

More TIPS on Selling Your Home

Sometimes, life just hands us the inevitable: just when everything seems right with your home, something happens and you have to sell your dwelling. No matter what your reasons are for selling, remember that now is no time to dawdle, the process of preparing a home for sale can take a month or more. So, here's how to start:

1. Take a Fresh Look at Your Home

Your home looks great to you, but a buyer wants to see it since he and his family will be living in it -- so take a fresh look at your dwelling. Hop in your car, drive around the block, and then scrutinize your home as a prospective buyer will see it for the first time. First, consider what's called "street appeal;" does it need washing or painting? Does the driveway need repair work? Is the landscaping in good shape? Remember, be very critical; your buyer will be.

Next, pull into the driveway and take a good, hard look. Is the yard neat and trimmed? What about the view from the front yard? Then, walk inside and size up the interior as though seeing it for the first time. Take a tour and imagine what your real estate agent might say about each room, look into cabinets, open doors, check out the bathroom.

Then, make a mental note of the things that might put off potential buyers, along with another list of the things that first attracted you to the dwelling. Remember, the home's become a great place for you, but a new buyer will see things that you don't.

2. Clean Out the Clutter Before You Start to Sell

Before putting your home on the market, get rid of clutter in every area -- closets, attic storage, kitchen cabinets, drawers, bath vanities, and shelves -- everywhere. Remember, this is no time to be sentimental: if you don't use it, lose it. Potential buyers are seriously put off by clutter, and most of us drag a lot more things through life than we really need.

Also, don't forget the furniture and fixtures when getting rid of clutter - - most of us put too much in too little space, which makes a buying prospect, think your home is too small.

Then, have a great moving sale with all the stuff you've collected and use the proceeds for paint or whatever other materials you need for repair projects. If you just can't bear to part with some possessions, store them in the attic or some other place that's out of sight to a potential buyer.

3. To Sell, Sell, Sell -- Clean, Clean, Clean

After you've cleared out the clutter, it's time to really clean. Have the carpets professionally cleaned, strip and polish the floors, scour the bathrooms, go over the laundry room, polish the furniture, scour out the cabinets, wash the windows and window coverings, and spiff up the ceiling fans and kitchen appliances. In short, clean everything.

Don't forget the exterior; paint or power-wash everything that needs the work. Remember, this is a ceiling-to-floor, roof-to-foundation clean-up project.

4. Get More for Your Home: Repairs Pay Off

After you've cleaned the place to within an inch of its life, the next project is making all the repairs necessary to attract a buyer.

So, patch up the roof, touch up all the paint, repair the screens, spruce up the porch framing, and make your entry area really shine. Don't forget to water the lawn and landscape beds, and take the time to trim, mow, and edge and get rid of sick or dying plants. Inside, fix the grout in the bathrooms and on tile floors, adjust any doors that need it, fix any scratches on the walls, cover any stains, and be sure to fix any plumbing problems. Remember, do what your home needs before the first buyer appears at your door.

Also, it's a good idea to get all this done before getting the real estate broker to make the first listing -- a good agent will advise you on what needs to be done. Also, if you have friends willing to be brutally honest about what your home needs to sell, invite them to assess the fix-up needs.

There is, however, an alternative to the sweat equity you get from a total fix-up --but it carries a price. An "as-is" sale keeps you from doing all this work, but a buyer will assess about twice the price you would have paid for the repairs. Then, the buyer will deduct that amount from your asking price before making an offer.

5. Putting Your Home on the Market: Show It to Sell It

After you have cleaned, shined, mowed, and generally whipped your property into shape, it's time to attract a buyer.

Regardless of who markets your home, you or a broker, there are other, small things you must do to attract buyers. For example, even if it's bright daylight, open the blinds and turn on the lights. Also, open all the interior doors to make the home appear roomier. Be sure to remove all your kids and pets -- they're cute, but a prospect wants to see your home, not your pride and joy. In addition, make sure your pet's litter pan is clean so the home smells clean and fresh, not like air freshener. Remember, you

need to make sure your home is available to be seen by a prospective buyer with as little notice as possible. That means less than an hour, or even five minutes, if possible.

6. Get a Sense of the Market

Before you put your home on the market, take a weekend day to check out the competition: homes with similar prices and in similar neighborhoods. Remember, you don't have to go out and buy new furniture just to look like that beautiful new model in the new development -- what you want is the feel of that new model -- clean, uncluttered, and fresh.

Remember, after location, the most important item to a buyer is a well maintained home. Many flaws can be overlooked if the buyer knows he can move in without a lot of trouble and expense.

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