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PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR SALE

Easy tips for making your home more attractive to buyers

Are you thinking of selling your home? If you're one of the many homeowners who choose this time of year to move — whether you're trading up or down, or simply relocating — you're probably starting to prepare your home for the sale.

Before you become overwhelmed by the task, it's a good idea to sit down and look at your home objectively. An attractive, well-kept home generally has a better chance of selling a little faster. Also, the old adage "first impressions are lasting ones" is very true.

If you haven't made substantial improvement or changes over the years, it's not a good idea to take on major renovation projects simply to sell your home. This can be an expensive and lengthy procedure and there are no guarantees that you'll be able to recover all of your costs.

Instead, try to determine what types of minor cosmetic improvements can be made, like general cleaning, painting floor refinishing, and so on. These projects generally don't require a lot of capital and your home can be greatly improved by them. Consult with your REALTOR to see what types of improvements make the most sense.

START WITH THE OUTSIDE

An inviting exterior ensures that potential buyers will inspect the interior, so it's important to keep your lawn and hedges trimmed and edged, the flower beds cultivated, and your yard free and clear of clutter and refuse.

If you have any loose siding or pavement, it's a good idea to get these items repaired. And if you have any cracked or broken windows, get them fixed as well.

Missing shingles or eaves troughs should also be replaced and loose shutters or awnings secured. You may also want to consider painting the exterior of your home to spruce it up a little. And if you have aluminum or vinyl siding or trim that's quite dirty, hire someone to clean it with a power washer if you can't or don't want to wash it yourself.

If you have a garage, make sure the door is clean, attractive and in good working order. Also make sure the inside of your garage doesn't look too cluttered or unorganized.

Keep patios, walkways and decks free of debris and clutter.

THE INSIDE STORY

You can do a lot on the inside of your home as well without spending a great deal of money. Two primary areas to keep in mind are the kitchen and bathroom. These two rooms of your home are generally of prime interest to potential buyers. Make sure they're clutter-free, bright and spotless. This applies to kitchen appliances as well, especially if you're including them with the sale of the home. Scrub sinks, toilets, bathtubs and kitchen appliances until they shine.

If the carpeting in your home looks dirty or dingy, you may want to rent a steam cleaner, or hire a professional carpet cleaner. Pet odours can become trapped in rugs and this can repel prospective buyers.

Give your home a thorough cleaning and if you've been cooking, ensure you air the home prior to its showing. Make sure any wood and tile floors look clean and bright, not dull and dingy. Get to those easy-to-miss spots that need a good cleaning. Wash down the walls, windows and woodwork. Clean out the cupboards under the sink, dust the tops of baseboards and wash all window coverings. The more extensive the initial clean up, the easier it will be to keep the house looking its best for visits from your REALTOR and prospective buyers.



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As well, keep in mind that rooms that are too cluttered will give the impression that they're much smaller than their true size. Try to create a feeling of spaciousness when conducting your spruce-up. Pack away bulky or unused furniture and make the best use of your space. Be ruthless when you go through closets, spare rooms and cupboards. If you haven't used that bread-making machine in a while, and if you're not likely to need that extra set of china in the next few weeks, pack it away. Those knick-knacks on the mantelpiece may have sentimental value to you, but they'll just look like knick-knacks to the people who come through your home. Take a deep breath and move them out of sight. You can get a head start on packing by cleaning off bookshelves, and clearing away out-of-season clothes, toys, bedding, sports equipment and garden tools.

Now is the time to fix the cracked light-switch plates, broken door handles, leaky faucets and squeaky doors you've learned to live with for years.

Shabby corners and grubby entranceways will benefit from a fresh coat of paint in a neutral colour — this is not the time to start experimenting with dramatic paint schemes. Similarly, heavily patterned wallpaper or brightly coloured accent walls may tend to distract buyers from other features, or make it hard for them to imagine how their belongings will look in the room. If you can, repaint or paper the walls in a subtle colour.

PRE-SHOWING CHECKLIST

Whenever possible, try to be out of the house while the REALTOR is conducting a showing. (Potential purchasers often feel like intruders when homeowners are present).

- Keep pets well out of the way — preferably out of your house during the showing. (Even small barking dogs can create a negative emotion and those potential purchasers who are afraid of or allergic to pets will not wish to view your home.)
- Make sure your home is tidy and well aired.
- Keep all stairways free of clutter.
- Remove any items (like chandeliers) which won't be included in the sale of the home.
- Don't keep money, jewelry and small valuables in plain sight during a showing.
- Ensure that every room is adequately lit.

Ask your REALTOR for his or her checklist to better prepare you for a showing or open house. By following these relatively simple tips, you'll feel proud of your home and potential purchasers are sure to appreciate its beauty.

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