

## ***Staging Your Home to Sell***

Our goal is not simply to sell your house, but to help you realize the best price obtainable for your property in the shortest period of time.

The following information will introduce you to practical ideas on how to successfully prepare your house for sale. These suggestions require a minimum amount of time and expense to complete and are designed to make your house stand out from the competition.

### **THE FIRST IMPRESSION**

You have probably heard how important first impressions can be. But did you know that within 15 seconds a buyer has developed an opinion of your property? This is why establishing the right first impression is critical to achieving a successful sale. The following is an outline of those elements which create the overall first impression, including suggestions on how to make sure the buyer reacts as favorably as possible.

### **THE MODEL HOME EFFECT**

The best way to make a buyer "feel at home" is to create an environment similar to that found in a model home. Obviously, you cannot recreate the feeling of a perfect display home without starting from scratch, but there are some valuable techniques to be learned. When walking into a model home you will notice several key points:

- The environment is neutral.
- The colors and interior decorating accent the home's features.
- The smell is new and clean.
- The sound is either quiet or enhanced by subtle background music.
- All details are looked after, from manicuring the lawn to a floral arrangement in the entry.

### **EXTERIOR**

#### **The Home Front**

Your property's landscape is not limited to the lawn and shrubs but encompasses everything from the street to your doorstep. For this reason, you must make sure each component of the visual landscape looks its best. The real estate industry refers to this as "curb appeal."

#### **Street & Yard**

Make sure the street in front of your house is free of litter and debris. If necessary, give it a fresh sweep. Remove any clutter from the yard and around the house. Make sure the garage doors are closed for all showings.

## **Sidewalk**

Sweep your sidewalk if needed and remove weeds that may be growing between cracks. Walkways should be swept and free of snow or ice during winter months.

## **Fence**

A freshly painted fence gives a home a crisp look. You should never let a peeling, tired-looking fence or squeaky gate stand between a prospective buyer and a positive first impression.

## **Mailbox/Light Fixtures**

Quick painting of an old mailbox will let the buyer know you care about the details. If outdoor lamps look rusted and worn out, new ones will cast a positive light on your property.

### ***Through the Buyer's Eyes...***

*Does your yard look well maintained?*

*Are the trees and bushes trimmed?*

*Is your lawn mowed and edged?*

*Is your lawn free of weeds?*

*Are the decks and patios clean?*

*Does your house need painting?*

## **Landscaping**

Neatly trimmed shrubs are essential. Taking the time to do this costs little, but has a big impact. Besides being freshly mowed and trimmed, a lawn should look healthy. If there are spots that look beyond help, a little sod goes a long way to restoring the look of a well maintained lawn. Fertilize for a greener yard or treat weeds with special treatments to strengthen and green up the lawn.

## **Front Walkway**

Like the sidewalk, the walkway should be clean and free of weeds. If sections are badly cracked, consider having them repaired. Walkways should be free of snow and ice during winter months.

## **Driveway**

There are two elements of the driveway with which you should be concerned. The first is its surface condition. If stained or otherwise worn-looking, consider resealing it with a high quality sealer product. Second, is the appearance of a car parked in the driveway. A newly waxed, well-maintained automobile will make a much different statement about you and your property than an unattractive, poorly cared for car. If you think your car will be a detriment to the look of your property, park it elsewhere.

## **Paint**

A fresh coat of paint can be one of the best investments you can make to increase the value of your property. If you do not want to spend the money to paint the entire house, consider painting just the shutters or the front of the house.

## **Siding**

If you have vinyl or aluminum siding, wash or repaint it using a product designed for these materials.

## **Windows**

Attractive windows can help increase the appeal of your property.

- Replace any cracked or broken glass.
- Make sure the windows are sparkling clean.
- Add shutters to the front of your house.
- Install window boxes with bright flowers.
- Apply touch-up paint where needed.

## **Roof**

The roof may be the single most important aspect of your home front. A well-maintained roof will say a lot about the overall condition of the property.

- Replace any broken or missing shingles or tiles.
- Repair flashing where needed.
- Paint or replace damaged or worn eaves and fascia boards.
- If the roof is old and needs to be replaced, consider having the work done before showing the property.

## **Gutters/Downspouts**

Neat and trim-looking gutters and downspouts make a house look shipshape. Consider replacing highly visible ones if they are in need of serious repair. If run off areas are eroded, you can install concrete (or other) "spillways." Make sure to clean out debris from gutters prior to showing.

## **Doorway/Decks**

The doorway is the focal point of your house.

- Repaint or clean the front door.
- Make sure all exterior lights are clean and working.
- Apply new door hardware.
- Install a brass kick plate.
- Replace house numbers.
- Put a flower box or planter alongside the door.
- Install a new front light fixture.
- If deck is worn - power wash and re-coat.

## ***Through the Buyer's Eyes...***

*Are there any exterior holes or cracks?*

*Are your walks and porches clean and in good repair?*

*Does your roof leak or sag?  
Are any shingles or tiles missing?  
Is your chimney in good shape?*

## **INTERIOR**

### **Appeal to the Senses**

There are many ways to create a more exciting and saleable interior, at surprisingly little cost. We will briefly discuss the sensory selling tools that can have enormous impact, then provide you with suggestions on how to improve each room.

### **Light**

It is proven that people react more favorably to property shown under bright light than dark. The following steps should help you keep your rooms as bright as possible.

- Keep windows clean.
- Clean all light fixtures and replace burnt out bulbs.
- Use adequate wattage in light bulbs.
- Consider replacing old fluorescent lamps, which darken with use.
- Use mirrors to magnify the feeling of light and space.
- Use track lights to create a high-tech look.
- Use light wall colors.
- Open drapes and blinds and turn on lights prior to showing.

### **Color**

The fundamental rule when selling your house is to keep colors neutral and light. The following are specific suggestions:

- A color consultation is recommended before selecting paint to freshen up the inside.
- Avoid highly patterned wallpaper whenever possible.
- Try to limit bright colors to accents like fresh flowers, towels, area rugs, and shower curtains.

### **Sound**

The sounds of peace and quiet are some of the best sounds to have when your home is being shown to a prospective buyer - but there are other sound considerations of which you should be aware.

- Avoid barking dogs and noisy children, if possible.
- Also avoid sounds of work such as vacuums, dishwashers and lawn movers.
- Make sure there are no sounds of mechanical problems like banging pipes or faulty appliances.
- Light classical or instrumental music can be effective in creating a pleasing atmosphere.

## **Smell**

Smell has more impact than you might expect. It can work for or against you.

- The smell of newness is positive. This scent can be achieved by applying a fresh coat of polyurethane to natural wood or latex paint to walls.
- The smell of cleanliness is important to the selling environment of your house. Beyond actually cleaning, lemon oil or lemon wax can create a lasting scent of freshness. Fresh flowers can be effective.
- For a real heart-warming touch, place a dish of vanilla in a warm oven to create the aroma of fresh baked cookies or bread.
- Sweeten the refrigerator with a box of baking soda.
- Smells to avoid include strong pet odors, tobacco, cooking oil or gas.

## **Focus on De-Personalizing Your Home**

When considering a home to purchase, the buyer often visualizes what it would be like living there. If the home is dominated by strong personal statements, buyers are less likely to feel comfortable and therefore less able to visualize the property as their own. Personal statements are reflected in many areas:

- Unusual wall colors or heavily patterned wallpaper.
- Heavy odors from pets, tobacco or cooking.
- Sounds of loud music or television.
- Noisy children or barking dogs.
- Strong political or religious statements.
- Unusual art or furnishings.
- Family photos.
- Mounted animals such as deer heads etc.

## **THE IMPACT OF SMALL DETAILS**

Small details make big statements about the perceived condition of your property. A house that shows poorly as a result of an overgrown lawn, peeling paint, or simply the smell of mildew, may create the overall feeling that the property has not been cared for. If your house leaves a buyer with this impression, it could cost you valuable time and money.

## **Entry**

The entry is where the first impression of the interior is created. Here you have the opportunity to make a big statement in a small area.

- Repaint the entry using light, neutral colors.
- Move a prized antique or attractive furnishing to the entry, where it will have maximum impact.
- Apply a fresh coat of finish sealer to a wood floor (follow manufacturer's instructions).
- Tile or linoleum flooring should shine.

- Replace plastic switch plate covers with brass or porcelain.
- A new hall light fixture can make a great impression.
- Make sure the room is well lit.

***Through the Buyer's Eyes...***

*Are your carpets clean and in good condition?*

*Do your carpets need stretching?*

*Are there any pet or smoking odors?*

*Do your walls have any cracks or holes?*

*Do your walls need painting?*

*What about that wallpaper?*

*Do your ceilings have any water stains, cracks or peeling?*

*Do your ceilings need painting?*

**Kitchen**

The kitchen is perhaps *the most important room* in the house. It can have a major impact on the value of your property. If your kitchen needs some real help, you may want to make extensive improvements. The following is a list of ideas to increase the appeal of your kitchen without spending a great deal of money.

- Make sure the room is virtually spotless and smells fresh.
- Consider replacing outdated light fixtures with new track lighting.
- If your appliances are dated by colors or wear and tear consider replacing them.
- Spruce up kitchen cabinets by installing new knobs or hardware.
- If your cabinets look especially old, you can have a professional replace the doors or door fronts.
- Organize your kitchen cabinets to demonstrate how much room you have. Cabinet organizers are a good investment for this.
- Remove small kitchen appliances and gadgets from countertops to create an uncluttered look.
- Chipped or damaged countertops should be repaired or replaced.
- If your linoleum floor is badly worn, replace it with neutral no-wax flooring, tile, vinyl wood look, wood, or laminate flooring.
- A freshly painted kitchen may be well worth the investment.

***Through the Buyer's Eyes...***

*Are your appliances clean and in good working order?*

*Are your cabinets in good condition?*

*Are your countertops in good condition?*

*Is your tile grout clean?*

*Is your sink stained, chipped, or in need of caulking?*

## **Bathroom**

The bathroom has become an important selling feature in today's home. It is a room that has moved from the utilitarian to the exciting. There are many ways you can improve deficiencies and create interest through various levels of enhancement.

- Place a vase of fresh flowers on the vanity.
- Replace an old toilet seat with a new one.
- Replace an old light fixture with a new style light fixture.
- Refinish an old porcelain tub using a porcelain finishing service.
- Place all personal care articles out of sight.
- Freshen the air with lemon scented products.
- Replace an old towel rack with a new one.
- Add color and richness with new towels and a shower curtain.

### ***Through the Buyer's Eyes...***

*Do your faucets shut off completely?*

*Do your sinks drain freely?*

*Are your toilets in good condition?*

*Do your tubs need caulking?*

*Is your floor in good condition?*

*Are your vanities and mirrors in good condition?*

## **Living Room**

The living room is an area we do very little living in yet it is a major selling point of a house. Buyers look for elegant and impressive living rooms to make the right statements to their friends and relatives.

- Use mirrors whenever possible to enhance the perception of size. The strategic placement of a mirror over a mantle or across from a window can make a room look brighter and larger.
- A fireplace is one feature that everyone can appreciate - show it off to its best advantage.
- If your house is being shown during the winter, make a cozy, crackling fire or leave the gas fireplace on. During warmer months, you can dress up the hearth with fresh indoor plants, battery operated candles or dried flowers.
- Use inexpensive freestanding accent lights to create dramatic visual effects behind large plants or pieces of furniture.
- Professionally clean wall-to-wall carpet or large area rugs. Sand and refinish stained hardwood floors.
- Clean windows and light fixtures.
- Clean fireplace ashes and replace with fresh wood if not in use.
- Make sure all cosmetic plaster or sheetrock cracks are repaired. (This applies to every room in the house.)

- Use lemon oil on hardwood furniture to create the right look and aroma.
- Liberal use of fresh flowers and plants will enhance the environment.
- Rearrange furniture and remove pieces as needed to open up the room and give the illusion of space plus improve traffic flow.

### ***Through the Buyer's Eyes...***

*Is your fireplace clean and in working order?*

*Has the wood burning fireplace had a safety inspection?*

*Are all drapes, shutters and shades clean and working properly?*

*Are any window screens bent?*

*Do all the windows open and close easily?*

*Are the windowsills clean?*

*Are your doors in good condition?*

*Is the paint in good condition?*

### **Bedrooms**

The bedrooms can do as much to sell your house as they can to turn off a buyer.

- Make sure the bedrooms are absolutely spotless. Rugs should be cleaned, windows washed and fresh smells from flowers or lemon oil should be in the air.
- Organize closets to increase their perceived size. Rubberized wire closet organizers do a great job of helping fully utilize space.
- Bedrooms should be well lit. You may want to add track lights in the master bedroom.
- A ceiling fan can be an attractive and practical accent to any bedroom.
- Rearrange furniture or remove some pieces to make rooms appear larger.

### **SPECIAL FEATURES**

#### **Basement/Attic**

The look of the basement and/or attic can say more about the condition of your house than you may think. A buyer who sees a meticulously clean and organized basement and/or attic will have much more confidence in your property than if it were in a state of disarray.

- If unfinished, paint a bare cement floor oil-based gray.
- If unfinished, paint the stairway down to the basement and the stairway up to the attic.
- Make sure there are no signs of pest infestation. If needed, call in a pest control company to remedy the problem before the property is shown.
- Clean and organize your laundry area if located in basement.
- Make sure all lights are working.
- Service all HVAC equipment and display service report.
- Eliminate dampness with a dehumidifier.

### ***Through the Buyer's Eyes...***

*Is your basement/attic organized?*

*Are they well lit?*

*Are they clean?*

*Are the stairs in good repair?*

*Do the doors open and close easily?*

*Are there any signs of insects or rodents?*

### **Garage**

A well-organized garage says a lot for your house.

- Keep the garage neat and organized.
- Clean up any oil stains from your car.
- Hang gardening tools and loose articles on the wall.
- Check the garage door opener auto safety reverse feature for proper operation.
- Hold a garage sale to dispose of unused items that create clutter and may distract a potential buyer.

### ***Through the Buyer's Eyes...***

*Is your garage organized?*

*Is it well lit?*

*Is the floor swept?*

*Are there oil spots or other stains on the concrete?*

*Does the overhead garage door safely and properly operate?*

### **Swimming Pool/Spa**

The swimming pool or spa should be sparkling clean and in good operating condition.

- Repair or replace broken tiles.
- Patio and/or decking around pool should be clean and cracks repaired.
- Pool filter and heating equipment area should be cleaned.
- Replace worn or broken pool equipment (brushes, hoses, sweeps, pool covers, etc.).
- If your pool is stained, you may want to have a professional service drain and acid wash or refinish the surface.

### **GET READY TO SHOW!**

By showing attention to detail and understanding the buyer's need to visualize your house against a neutral backdrop, you can dramatically increase the salability of your property.

An **Acuity Group Real Estate Consultant** will be happy to assist you with recommendations to help your house sell for the highest price obtainable in the shortest possible time.

**Contact Acuity Group to Schedule a Free Market Valuation: 763-633-3535 or [Sales@ACGProperty.com](mailto:Sales@ACGProperty.com).**

