

# Staging Criteria

When you are ready to place a home on the market for sale, it becomes a product and just like any product on the shelves at your local store, it has features and benefits, pluses and minuses, and there are other products to compete with. To gain an edge in your marketplace you must be priced right and look better than the competition. Sometimes it is difficult to think of a home as a mere product, but it helps to think that way so that you can get top dollar for your property and sell it in a reasonable amount of time.

When you sell your home, you're going to have to move. When you move you're going to have to pack. Most of the principals of staging just mean that you're going to pack up some of your things early. It is a little bit of work, but you are going to have to do it anyway, so let's do it now so you can get top dollar for your home.

## GENERAL COMMENTS

- In every room.....stand at the doorway and look at the room through the eyes of a buyer. What do you see? Be tough on yourself: What can you live without while your home is on the market?
- Most carpets need to be cleaned. Have them professionally cleaned before coming on the market.  
*Buyers only know what they see...Not the way it's going to be! Unless your home is a "fixer", badly worn or very out of date carpets should be replaced before coming on the market. Offering a buyer a credit to pick their own carpet or a discount off the price is far less effective and will always end up costing you more money and slow the selling process. Pick a light colored short plush or Berber carpet. Real estate beige is the safest color.*
- Check all light fixtures. Are they working properly? Replace all burned out light bulbs. Look for dark hallways and corners and increase the wattage of bulbs in those areas.
- Make sure there are lamps with adequate bulbs in dark corners that are turned on for showings.
- Repair and repaint cracks on all walls and ceilings.
- Repair or replace broken light switches and switch plates. Clean any dirty areas around them.
- Keep all curtains and blinds open during the day to let in light and views. The extra cost of additional heating or air conditioning is a necessary cost of selling.
- Reduce the number of pillows on couches to zero or two. Remove all afghans and blankets.

## THE WAY YOU LIVE IN YOUR HOME AND THE WAY WE MARKET AND SELL YOUR HOUSE ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS!

- Pack up all valuable items to protect them. If necessary, take them to a safe deposit box.
- Take a hard look at those beloved houseplants. In most cases, they need to be pruned and/or the number of plants reduced to create more space. If plants don't look healthy and are just barely clinging to life, give them away.
- Fireplaces need to be cleaned out. Glass doors should be cleaned. Mantels and hearths need to be cleared off except for a very few necessary items.
- To create more space, you may want to remove a chair, a loveseat or other pieces of furniture.

- Pack up all collections (You are going to need to pack them up sooner or later anyway). They become a distraction for buyers from the desired focal point of your home.
- Reduce the number of books on bookshelves. Pack up extra books!
- Reduce the number of family pictures on shelves, pianos and tables.
- Reduce the number of wall hung photos and paintings in every room to one large piece on a wall or a small group of three. Make sure they are hung at eye level.
- Keep soft music playing at all times for showings. Easy listening or light jazz, not hard rock or funeral music.
- Be sensitive to odors, because buyers are! Excessive cooking or smoking odors, dog or cat odors, baby, laundry and mildew odors will turn off buyers. If there is a challenge with odors in your home, use room deodorants or disinfectant sprays and keep windows cracked open for ventilation even in very hot or cold weather. (There are great products in pet stores for pet odors, and many professional carpet cleaners have special ozone machines that can really help with difficult odors.) You can't sell it if you can smell it!
- Wash all windows and make sure they operate freely. If the seal is broken on a double pane window, replace it now.
- Repair items that are broken. This will show that your home is well taken care of. In most cases, buyers will ask for them to be repaired anyway, so do it now.
- Don't be afraid to move furniture from room to room. That extra chair from the living room or dining room may just look great in the master bedroom.
- In general, pack up little things. Little things create clutter and they need to be packed up anyway.

## *Inside the Home*

### **LIVING ROOM**

If you go into a model home that is newly constructed you will see that they are usually sparsely decorated. In a resale home you need to create space for buyers to mentally move in to the room by reducing clutter and the overall number of items.

- Clear off all coffee tables and end tables to just 2 or 3 magazines and one nice vase or statuary.
- Remove all ashtrays.

### **FAMILY ROOM, DEN, BONUS ROOM OR REC ROOM**

*Same as living room*

### **DINING ROOM**

- Clear off dining room table except for one nice centerpiece.
- Remove tablecloths from the table.
- Remove extra leaves from the table to make the room look bigger.
- Remove extra dining room chairs if they crowd the table or fill up the corners of the room. Four to six chairs are plenty.
- Remove or reduce the number of items, valuable items and collections. It applies here too!

## **KITCHEN**

The main question in the kitchen is...What can you live without? Clear off counters leaving only a very few items that you have to use on a daily basis. Everything else should be kept off the counters to create space. Most homes have far too many small appliances and other items out that should be stored out of sight. Leave out a few large decorative items like a bowl of fruit or a basket with bread in it.

- Repair any tile or Formica countertops and edges that have been damaged or come unglued.
- Clean tile grout with bleach if it is stained.
- Remove all magnets, photos, children's drawings, etc., from the front of the refrigerator. If there are a couple of truly necessary items, put them on the side of the refrigerator.
- Clean the stovetop and oven. Replace old burner pans if they are badly stained. Clean all exhaust fans, filters and hoods.
- Clean the kitchen floor and keep it clean for showings.
- Keep the kitchen sink clean and empty on a daily basis.
- Make sure the kitchen faucet is working smoothly without drips and that it is clean.
- Clear everything off the window ledge above the kitchen sink.
- Remember to pack up the collections in the kitchen too. Pack up your antique plate collection or whatever will distract buyers and take up space.
- Keep all soaps, towels, scouring pads and cleaning supplies out of sight under the sink.
- Some kitchens have too many scatter rugs in them. Too many rugs make a room look smaller. If space allows, one large oriental rug in the middle of the kitchen looks great.
- Empty the garbage regularly to prevent kitchen odors.
- Move dog and cat dishes so that they don't interfere with buyers walking around the room

## **MASTER BEDROOM**

- Make the bed everyday.
- Invest in a new bedspread if necessary.
- Clear off bedside tables and chest of drawers except for a very few necessary items.
- Store extra books and magazines underneath the bed.
- Keep closet doors closed. If you have a walk-in closet keep the floor clean and free of laundry and clutter.
- If you have a clock radio, keep it playing soft music during showings.
- Reduce the number of photos on tables and chest of drawers to a minimum.

## **HALLWAYS**

- Remove plastic runners on carpet or hardwood floors.

## **ADDITIONAL BEDROOMS**

- In children's rooms, take down all the posters except for one favorite over the bed. Repair nail holes and paint walls.

## **LAUNDRY ROOM**

- Put soaps & cleaners in a cupboard or reduce the number and organize them on one shelf.
- Just like in the kitchen, keep counters and sinks clean and empty.
- Get rid of excess hangers and hanging laundry. If you have a drying area, replace all of those miscellaneous hangers with one style of white plastic.
- Make sure that light bulbs are working and have adequate wattage. Many laundry rooms are too dark and need to be brighter.

## **BATHROOMS**

- Clear off counters. Reduce toiletries down to a decorative few (3-6) and consolidate them on a tray or decorative basket. Put everything else in drawers or cabinets.
- Replace that ugly dirty hand soap with a neat bottle of liquid soap.
- Coordinate all towels with one or two colors. Fold in thirds and hang neatly every day. New towels can be purchased very inexpensively if the ones you have don't match.
- Clear everything out of the shower and tub except for one bottle of liquid soap and one shampoo.
- Clean or replace the shower curtain. Keep shower curtains drawn at all times.
- One common problem in a lot of bathrooms is cracking or peeling just above the top of the shower tile or tub enclosure where it meets the dry wall or ceiling. Repair using caulking and paint or install wood trim coated in polyurethane.
- Get rid of mold and stains throughout the bathroom, especially in the shower and bath tub area.
- Many tubs and showers need a fresh new bead of silicone caulking around the edges to make them look neat and clean.
- Take all cloth toilet lid covers and water closet covers off. Keep toilet lids down every day.
- Scatter rugs in front of the sink, toilet and shower make the room look small. Use one larger rug in the middle of the room or none at all.
- Hide all cleaning supplies and the garbage can under the sink or out of the line of sight.

## **CLOSETS**

- Make sure you can open the door freely without something falling out on a prospective buyer.

## **BASEMENT**

- Be aware of smells, musty odors and dampness. Do your best to alleviate problems by repairing and cleaning problem areas. Use room deodorants and disinfectant sprays to help with any odors.
- If you use the basement for storage, condense the piles to one corner of one area of the basement.
- Repair any cracks in the ceiling and walls.
- Clear any drains.

## **GARAGE**

- Carports have to be completely cleaned out....everything!
- Garages should be swept out and organized. If you have to use part or the entire garage for storage, that is fine - just keep it neat.

- Always keep the garage door down while your home is on the market.
- If you are not using the garage for storage, keep cars in the garage and not in the driveway.
- Move boats & RVs to a storage facility or neighbor's home until your home sells.

Where do I  
store all of  
the stuff I  
took out?

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Rent a storage unit           | 5. Have a garage sale   |
| 2. Give it to charity            | 6. Put it in the attic  |
| 3. Store it in the crawl space   | 7. Use a portion or corner of the basement                                |
| 4. Use part or all of the garage | 8. As a last resort, sacrifice a third or fourth bedroom and fill it full |

## *Outside the Home*

The first impression when a buyer drives up to your home is critical! Walk across the street and look at it through the eyes of a buyer. Be tough on yourself. What do you see?

### **TRIM & HOUSE PAINT**

- Take a hard look at the front door and trim. Give special attention to this because this is where buyers will get their first opportunity to make a close inspection of your home. Does it need repainting or staining? Repainting the door and trim to help make the house look crisp and in good condition is one of the least expensive things you can do to dress up a home.

### **DECKS, PORCHES & PATIOS**

- Sweep all decks, walks, porches and patios and keep them swept.
- Remove any moss from all decks, walks and patios.
- Decks should be pressure washed, stained or painted if they are in need of it.
- Reduce clutter on decks, porches and patios so that they look bigger. Get rid of old flower pots, barbecues, charcoal, planters, toys, construction materials and excess furniture.
- If you have outdoor furniture, create one simple "room setting" of clean furniture that will remind buyers of the usefulness of the space.

### **ROOF**

- Clean all debris and moss from the roof and gutters.

### **FENCES**

- Repair broken fences and paint if necessary.

### **LANDSCAPING**

- Plants are like children...they grow up so fast! First they are little and cute, then they seem just right and all of a sudden, they are so big we hardly know how to take care of them. You can't trim the kids but you can trim your plants. If they need it.....start trimming!
- Rake and weed flowerbeds. If possible, spread new mulch such as beauty bark, pine needles, gravel or lava rock to put a finishing touch on the landscaping.

- Remove and if needed, replace all dead plants.
- Mow the lawn and keep it mowed on a weekly basis during the growing season.
- Trim branches around the roofline to prevent animals, insects and foliage from getting on the roof.

#### **FRONT YARD**

- “Curb appeal” is very important. Has your landscaping overgrown the house? Remember that you can’t sell it if you can’t see it! Cut back all shrubs to window height that block light or view from the windows.
- Move all children’s toys to the back yard.
- Clean and sweep paved driveways. Rake and weed or re-gravel gravel driveways.

#### **BACK YARD**

- Remove any extra items from the yard, such as tools, piles of lumber or auto parts.
- Children’s toys should all go in one area in the back yard.

### **Things to keep in mind**

1. Buyers only know what they see, not how it is going to be
2. You can’t sell it if you can’t see it
3. You can’t sell it if you can smell it
4. The way you live in your home and the way we market and sell your house are two very different things