



Prepare Your Home For Sale

Guidelines

The condition of the property is one of the most important things that homeowners can control when selling their home.

The presentation of the product is a very important part of promoting your property. Corporations and retail businesses understand this concept, and they pay millions of dollars each year on advertising and marketing.

It is the same for real property. In order to compete effectively, and to stand out from other sellers, homeowners must present their homes to the marketplace in an attractive and desirable condition. Buyers shop by comparison, and according to the National Association of REALTORS, the average purchaser looks at eighteen (18) properties prior to making a decision. Regardless of how many properties are on the market, buyers will always seek the best-priced property in the best condition.

PRETEND YOU ARE A BUYER, WHAT WOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

You are not just selling a house; you are selling shelter, security, lifestyle and dreams. People always want the best for themselves and your home should represent the buyer's answer to this goal. Put yourself in the buyer's shoes! Remember, they arrive at your front door hoping to find the home that is right for them. Don't make them search somewhere else. If you have done your homework, every room in your home will create a desire for the buyer to stay.

START MAKING A LIST

Look at the property through the critical eyes of a buyer. Is there anything that needs 1) repairing, 2) looks worn or is outdated, 3) needs to be updated or 4) painted? Start writing these items down on your list. Walk through the interior and do the same.

WHY DID YOU PURCHASE THIS PROPERTY?

Think back to when you first walked in this house. What attracted you to this property? These features should be among the first that you enhance. Ask your spouse and your children to add their own special positive reactions. Your teenager(s) may remember how she fell in love with your home years ago because of the "climbing" tree in the backyard. Listen carefully to your children's perceptions.

Tour every room, the attic, basement, garage and yard. Note at least one positive feature in each area. Include the items that attracted you and those desirable features you have added.

DO EVERYTHING BEFORE YOU PUT YOUR HOME ON THE MARKET!!!

The longer a house is on the market, the likely prospective purchasers are to suspect that something is wrong with the house. Remember back to all the times you have looked at properties during a home search. Chances are that whenever you came across a property that had been on the market for a while, the first thought that went through your mind was, "I wonder what is wrong with that house? Why hasn't it sold?" Don't let that happen to you. Complete all of your repairs, improvements and enhancements prior to your first showing.

The following pages will guide you step by step through the process of preparing your home for sale in order to achieve the highest possible sale price in the least amount of time. After all, isn't that your goal? This is an extremely important part of marketing your home.

KEY POINTS

REPAIRS

The rule of thumb is if something needs repair, fix it! The buyer will mentally add up the cost of repairing all those minor flaws and end up with an amount that is generally much higher than what it would cost you. Needed, small repairs and perceived owner neglect will either lowers the purchase price or lengthens the time to sell.

Check all walls for peeling paint, chipped corners and loose wallpaper.

Large repairs: In today's climate of open disclosure and vigilant professional home inspections, the rule is – treat the buyer as you would yourself. Repair any problems with major systems or offer an allowance for the buyer to make repairs after closing. Always disclose anything that you know about the property. Don't get caught in a legal battle, full disclosure is one of the many laws surrounding the transactions. Having been a consumer yourself, you know that buyers will more readily make a purchase decision with someone whom they can trust.

CLEANING

Every area of the home must sparkle and shine. Would you rather buy a clean car or a dirty one? Would you hurry to buy a pair of shoes with mud on them? Neither would a buyer.

Clean all of the windows, including attic and garage.
Clean all wall-to-wall carpeting and area rugs. Clean and polish linoleum, tile and wooden floors. Consider refinishing wood floors if necessary. Pay particular attention to the kitchen and bath cabinets.

Clean and polish all the light fixtures.

NEUTRALIZING

Be cautious with colors when painting or replacing carpeting. Position your home on the market to be as livable to as many people as possible and to allow the buyer to mentally picture the home as theirs.

Forget your personal taste – the market is always demand driven! Consider replacing unusual or bold colors with neutral tones. Two coats of off-white paint may be the best investment you have ever made.

CREATING THE ILLUSION OF MORE SPACE

Arrange furniture to give the rooms as spacious a feeling as possible. Consider removing furniture from rooms that are crowded. If necessary, place some furniture in storage.

Pack up collectibles – both to protect and to give the room a more spacious feel. Leave just enough accessories to give the home a personal touch. Pack the rest.

Remove all clutter and make it a habit to pick up clothing, shoes and personal possessions each and every day for possible showings.

Empty closets of off-season clothing and pack for the move. Organize them to demonstrate the most efficient use of space. Leave as few items on the floor or shelves as possible.

Use light to create a sense of space. All drapes should be open. Turn on all of the lights throughout the home for showings.

ATMOSPHERE

When placing yourself in the potential buyer's shoes, you will want to consider the overall atmosphere of your home. Keep in mind your sense of smell as you go through this checklist. Create the atmosphere of your home as a shelter, a place that is safe and warm and in good condition.

A clean smelling house creates a positive image in the buyer's mind. Be aware of any odors. Remember that some people are much more sensitive to odors than others.

Use products like carpet deodorizers, air fresheners and room deodorizers. The best strategy is to remove the source of the smell rather than cover it up.

Often the only way to remove the smell of pet urine from flooring is to replace the carpeting, padding and any underlayment and replace them. If this is preventing the sale of your home, do not hesitate to make this investment or offer an allowance for replacement.

Have your carpets and furniture cleaned and air out or dry-clean your drapes.

Air conditioning filters: clean the vent covers and change filters at least once a month.

Consider adding delightful scents. Cinnamon, fresh flowers, breads baking are all excellent ways to enhance your property for sale.

MAKE YOUR HOME ATTRACTIVE

Preparing your home for sale is the most fun and involves the use of color, lighting and accessories to emphasize the best features of your home.

Small details can make rooms more attractive and appealing. The effect of a vase of flowers, an open book on the coffee table, a basket of birch logs by the fireplace, etc., can make the difference in a room.

The use of a brightly colored pillow in a wing chair or a throw blanket on a couch can add dimension to a sterile room.

Never apologize for things you cannot change. The buyer will either decide to accept or reject the property regardless of the words you say. Just present the home in the best way possible with complete honesty!

Take advantage of natural light as much as possible by cleaning windows, opening shades and drapes, etc. Add lamps and lighting where necessary. Be sure that all fixtures are clean and have functioning bulbs. Increase the wattage of the bulbs to manufacturer recommendations.

Be careful not to create distracting clutter.

OTHER AREAS

THE EXTERIOR

Needed maintenance just as a buyer would. Repaint to touch up as necessary. You can't make a better investment when you are selling your house. Don't let the outside turn buyers off before the inside turns them on.

Color has the power to attract. A tub of geraniums, a pot of petunias or a basket of begonias on the front steps is a welcoming touch.

If you have a porch or front deck, set the stage with pots of flowers and attractively arrange outdoor furniture.

If you are selling during the fall or winter months, consider using a wreath of dried flowers or attractive milk can on the porch.

- ❑ Check to see that all doors and windows are in good working order. Give special attention to your home's exterior doors and front entry.
- ❑ Clean and paint doors if necessary. Remember that you have only one chance to make a good first impression that is likely to color the remainder of the house tour.
- ❑ Wash all windows and replace any broken or cracked windowpanes.
- ❑ Screens should be free of any tears or holes.
- ❑ Inspect all locks to ensure that they are functioning properly.
- ❑ Check for loose or missing shingles. Clean out gutters and down spouts. Touch up peeling areas on gutters.
- ❑ Invest in a new doormat that says, "Welcome."

THE YARD

Make sure the yard is neatly mowed, raked and edged.

Consider adding seasonal flowers along the walks or in the planting areas. Plop the plants into a well-placed wheelbarrow, and old fashioned washtub or what novelty you can think of.

It is important to devote at least one area of your yard to outdoor living. Buyers will still recognize a scene set with picnic table and chairs and respond positively to it.

THE FRONT ENTRY

Whether a graciously proportioned center-hall or a small space just large enough for a coat rack and tiny table, this part of your home deserves your particular attention.

The first impression is very important. Dried flowers or a small plant can make a striking focal point on a hall table any time of the year. Virtually any entry hall will benefit from a well-placed mirror to enlarge the area.

Hall flooring: make sure the surface is spotless and add a small rug to protect the area during showings.

Entry hall closet: make it appear roomy. Add a few extra hangers. Hang a bag of cedar chips or a pomander ball to give it a pleasant, fresh scent. Remove all off-season clothing.

LIVING AREAS

Think of these areas as if they were furniture showrooms. Your job is to make each room generate a positive response. Add touches that make a room look truly inviting.

Sweep and clean the fireplace. Place a few logs on the grate to create an attractive appearance.

Improve the traffic flow by removing excess furniture. Have easy traffic flow patterns.

Remove oversized television sets if they dominate the room. If necessary, substitute with a smaller one until you move.

Draw attention to exposed beams or a cathedral ceiling with special lighting.

Clean and organize all storage space. Neat, organized shelves and drawers look larger and more adequate for prospective buyer's needs.

Large, cheerful kitchen windows are an advantage and should be highlighted as a special feature of your home.

Set the table in an inviting way with bright place mats and a generous bowl of fruit as a centerpiece.

THE KITCHEN

Pay particular attention to you kitchen – this room continues to be the “heart of the home.” A pleasant, working kitchen is near the top of most buyers’ list of priorities and is a room that buyers always scrutinize closely.

No clutter! Clear counters and the area around your sink(s) to maximize the appearance of workspaces.

Sinks, cabinets, appliances and counter tops should be clean and fresh. All appliances should be absolutely clean, bright, sparkling and shiny!

If you have a counter top eating area, set two attractive place settings with coordinating napkins and placemats, and place cushions on the stools.

LAUNDRY ROOM

A separate laundry room is a true asset and is one of the most frequent requests that buyers make during a home search. Don’t hide this treasure behind closed doors. Spruce up the room and open the door proudly for inspection.

- ❑ Add a fresh coat of paint or put up cheerful wallpaper.
- ❑ Organize all closets and storage areas.
- ❑ Remove all dirty laundry. Keep current with your laundry or store all dirty laundry in a closed container.
- ❑ Clean and polish the washer and dryer. Don’t forget to clean the flooring and baseboards under and around the washer and dryer.
- ❑ Consider adding an attractive, coordinated throw rug.

STAIRWAYS

Stairways should provide an attractive transition from one level of your home to another.

Stairs must be clutter free, stair railings tight and secure and runners or carpeting tacked securely. Check the condition of the walls; paint or re-wallpaper if necessary.

If the stairs are focal point of the main living areas, carefully choose accents to improve the visual appeal. If you have a wide, gracious staircase, emphasize this feature by hanging a few pictures along the

wall. Draw attention to a handsome lighting fixture by polishing the brass and dusting each small light bulb or crystal prism. Any stair landing should also have an attractive focal point, be it a fern on a plant stand, a dramatic poster, a chiming clock, or a special chair on a large stair landing. If the staircase is narrow, fool the eye by minimizing clutter.

BEDROOMS

Every bedroom in your home should invite prospective buyers to settle right in.

Make your bedroom larger. Paint the room a light color, and minimize clutter to maximize spaciousness. Aim for a restful, subdued "look."

A private bathroom off the master bedroom is a real sale plus...decorates to coordinate with the color scheme of your bedroom, creating the "suite" effect.

Remove and store all out of season clothing. Remove any items from the floor area – this will make a closet seem more spacious. Arrange all shelves to maximize the use of space.

Make sure all articles in the closet smell fresh and clean.

Make sure all closet lights have adequate wattage and are operating. Lighted closets look bigger, are more attractive and allow buyers to inspect the interiors easily.

Have children pack any items that are not currently in use and dispose of unused possessions.

BATHROOMS

Prospects will inspect yours carefully, so be sure it is immaculate.

- ❑ Cleanliness is the key! Make sure that all surfaces are spotless.
- ❑ Replace worn or dirty shower curtains, clean and repair caulking and remove non-skid bath surface decals that are in poor condition.
- ❑ Clear off countertops and store all personal care products out of sight.
- ❑ Repair any faucets that leak or do not function properly. Clean off mineral deposits with vinegar or commercial products.

- Clean and organize all cabinets and drawers. Don't forget the medicine cabinet; dispose of old prescriptions and polish the shelves. The same goes for the storage cabinet under the sink(s).

Don't hesitate to buy a few new towels and a rug. After all, you will be taking these things with you to your new home.

Scrub and wax an old floor. Cover the largest area you can with a freshly washed rug.

Create a pleasing, individual look. Consider bringing out your best towels and perfumed guest soaps. Add a plant for color and freshness.

A gentle hint of fragrance in the air is fine – but keep it subtle.

GARAGE

Sweep and wash the floor to remove dirt and stains. Organize tools, lawn and garden equipment, bicycles, etc. A clean, organized garage appears large.

If the area is dark, add more light. If you have a two-car garage with very little extra room, remove one of your cars so that buyers can make their inspection in comfort.

Clear off and organize the workbench in your garage. Make sure the lighting is excellent. Add a throw rug as cushioning against the cement flooring.

ATTIC

Whether a high-ceiling room or a crawlspace under the eaves for storage, your attic will be examined and should not detract from the well-kept appearance of your home.

Be sure to oil the mechanism of the stairs and that there is adequate lighting.

Spruce up your attic space.

Make sure your major systems, such as heating/air conditioning units and electrical service is operating properly. If appropriate, vacuum out these units and install a clean filter.

As a final touch, take a damp cloth and wipe off any dust and grime from the surface of your water heater and heating/air-conditioning unit. Apply a coat of wax when you are finished.

SOME FINAL TIPS

- There should not be any major housecleaning at this point. The kinds of tasks you ought to be concerned with now are simple ones; making the beds, stuffing last night's dirty dishes in the dishwasher, picking up loose newspapers etc. Even young children can participate by "cleaning" their rooms.
- Keep your thermostat at a comfortable temperature.
- Turn on all the lights for every showing before prospective buyers arrive. This also gives you an opportunity to select the lighting effects you want for each room. Be sure not to overlook areas like your attic and garage where light switches are often difficult to locate. No area of your home should be dark.
- Turn off the television and turn on light, soothing background music.
- Arrange for pets and children to be at a neighbor's house. Perhaps it's unfair to lump children with pets but young children can distract buyers from their purpose. **Keep pets away from buyers.**
- Don't try to "sell" the house with words! By this time you have prepared the house for sale – so let it sell itself. Buyer's buy on emotion – theirs, not yours! Keep your emotions under control.
- Never misrepresent! Today's consumer protection laws are very specific. Prepare the entire proper, not to mention legal, information. **DISCLOSE!**
- Prepare a book of complete information about the property. Include data about the neighborhood, distance to shopping, drive time to and from the airports, ages of the neighborhood children, places of local interest, etc.
- Assemble utility expense records, such as total yearly heating costs or monthly budgets, for buyers' inspection.
- If you are including any appliances in the sale price of your home, you should keep warranties and instruction booklets in the same file.
- Consider hiring a surveyor to mark the boundaries of your property. This will not only show consideration, it will be an effective sales tool. Cautions, if you are not exactly sure of the boundary lines, do not attempt to represent their location to the buyer!
- Items not included in the sale must be removed (and replaced if applicable) before showing your home. Some items that have caused problems during contract negotiation are lighting fixtures, ceiling fans and other such attachments to the home.

Now draw a deep breath and don't panic. Real Estate professionals consider these things and much more everyday, if you have done all your "homework" and completed your "assignments," you should be ready for a sale! If you have any questions, please feel free to call.

We sincerely wish you good luck with the preparations your house. If you feel this is too overwhelming and you rather have a specialist handle the preparations, please call us! Our team has 23-year+ know-how of the real estate business and our staff provides you with their expertise and knowledge to list and sell your home. We promise 100% customer focus, 100% loyalty. Our job is to protect and promote your best interest.

Please do not hesitate to contact us and we will start working for you.

Have a wonderful day!

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When Service Matters Most

