

## Selling your home? A Checklist

Remember: ***You Only Get One Chance to Make a First Impression!***

I want to provide you the benefit of my experience – the countless times I've walked into houses with buyers. I know how most buyers react to homes, and it's the rare buyer that looks beyond their first impression. Most buyers do not 'reinvent' their first impression. On the contrary, what they see AFTER their first impression is a **refinement** on their first impression. Most buyers won't 'see' your home other than as you present it.

Here's what you want to happen when buyers walk into your home: you want them to envision it as THEIR space, a space they can 'see' is comfortable and spacious, easy to move into, and filled with the things THEY love.

Therefore, you want your home uncluttered with lots of open space, with as few distractions as possible. The way to unclutter your home is to 'prepack.' This isn't as odious as it appears. After all, you will need to pack when you move, anyway. This just gets it over with sooner. What you will do **to put your home 'at the front of the store'** is to pack as many of your belongings as you can right now. The inexpensive large plastic storage tubs are terrific because they stack and you can write on them with a permanent marker to know what's inside. You'll be that much further ahead when it comes time to move AND you'll also accomplish one of the most important goals for a house sale: the first impression that allows the buyer space to dream of **your** house as **their** house.

What else can you do to boost your profits dramatically when you sell your home and to sell quickly? Like most other REALTOR®s I'll answer with one word: clean. Any visible dirt says, 'this space belongs to someone else.'

Don't be offended. I'm not saying your house is dirty, but it does need to be showcased to its greatest advantage if you want it to be the home buyers choose first.' REALTOR®s call this "staging" your home for sale. It involves time and effort and may cost you from a few dollars up to a few thousand, but the payoff will be there.

How much can a little elbow grease and attention to detail actually be worth? "A house in tip-top shape priced at \$100,000 will get its asking price or close to it, while you might have to take up to 10 percent less - \$10,000 - for one without the finishing touches," says Marie Powell, president of Marie Powell and Associates, Better Homes and Gardens.

Helen Phillips *Coe Realty* PO 3397 Boone NC 28607 828.264.1434  
Info@CoeRealty.com

As a real estate professional, I can advise you on *specific ways* to present *your* home. Keep in mind that my recommendations aren't meant as criticisms. Rather, your home is competing against dozens of new and existing houses. Enhancing your home's market value may involve one or more of these factors:

- **Curb appeal.** You have just one chance to make a good first impression and it starts the instant the buyer drives up to your home. Buyers believe the condition of a home's exterior speaks volumes about the interior. Be sure your home's exterior and yard make a good impression.
  - ❑ Does your house need painting?
  - ❑ Is the driveway free of stains?
  - ❑ Do the screens need to be replaced?
  - ❑ A well-groomed yard adds to the all-important street appeal that attracts potential buyers.
  - ❑ Make sure your lawn is closely mowed and edged, even around the parking strip or driveway.
  - ❑ Keep grass free of weeds, particularly dandelions.
  - ❑ Sweep up the walkways after you mow.
  - ❑ Spreading a layer of bark or dark mulch in flowerbeds gives your yard a finished look.
  - ❑ Are the lawn and shrubbery manicured?
  - ❑ Remove any foliage brushing up against your home, garage, or fence, or trees that hang over your roof.
  - ❑ Cut bushes so they are below the windowsills.
  - ❑ Store garbage cans and yard waste at the side or back of the house out of sight.
  - ❑ By the front door or up the front walk, add colorful hanging baskets or potted flowers.
  
- **Front door.**
  - ❑ A freshly painted door or new or polished kickplate creates a welcoming impression.
  - ❑ Stains, scratches, dents and cobwebs create an entirely different mood.
  - ❑ Seasonal flower boxes near the front door are one of the easiest and most economical ways to create a warm welcome that invites buyers in.
  - ❑ Choose brightly colored flowers or aromatic herbs and place them in containers where they will be seen from the street.
  
- **Odors.** Every house has a distinctive smell that its owner gets used to and doesn't notice. Pungent odors - pets, tobacco, food - can turn a buyer off. A deep cleaning and deodorizing may be essential. Consider hiring a service if you don't want to do it yourself.

**A warning note:** adding scented deodorizers can be a red flag to buyers. They are likely to think you are covering up mildew or some other problem.

- **Lighting and general appearance.** As the song goes "let the sunshine in." Even if you prefer a dark house, most buyers react positively to a light, airy home. In addition, it makes your rooms seem more spacious.
  - ❑ Open up the curtains and blinds.
  - ❑ Make sure the windows sparkle.
  - ❑ Wipe the baseboards.
  - ❑ Remove fingerprints from the doors.
  - ❑ Dust blinds and light fixtures.
  - ❑ Turn on ALL your lights.
  
- **Carpeting and painting.**
  - ❑ Sellers often concede that carpeting should be replaced or rooms painted but decide instead to subtract the cost of these improvements from the sales price. The problem is that buyers inflate the cost of these improvements. Buyers begin making mental deductions from the moment they arrive. If something will cost \$2,000, they may mentally figure \$5,000, or if it's \$100 they may think \$1,000. In many cases they just don't want to bother. Sellers are usually better off having the work done before putting their house on the market.
  - ❑ By the same token, fix what needs fixing. A cracked bathroom tile or fogged window sets off red flags in a buyers mind to begin looking for other needed repairs. By far, the greatest proportion of buyers DO NOT want to fix up a home – rather they want to move in and begin 'living' right away.
  
- **Colors.** Bold, vivid colors may suit your style, but neutral tones appeal to the widest range of shoppers. A new coat of paint will earn you far more than it costs, including labor.
- **Furnishings and keepsakes.** If your rooms look crowded and your closets filled,
  - ❑ rearrange or even temporarily store furniture
  - ❑ hold a garage sale before showing.
  - ❑ store half of whatever is in your closets.
  - ❑ You may also want to protect your collectibles by packing them away.
  - ❑ *The goal is to highlight your house, not your possessions.*
  
- **Kitchens and bathrooms.** Kitchens and baths sell houses and a thorough cleaning of those rooms is critical. But don't forget the extra touches. You might:
  - ❑ put some place settings around the kitchen table
  - ❑ dab a little vanilla on a light bulb with a cotton ball for a nice pleasant scent
  - ❑ organize the cabinets
  - ❑ put out fresh towels and decorative soaps
  - ❑ new 'specialty' drawer and cabinet knobs can add a cozy feel

- **Clutter.** Whenever you leave your home,
  - ❑ the beds should be made,
  - ❑ the sinks empty,
  - ❑ the clothes hung up.
  - ❑ Newspapers, magazines, books, trophies, mementos and even large clusters of photos can all be costly distractions if they become the one thing a prospect remembers about your house. In this case, less is more.
  
- **A Cleaning Checklist.**
  - ❑ Wash every surface in the house.
  - ❑ Windows should be washed inside and out with vinegar and water.
  - ❑ Scrub counters and painted walls with mild soap and water.
  - ❑ Use non-abrasive household cleaner to give ceramic tiles a once-over.
  - ❑ Household ammonia and water will lift up ground-in dirt from linoleum floors
  - ❑ Use an old toothbrush to scrub the grout around tiles in the bathroom and kitchen.
  - ❑ Launder all throw rugs.
  - ❑ Have your carpets professionally cleaned or rent a rug cleaner to do it yourself.
  - ❑ Dust all of the woodwork, shelves, window ledges, tops of doorways, picture frames, vents, registers and returns, especially if you have central air conditioning.
  - ❑ Vacuum or brush out your fireplace, too.
  - ❑ Use car polish to give laminate counters extra shine and more durability.
  - ❑ Use lemon oil, tung oil, or other appropriate wood polish to moisturize and protect your home's paneling, woodwork and hardwood floors

Perhaps you're thinking that all this staging will strip the personality from your home. Well...that's good. Experts find depersonalized homes sell faster and at a better price than those left as is. Think of the new, furnished home in magazines - that's your competition.

It might help your thinking to compare selling a house to looking at a used car. The dealer keeps it in spotless condition, with no reminders of the previous owner, so shoppers can picture the car as theirs. That's just the reaction you want when you clean-up on your real estate investment.

Finally, a couple hundred dollar investment hiring a professional stager may so dramatically alter the appeal of your home that you'll have 2<sup>nd</sup> thoughts about moving yourself! The professionally staged homes I list sell so much more quickly near/at the list price that I gladly pay several hundred dollars for this service. Contact me, if you'd like a referral to a stager.

**Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.**

In short:  
Prepack  
Clean

Paint and Fix Up  
Let the Sunshine In

Create an appealing space so buyers have room to dream THEIR dreams!