

# 8 TIPS FOR HOLIDAY HOME SELLERS



Tradition says that there's no point trying to sell your home in late winter, especially the holiday season. And every year at this time, listings bottom out. But Realtors report that buyers are out there, and desirable, well-staged, well-priced homes still sell well, no matter what month it is. Here are some seasonal strategies to make your home stand out in the December/January market.

**1 Tip 1. Be prepared to negotiate** Many people house hunting in December and January are serious buyers who are aware that there are bargains out there. Consult with your Realtor to determine the ideal price for your home and make a plan for negotiating to reach it. Don't reject initial lowball offers. They may be just a starting point.

**2 Tip 2. Add curb appeal** How do the front and back yard look? It's winter and the garden is sleeping, but can you make it look bet-

ter with pots of attractive winter-hardy plants? If you're planning on selling, it's probably worth the investment to hire landscapers who can add curb appeal to your home.

**3 Tip 3. Stage it and pare it down** This goes for any time you're selling. Eliminate all clutter, remove personal touches—make your home as neutral as possible so buyers can imagine living in the space. If you can't bear to part with your clutter, hire a stager. Getting rid of stuff adds huge value to your home.

**4 Tip 4. Decorate with discretion** Much as we love to lay it on thick during the holidays, decorations equal clutter, and clutter is a bad thing at an open house (see Tip 3). Instead of decking the halls to the hilt, just put up a few dramatic but simple decorations.

**5 Tip 5. Go with nature** Avoid overtly religious seasonal decorations during the holi-

days. In a multicultural region like ours, consider a nature theme: evergreens, rosemary branches, candles, berries, pinecones, lights. A few beautiful sprays or a small tree are festive without being overbearing.

**6 Tip 6. Don't hide flaws** House hunters want to see everything, so don't use holiday decorations to hide some flaw. Cracks, mould, water stains, whatever... it's better to fix them than hide them. Otherwise, like the Ghost of Christmas Past, they can come back to haunt you.

**7 Tip 7. Make it fragrant** This is the season when you can really appeal to our most primal sense: smell. For open houses, simmer a big pot of some kind of punch with apple and spices on the stove to make the space smell like everyone's best memories. Or bake some special cookies just before you leave. Use real scents, not fake ones.

**8 Tip 8. Gift wrap your home with a great listing**

Buyers will be doing much of their house hunting online, so work with your Realtor to write a listing that really sells your home. Proofread for spelling and grammar. Include lots of photos—even video or a virtual tour—to give viewers a real sense of your home. Even your listing in this paper can go multimedia if your Realtor uses Layar, a mobile app that scans the newspaper and opens up related web content.

“Yes, you can sell your home this time of year.”



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