

How to Sell Your House for the Most Money In the Shortest Possible Time

Your imagination is the most powerful tool you have to improve the value of your property – and it's free. Here's how: Step out of your own shoes and step into your potential buyer's shoes. Then take a good, realistic look at your house and property, and consider: Is it appealing? Can you imagine yourself living there comfortably? Or do you imagine yourself putting in a lot of work to make the house and property acceptable?

Most buyers are interested in three things about a property they're considering:

- ◆ **Visual appeal** (landscaping, spaciousness, cleanliness, color, lack of clutter)
- ◆ **Maintenance** (everything in working order, nothing to repair or paint)
- ◆ **Safety** (locks and deadbolts, burglar/fire alarm systems, busyness of the neighborhood)

If a potential buyer can't form a good mental picture of living in your house – no sale! With this in mind, you'll want to give your property a good, hard look from the outside in. You want to create a fabulous first impression so everyone will want to come inside.

What to Look For On the Outside:

- ◆ **Roof and gutters:** When buyers look at your house from their car, about 30 percent of what they see is your roof. Be certain it's in good repair.
- ◆ **Landscaping:** A well-manicured yard and a smooth, even driveway reassure potential buyers that you care about your property. A yard free of mud and weeds suggests a good sprinkler system and low maintenance.
- ◆ **Paint and siding:** Neutral colors and a clean appearance are important. Consider repainting or power-washing both your house and roof.
- ◆ **Porch or covered patio:** Make sure it's clean and uncluttered.
- ◆ **Fence:** Fencing should be in good repair.

What to Look For On the Inside:

- ◆ **Kitchen:** Regardless of your kitchen size, you can make it feel spacious: Remove appliances and gadgets from your counter tops and store them. Repair broken or cracked counters.
- ◆ **Bathrooms:** Replace faucets, medicine cabinet, and towel racks if necessary; be certain the bathrooms are spotless and fresh-smelling.
- ◆ **Family Pictures:** Pack/Remove them to help your Buyers focus on placing their furniture (rather than being distracted by your cute children).
- ◆ **Master Bedroom:** Spaciousness and décor are important. Remove and store nonessential furniture.
- ◆ **Flooring:** An investment in new carpeting almost always increases the perceived value of a home. Select a neutral color of medium-grade carpeting and padding. Replace cracked and broken tiles.
- ◆ **Wall covering:** A fresh coat of paint can do wonders. Always use neutral or soft, warm colors. Avoid wallpaper.
- ◆ **Personal touches:** Eclectic personal touches may distract potential buyers.

Deciding What to Do First:

The most important thing to think about first is this: ***Fix what you can see!*** Cosmetic changes, regardless of the cost, will make a world of difference when it comes time to sell. Whatever you saw when you put on your potential buyer's shoes, *that's* what you do first, from the outside in.

Keep in mind that you want the best return on your investment. When you make cosmetic changes, you maximize popular appeal. People will see what looks great, and they'll picture themselves living there. Conversely if your home looks untended, people will imagine how much work they have to do – again, no sale!

The cost of such a project might frighten you; however, think about the cost of *not* doing it. If it costs \$2,000 to repair your roof and gutters and you balk at the price, think again. The same roof repair will probably decrease your asking price by \$4,000 when a buyer begins to negotiate. Ask your REALTOR® for guidance.

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