

Staging Sells !

People today who are in the market to buy a home are most likely to want a home that is ready for immediate occupancy. If they see issues with the home that are potential projects for them in the future it will effect their desire to make an offer and may cause them to not consider an offer at all. All sellers should attempt to present their homes for sale in the best possible manner to help maximize the chances for a rapid sale at the highest possible price.

Sellers should consider “staging” the home for potential buyers. Staging a home is not necessarily about how we live in our homes day-to-day. It is more about creating an environment where most potential buyers feel safe, relaxed, calm, and can envision themselves living. Staging helps attract a wide range of people to a home and invites them to imagine how the home would be if **they** were to purchase it.

As difficult as it may be, we need to eliminate “evidence” that we live in the home and provide a clean slate for buyers so they can imagine living in the home;

- ✓ Remove personal, family photos
- ✓ Remove monogrammed and personalized items like artwork with the family name, or door signs that read “Emily’s Room”
- ✓ Daily use items of a personal nature, for example a toothbrush, or shampoo bottles in bath rooms should be stored out of sight
- ✓ Counter tops should be as clear as possible so that buyers can picture places for their appliances and accessories.
- ✓ Furniture should have minimal extra pillows and throw blankets
- ✓ Wall art should be at a minimum. Provide some art, but don’t cover every wall. Remember, we are showing a “home”, not an art collection.
- ✓ Tables can be set, but keep it simple. No big center pieces that block the view or distract buyers. They should be focusing on the room, not the big center piece.

The first thing to do is conduct a deep clean. Thoroughly clean everything with focus on details;

- ✓ Top shelves and high ledges
- ✓ Ceiling fans, chandeliers, and other lighting fixtures
- ✓ Corners and crevices (no cob webs and dust bunnies !)
- ✓ Showers, tubs, toilets
- ✓ Polish and shine everything wood and metal
- ✓ Pet owners and smokers pay attention to cleaning issues and related odor...

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Don't forget to take care of the exterior of the home. Curb appeal is very important.

Make sure the approach to the house is appealing to buyers before they ever get out of their cars.

- ✓ Grass should be cut and edges defined
- ✓ Trees and bushes should be trimmed and pruned. Rake leaves.
- ✓ Potted plants need to be watered and flourishing. Nobody wants to see a pot with dead plants in it !
- ✓ Keep yards clear of debris, tools, and children's toys
- ✓ Fix any damaged building material and paint any peeling paint areas... especially around the main entrance to the home. You only get one chance at a first impression !!!

After the initial deep clean you must regularly maintain the home;

- ✓ Wipe down sinks in bath and kitchen areas after use.
- ✓ Wipe down counters regularly
- ✓ Do not leave dirty dishes in sinks
- ✓ Make beds and arrange furniture
- ✓ Make sure dirty clothes are out of sight in hampers or laundry closets, not on the floor
- ✓ Dining room table should be clear (or tastefully set with a simple center piece) and chairs neatly returned to position under the table
- ✓ Office areas should be free of paper clutter and chairs should be neatly placed under the desk.
- ✓ Children's toys should be minimized, and then stored in a toy chest or other unit out of sight.
 - DO NOT use a closet as a "dumping ground" for stray items. Buyers will be looking in closets too, and you do not want them seeing your mess.
 - DO NOT use the garage as a dumping ground either. Buyers want to see that big open garage so they can visualize parking cars there.
 - Consider renting a storage unit while showing your home and keep all extra items there. You need to leave only essential items at the home during showing... MINIMIZE !!!
 - When selling and moving it is a good time to purge all of those things you haven't used or really needed. Many agencies that need your help will gladly accept your donation of clothing and furniture. A garage sale is another option.

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Understandably, when selling a home most people do not wish to pay for extensive remodeling projects. Sellers should consider projects that are cost effective and bring great positive change to their homes.

- ✓ Cleaning and de-cluttering cost nothing (except your time and effort)
- ✓ Even a professional, one time cleaning, may be a good idea. Ask for a price quote ??
- ✓ Painting is far and away the least expensive with the biggest return on investment. A nice clean coat of paint goes a long way toward selling your home. Especially on doors and trim where hands have made surfaces dirty or worn. If you can't do it all by yourself, invite friends, have a few snacks and soda, and call it a party !
- ✓ Appliances should be clean, inside and out, and in good working order. There are many appliance outlet centers that offer deep discounts on appliances that have some minor cosmetic imperfection. It may be worth the money to replace some old appliances.
- ✓ If an entire house of new carpet is out of the question, how about a good professional carpet cleaning ? Or, you can rent a steam cleaner and do it yourself !!

If you can't update the entire home, prioritize...

- The Entrance to Home; First impression is everything.
 - Make sure the front door is clean, fresh paint on the door and trim is even better. Nothing is worse than a dirty or peeling front door. And also make sure all glass windows are clean and not broken.
 - Clean the area of debris, dead leaves, and other distractions.
 - A colorful potted plant or two by the door will make a good first impression.
 - Make sure everything works
 - Door knobs must turn and open the door
 - Locks must lock and unlock as intended
 - Door bells must work
 - Lighting must work
- Kitchen; A nice kitchen can sell an average house.
 - Appliances should be clean, working, and should all match each other in color and style.
 - Keep it uncluttered and let people see your beautiful counter tops
 - Stage with "Smell"
 - Use Vanilla, Cinnamon, or Citrus air freshener or candles in the kitchen...

- Master Bedroom; A romantic retreat, or private getaway appeals to buyers.
 - Keep things simple so people will feel relaxed, not energized.
 - Simple bedding in solid, neutral colors or simple prints work. Don't use bright colors (except in very small doses with accessories) or busy patterns.

As a rule, neutral colors are best throughout the home. Most buyers are not likely to respond well to bright colors. There may be some people who prefer to be bold with color, but remember, when trying to sell a home we are trying to appeal to the largest group of people possible, not a special few. Keep colors neutral and light to appeal to the most people, especially in smaller rooms. Dark paint in a small room will only make it look smaller. Things to keep neutral in addition to walls;

- ✓ Carpet
- ✓ Drapes
- ✓ Bath Towels / Dish Towels
- ✓ Bedding
- ✓ Large Furniture

Open Floor plans sell. It's important to make your home show as "open" as possible;

- ✓ As buyers enter a room they should be invited in. Don't block their path into the room.
- ✓ Minimize furniture in a room so that there is more open space. Buyers should not be met by the back of a piece of furniture
- ✓ In bedrooms, don't block the path to a closet with a dresser... let people easily move around the room.
- ✓ Smaller scale furniture, see through table tops, and thinner legs on furniture is much better than huge pieces, with bulky or blocky shapes.
- ✓ DO NOT block a room's focal point such as a fireplace or bright window.

Stage rooms in the manner for which they were intended. Let the buyers see what a room can be used for so they can imagine using it as their own. Avoid showing rooms with multiple uses. If you currently have a room that you use as an office and guest bedroom, don't stage it as both... choose one or the other; stage it as an office or stage it as a guest bedroom, but not both. If you have a guest bedroom with a treadmill in it, take the exercise equipment out... it's a bedroom, not a bedroom and a gym.

On the day that a showing is scheduled there are certain things you should do to maximize the potential of your home;

- ✓ Open blinds to let the light in... bright and airy is best.
- ✓ Turn on lights to eliminate any dark places. Put the brightest light bulb that will safely go in the light fixture in question. Check the fixture... it should have a label telling what the maximum allowable wattage for a light bulb is acceptable for that fixture. Light is great, but ***DO NOT EXCEED THE MANUFACTURES RECOMMENDED ALLOWABLE WATTAGE.***
- ✓ Keep things fresh and clean. Natural air freshener will keep buyers happy.
- ✓ Check that cloths are picked up, toys are stored, and nothing is out of place.
- ✓ Make sure furniture is properly placed and provides an open feel.
- ✓ Don't leave anything blocked from buyers. Pathways to closets, doorways to the backyard, access to balconies and outdoor decks... let them see it all !
- ✓ Play "easy listening" music at a low level to provide a lived-in feel.
- ✓ Make sure timers are not set to turn on sprinkler system during a showing.
- ✓ Make sure alarms are turned off, or simple instructions are provided for showing real estate agents.
- ✓ Lastly... GET OUT. Owners have an emotional attachment to the property and it is much better for them and the potential buyers, if they are simply not present for a showing.