicago, IL, 60604, (312)-675-0300
- [www.ChicagoBungalow.org](http://www.ChicagoBungalow.org)

### H.O.M.E. Housing Opportunities and Maintenance for the Elderly

H.O.M.E. is a non-profit organization that serves low-income seniors in Chicago. They provide many programs and services that promote independent living, including the home Upkeep and Repair Program, which connects seniors with home repair specialists that perform repairs to help ensure safe and healthy living spaces. Participating seniors pay a \$25 service fee and are asked to reimburse H.O.M.E. for materials, but the labor is free. For income-qualifying homeowners that live south of North Ave. within the City of Chicago, H.O.M.E. also offers free painting services.

- 1419 W Carroll Ave, Floor 2, Chicago, IL, 60607, (773)-921-3200
- [www.Homeseniors.org](http://www.Homeseniors.org)

### Free Energy Assessments

Income-qualifying homeowners who receive free home energy assessments may also receive free energy savings products, including LED lights, water efficient shower heads, and faucet aerators for the bathroom. Organizations in Chicago that conduct or can connect you to these assessments include (but are not limited to):

- Elevate Energy, [www.Elevateenergy.org](http://www.Elevateenergy.org), (773)-269-4037
- CEDA, [www.CEDAorg.net](http://www.CEDAorg.net), (800)-571-2332
- ComEd, [www.Comed.com/WaysToSave](http://www.Comed.com/WaysToSave), (855)-433-2700
- People's Gas, [www.Peoplesgasdelivery.com/homeU](http://www.Peoplesgasdelivery.com/homeU), (855)-849-8928
- Chicago Bungalow Association, [www.Chicagobungalow.org/energy-savers](http://www.Chicagobungalow.org/energy-savers), (312)-675-0300



### **Metropolitan Family Services: Senior Homeowners Program**

This Senior Homeowners Program serves low- to moderate-income homeowners in Chicago who are age 60 or older and have difficulty maintaining their homes. The organization's staff provides trusted referrals to reputable home repair contractors and will link seniors to city departments and programs that can help maintain their property.

- Calumet Center: 235 E. 103rd St., Chicago IL, 60628 (773)-371-3600
- Midway Center: 3843 W. 63rd St., Chicago IL, 60629 (773)-884-3310
- North Center: 3249 N. Central Ave., Chicago IL, 60634 (773)-371-3700
- For more information, visit: [www.Metrofamily.org](http://www.Metrofamily.org)

### **Small Accessible Repairs for Seniors (SARFS)**

This program provides resources for income-qualifying seniors in the Chicago area to make safety, security, and accessibility improvements to their homes. Minor repairs covered by this program include (but are not limited to) grab bar installation, lever faucets, door repairs, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and wheelchair ramps. Certain agencies have been contracted under the Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist seniors in Chicago with the application process, conduct on-site assessments to determine service needs, and provide home improvements at no cost to the applicant.

- For more information and to see a full list of delegate agencies, visit: [www.Chicago.gov/city/en/depts/doh/provdrs/renters/svcs/sarfs.html](http://www.Chicago.gov/city/en/depts/doh/provdrs/renters/svcs/sarfs.html)



## Learn more about Healthy Home Routines

### Virtual Home Inspection

Go on a virtual home inspection tour to see and hear what a professional home inspection is all about. Learn about some common problems discovered during the home inspection, from the American Society of Home Inspectors.

- [www.Homeinspector.org/Home-Inspection-Virtual-Tour](http://www.Homeinspector.org/Home-Inspection-Virtual-Tour)

### Habitat for Humanity Home Maintenance and DIY Tips

Habitat for Humanity International asked Habitat supporters for their favorite home maintenance and improvement tips. Builder and maintenance experts reviewed and selected the best and most useful suggestions, resulting in this collection of more than 150 DIY tips to care for your home inside and out.

- [www.Habitat.org/restores/home-maintenance-diy-tips-for-homeowners](http://www.Habitat.org/restores/home-maintenance-diy-tips-for-homeowners)

## Tool rentals and material resources

**The Chicago Tool Library** is a nonprofit organization that lends tools and equipment to residents of the city of Chicago. They are open Saturdays and Sundays 10am-3pm.

- 1048 W 37<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 102 | [www.Chicagotoollibrary.org](http://www.Chicagotoollibrary.org)

**Craigslist:** Search for tools under “free stuff” or other relevant topics under “for sale.”

**Habitat for Humanity ReStores** sell new and gently used home improvement goods, including building materials and tools, at discounted prices.

- Chicago: 6040 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago, IL 60646
- Chicago South Suburbs: 180 W Joe Orr Road, Chicago Heights, IL 60411

**Home Depot or Lowe’s Tool Rentals** (Multiple locations)

### Rebate Finders

- [energystar.gov/rebate-finder](http://energystar.gov/rebate-finder)
- [energy.gov/savings](http://energy.gov/savings)

## Project and maintenance tracking

**Apps and Websites:** It can be hard to keep track of all the things you need to do to take care of your home. For people who need some structure or gentle prodding to stay on top of their home maintenance, smartphone apps like [HomeZada](#), [BrightNest](#) and [HomeKeeper](#) offer checklists, schedules, and reminder alerts.



## Advice from a handyman: So, you're about to start a DIY project

### GETTING STARTED

Home improvement projects often require knowledge and a set of skills that can take time to acquire. Most people learn as they go, diving in and picking up skills along the way. One of the best ways to learn is to ask friends, family members, or neighbors who already have the skills to help you start a project. Do-it-yourself manuals can also be found at your public library, covering topics from general home maintenance to specialized projects. Other people may choose to start with online courses and videos to gain the initial knowledge needed to start a project.

- Here are some online resources available to someone pursuing a DIY project:

[www.mydiyuniversity.com](http://www.mydiyuniversity.com)

[www.homedepot.com/workshops](http://www.homedepot.com/workshops)

[www.youtube.com/user/Lowes](http://www.youtube.com/user/Lowes)

[www.repairclinic.com/](http://www.repairclinic.com/)

### BUYING MATERIALS

- When buying new tools and materials, the costs can start to add up. It may be a good idea to look for tools that you can get second hand, as long as you check that they work. However, there are some items (like plumbing and electric parts) that are better to get new. It's always wise to do research on a tool before buying it.
- Within Chicago, there are organizations that rent and lend tools to individuals and community groups. One option is the Chicago Tool Library – check here or with other similar organizations if you only need the tool for a short amount of time.

### TOP TOOLS FOR YOUR TOOL BELT

In order to take on your own home improvement projects, it's important to invest in some basic quality tools and materials. This list of tools should work for most simple projects, but you may want or need to acquire specialized tools for larger or more involved projects.

- Hammer
- Screw driver
- Utility knife
- Pry bar
- Measuring tape
- Hand saw
- Trowel
- Crescent (adjustable) wrench
- Carpenter's level
- Stud finder
- Handheld power drill
- Safety items, including dust masks, eye protection, and ear plugs

### KEEPING RECORDS

Taking care of your home is an ongoing process and some projects can span several years. It can be helpful to keep a record of all the maintenance, repair, and renovation projects you do and when you do them. Having a plan and keeping track of big and small tasks alike can help you stay on top of seasonal and annual maintenance, so your home can stay in tip top shape.



## Advice from a handyman: So, you're hiring someone for a project

### HIRING A CONTRACTOR

First off, you'll need to determine what kind of contractor you want for your project: A general contractor or a trade contractor?

- A **general contractor** is responsible for handling the timing and scheduling of the job, managing sub-contractors, and resolving any problems that may arise. General contractors are licensed and insured, with a knowledge of building codes and requirements. Additionally, because they are usually familiar with the trade contractors that are working for them, there may be less surprises, which keeps the project running smoothly.
- If you only need to hire someone for a very specific task or project, you may want to seek out a **trade contractor**. A trade contractor is a subcontractor that specializes in a specific part of a construction project. Common types of trade contractors include:
  - Electricians
  - Plumbers
  - Heating and cooling system specialists
  - Masons
  - Drywallers
  - Painters
  - Carpenters
  - Glazers
  - Roofers
  - Landscapers

### GETTING A BID

When you're looking for a contractor, you'll want to get 2-3 bids for the project. You get a bid by calling a contractor and telling them what you want done on a project. After getting a bid, there may be some other factors to look at when making your decision on who to hire. Good questions to ask a contractor may include:

- How long have you been in business?
- How will you keep me updated on the project's expenses, tasks, and progress?
- How many jobs do you typically take on at once?
- Do you sub-contract out? What does that process look like?
- Who do you work with in the trades, and how long have you worked with them?

### ESTABLISHING THE JOB AND PAYMENT

Get the contract in writing and make sure that both you and the contractor agree on exactly what's going to happen throughout the course of the project. If you're not getting a breakdown of expenses and job tasks, ask for it!

For smaller jobs, it's typical to pay half at the beginning and the final half at completion (if the job is under a month). For bigger jobs, it's common to split the payment up into parts (quarterly, monthly, etc.). It's important to remember that things don't always go as planned, and if a project doesn't stick to a timeline, using a payment plan can help with keeping the contractor on the job.