



## How To Evaluate a Flip Like a Professional Home Inspector

Simply put, a flipped home can be a work of art or a complete disaster. A flipper (or redeveloper, as some like to be called) can take something that is dilapidated, worn, and old, and add new modern design features, new electrical and plumbing, new appliances, etc. They can improve the value of the property and neighborhood, and in turn, make it a desirable place for the new owners to call home. When it is a complete disaster, a flipper can perform bare minimum repairs on a property using inexpensive material and inexperienced labor while ultimately avoiding major systematic revitalization. Oftentimes, in this case, it is difficult for home buyers to tell the difference. This makes a detailed and experienced home inspection all the more important. Having previously managed “fix and flip” projects and, as the owner of a rapidly growing home inspection company, Dwell Inspect Arizona, I have personally experienced countless flipped homes in different capacities. This exposure provides our company with a unique insight as to the common techniques a flipper may use to cut corners on projects.

When evaluating a flipped home for purchase, it is important for the buyer to understand that the primary goal of the project is for the seller to make a profit. Many times, no matter the quality, the flipped home will look new, clean and ready to move in. It is important to enjoy the design of the property, but ultimately, look past the pleasing aesthetic qualities of the home and look at the things that may not be immediately visible. When a flip is a disaster, oftentimes the flipper has made the home look inviting and well renovated but neglected the things the buyer cannot see. Some of the most common, costly, or unsafe mistakes that we find in flipped homes are associated with the plumbing, electrical and aged components. The best advice we can give is to **look up, look at the electrical panel, and look at the details.**

### *Look up.*

What are you looking up at? Well, when you look up, you will see past the aesthetics of the home and see the fundamentals of the property. Look at the ceiling. When you look at the ceiling, you may see water stains, patching/repairs or even cracking. Those are some things that could be indicative of a larger issue. Look up at the roof. On the roof, you have the opportunity to evaluate the condition of the material and make some conditional assumptions based on appearance. Also look for other possible abnormalities such as sagging in the roof line, birds nesting or even damage to the eaves. You may also have the opportunity to see the HVAC system. While looking at the HVAC system, determine if it is new and shiny or old and rusty. Looking up can help you to determine if the flipper went the extra mile or maybe cut some corners.



### *Look at the electrical panel.*

Improper installation of electrical components can certainly lead to safety hazards within a home. Pay special attention to the electrical panel, especially if you are considering the purchase of an older home. If



the electrical panel looks old, there is the possibility that it may require replacement. An older electrical panel is also a good indicator that the electrical wiring and components are older too. While this may not necessitate immediate repair or replacement, it does require proper installation of material and compatible components. A great home inspector will look deeper into the electrical system and look for ungrounded outlets (indicating a 2 wire system), bootleg grounds, Federal Pacific/Zinsco electrical panels, improper connections (where visible) and other areas of potential electrical concerns.

### *Look at the details.*

As they say, “the devil is in the details”. Attention to detail can help to further indicate the quality controls executed at the time of construction. A property that has high-quality controls can indicate pride of work and adherence to proper construction methods. A property that has a lack of attention to detail indicates lower quality controls and may show the desire for a quick turnover, use of inexpensive materials and unskilled labor. Details to be aware of can include: quality of painting, aligned and secure hardware on the cabinet, tight plumbing fixtures, alignment of the doors, etc. While these are defects that are mostly superficial in nature, they can be indicative of the overall strategy that the flipper took while remodeling the property.



Buying a flipped home could be a great opportunity to obtain an older home that is freshly updated and modernized, or it can be a cover-up for older problems. Either scenario is fine as long as the buyer understands upfront the condition of the property prior to the purchase of the home. Looking up, looking at the electrical panel and looking at the details are all great ways to initially evaluate the property and see through the aesthetic first impression. If you choose to move forward with the purchase of the property, a detailed home inspection and a sewer scope inspection are a must. These services help to dig deeper into the quality of the remodel and can identify any other potential areas of concern.