

Staging

Staging Your Home To Sell

Selling anything is about presenting it as favorably as possible, and a home is no exception.

What is Staging? Staging is the process of preparing your home to show its best. Staging is an extremely important step if you want to sell your house quickly and for top dollar. Your home will be competing with many others and your goal is to get potential buyers to remember your house above all the rest. Also, a well staged home can sometimes get \$10,000 - \$20,000 more than if it wasn't staged. You can either do this yourself or you can hire a professional.

Professional Home Staging

A professional home stager can help you understand what is needed for your home to show its best. He or she will help you determine items such as, whether painting is required, how furniture should be arranged, where a nice arrangement of flowers might be placed, etc. If necessary, and the budget allows for it, he or she might even bring in furniture and other decorations from their warehouse to dress your home up. If you can afford a professional home stager, we recommend using one. Most sellers are emotionally attached to their homes and an objective point of view can really help. One last note: it's easy to get offended when they start to recommend changes, but remember, your taste is your own. They are not trying to decorate your home to meet your tastes, they are trying to decorate it to meet the majority of home buyers' tastes.

Staging Your Home Yourself

If you decide to stage your home yourself, then here is a list of items you should consider. You may think of a few others yourself, but start with this list:

Clean up the Outside:

Curb appeal is extremely important and can't be emphasized enough. If people drive by and see a messy or unkempt yard, they will keep on driving. Here is a list of items to consider:

- Remove Clutter (front and back yard) - make sure you remove anything that might clutter your yard such as litter, bicycles, old furniture, cars, anything else that does not add beauty to the landscape.
- Exterior of the House - at a minimum, you should wash your house with a hose or a power washer to remove dirt that has accumulated over the years. Consider painting at least the front of the house if it has a paint friendly exterior.
- Lawn - make sure the lawn is in good condition. Mow and trim it regularly.

- Trees and Bushes - make sure any trees or bushes are well trimmed.
- Flowers - consider planting some flowers to add color.
- Windows - clean windows and window shades
- Front Door - make sure the front door and fixtures are clean. If cleaning it does not make it sparkle, consider painting it. Ensure the door handle and lock are firm and don't wiggle. Oil it if it squeaks.

Clean up the inside:

Here is where a professional home stager really helps, but there are still lots of things you can do to make your home appealing to buyers. Remember, it's important that your house looks roomy and inviting, not messy and cramped. If you are going to move, you might as well rent a storage unit and start moving much of your clutter out now. Here is a list of items to consider:

- **Pictures and knick-knacks** -Even though all those pictures, vacation memorabilia, trophies, etc., are important to you, potential buyers have no emotional ties at all; all they see is a busy house. If you have a large quantity of pictures, trophies, and other memorabilia, in a single location, remove the majority of them. One or two pictures is enough.
- **Thorough cleaning** - Must! Must! Must! If you don't like to clean, then hire an agency to come in and clean it for you. Nothing turns a home buyer off more than a dirty home.
- **Clean out and straighten up your closets** - Remove shoes and clothing you normally don't wear and store them out of the way. This will make your closets appear more spacious.
- **Kitchen** - the kitchen is one of the most looked at rooms in the house. It's important it comes across as spacious, roomy and inviting. Remove items in cupboards and drawers you rarely use. Remove magnets and other clutter on the refrigerator. Keep countertops clear and clean. Clean light fixtures and consider using high wattage light bulbs to make the kitchen as bright as possible.
- **Storage rooms** - remove clutter from storage rooms. Even these rooms are meant for storage, you want them to look clean and roomy.
- **Bathrooms** - Bathrooms seem to collect mildew, hair, odors, and other unbecoming items, yet bathrooms are another highly viewed area of the house. It's important that your bathrooms sparkle. Clean all the grime away and if you can't get your faucets to shine, consider replacing them. Replace the shower curtain with a brand new one. Put out your best towels and consider adding a floral arrangement or a picture.
- **Flooring** - Unless your carpet is really worn out, a good carpet cleaning is all you need. If the carpet is worn or stained, consider replacing it with a neutral, light colored carpet. New carpet goes a long way with buyers! If you have tile, check the grout to make sure it looks clean. If not, you can either clean the grout or purchase grout stain to re-color the grout. Wood floors can easily be refinished in most cases, and is fairly inexpensive.

- **Furniture** - if you have a lot of furniture in your house, consider removing pieces to make the room appear less crowded. If you have old, dirty, or worn furniture, consider removing it and renting some nice furniture until your house sells.
- **Ceilings and Walls** - A fresh coat of paint is one of those other items that goes along way with buyers, simply because it makes your home look new and clean. If you are going to paint, you might as well do it in lighter, neutral colors. Everyone's taste is different, so a light, neutral color is generally a very safe way to go. If you have water stains, first make sure you fix any leaks and then have them painted.
- **Odors** - If you are a smoker or a pet owner, your house may have odors that you no longer smell, but are a real turn off to those who aren't used to them. Eliminating odors before showing your house is extremely important. Air fresheners, carpet cleaners, paint, and scented candles, are great ways to get rid of or hide smelly odors.
- **Friends** - before showing your house, have some friends come through and ask them to give you some honest feedback in how it shows. Don't be offended by any of their comments, they are giving you valuable advice. They are able to look at your home more objectively than you are.

Make home repairs:

It's best to avoid making major renovations just to sell the house since you're unlikely to recoup those costs in your selling price, but it's important to make minor repairs. The following is a list to consider:

- Leaky faucets and plumbing
- Torn screens
- Slow drains
- Gutters
- Loose doorknobs
- Deck boards
- Broken windows
- Electrical fixtures
- Water stain damage
- Broken appliances
- Damaged walls and ceilings
- Worn carpet and rugs
- Damaged sidewalks and steps

Once you are finished staging your home, don't forget to check it off the list, so you can move on to Step Two. Good Luck!