

PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR SHOWING

Make sure that buyers looking at your home are left with the best possible impression. Here is an easy checklist to get your started:

FIRST IMPRESSIONS/GENERAL

- House exterior in good repair
- House number easy to read
- Eavestroughs, downspouts and soffits painted and in good repair
- Garage/car port clean and tidy
- Litter picked up
- Cracked or broken window panes replaced

FIRST IMPRESSIONS/SUMMER

- Lawns cut and raked
- Hedges and shrubs trimmed
- Garden weeded and edged

FIRST IMPRESSIONS/WINTER

- Snow and ice cleared away from walks
- Sidewalks sanded and salted
- Boot tray inside front door

AT THE FRONT DOOR

- Doorbell works
- Door hardware in good repair
- Porch and foyer clean and tidy
- Fresh air in house

INTERIOR MAINTENANCE

- Chipped plaster repaired
- Chipped paint touched up
- Doors and cupboards latch properly
- Leaky taps and toilets repaired
- Furnace wiped down and cleaned
- Burned out light bulbs replace
- Squeaky doors oiled

BATHROOM

- Mirrors, fixtures and taps cleaned and polished

Leaky taps and toilets repaired

- Seals around tubs and basins in good repair
- Floors cleaned, garbage containers emptied
- Inside of cupboards and cabinets clean and neat
- Towels clean and matching
- Countertops free of personal care items

KITCHEN

- Sinks and taps clean and polished
- Appliances cleaned
- Countertops neat and polished
- Inside of cupboards and cabinets clean and neat, not overcrowded
- Small appliances put away

CREATE A BUYING ATMOSPHERE

- All lights turned on
- Air conditioner turned on in warm weather
- Fireplace lit in cooler weather
- Closets neat and tidy
- Halls and stairs cleared
- Drapes opened during daylight
- Background music playing quietly
- Carpets freshly vacuumed
- Fresh flowers in various rooms

PETS

- Pets containers or absent during the showing

VALUABLES

- Jewellery and valuables locked safely away or taken with you
- Valuable property, such as objects of art, vases and figurines are out of reach, out of sight or locked away

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STAGED TO SELL

Six tips to prepare your home for sale and maximize your return

If you're looking to buy or sell a home, you know that first impressions count. Most people decide whether or not they are comfortable in a property within the first few seconds of entering; and when they are looking for a home, that first impression is crucial to a quick sale. Here are six things you can do to get the best value out of your investment.

1. Ensure proper lighting. Correct lighting is so important to every room – the standard staging advice is turn all the lights on throughout the house to help show off the lighting. “Daylight” bulbs are best.

2. Clean reflective surfaces. Clean the windows inside and out and check other reflective surfaces throughout the house to bounce extra light. Consider all glass surfaces, refrigerators, countertops and art.

3. Go for curb appeal. Go beyond cutting the grass and planting flowers. Think of it as drive-by appeal – review the front door, get a new mat and make sure the house number is visible from the street.

4. Review the minor details. Inspect your home for minor flaws. Pay attention to the smallest details – they are the ones



that detract equity. Repair dripping faucets, chipped paint and cracks in the driveway.

5. Ensure it shows well. Make sure all selling features have been addressed – pay attention to the focal points, sight lines and traffic patterns.

6. Put away the family photos. All family photos should be packed away, as well as any extra items smaller than your fist. Closets need attention too – pack away two thirds of clothing, bed linen and towels.

The best advice is: be sure you complete the home staging process thoroughly and effectively before any marketing starts – you'll have a hard time increasing the list price after it's on the market.

And if you think you could do with some help, consider hiring a professional. Information on Canadian Staging Professionals is available at: www.canadianstagingprofessionals.com ■

Renovating your home before selling pays back many times over with higher sale price

The bigger the job, the better the return

Province

Friday, March, 21, 2008

OTTAWA -- As much as 100 per cent of the cost of a fully renovated kitchen or bathroom, often done with the help of a contractor, can be recovered when it comes time to sell, a report released this week suggests.

Major renovations generally provide higher certainty of return than do-it-yourself projects, said the report prepared by Toronto-based Royal LePage.

"Those still are the No. 1 return on investment," said Diane Usher, a broker with Royal LePage.

But she cautioned that contracted jobs must be approached prudently to ensure a decent return, and spending should be relative to the value of the property. "To put a \$50,000 kitchen in a \$200,000 condo isn't going to give you as good a return on your investment," Usher said.

Some Improvements made by the homeowner, like replacing a worn carpet or updating light fixtures, are good ideas but can be less effective in terms of the rate of return when compared with other projects.

She explained many people have success finding quality paints, decorating ideas and techniques on their own but renovations like landscaping are more challenging and returns can be lower without professional aid.

Approximate cost vs. approximate return on your investment

Do-it-yourself renovations

- Paint the interior: \$1,000, 50-100%
- Replace carpeting with laminate (1,000 square foot space): \$2,000, 50-75%
- Install new light fixtures: \$2,000, 60-70%
- Groom exterior landscape: \$2,000, 25-50%
- Replace knobs, hardware: \$2,000, 75-100%

- Update the entryway: \$3,000, 50-75%
- Replace carpeting/laminate with hardwood: \$5,000, 50-75%
- Build a fence/deck: \$5,000, 50-75%

Renovations that may require a contractor

- Install a main floor powder room: Under \$5,000, 80-100%
- Reno bathrooms: \$5,000-\$8,000, 75-100%.
- Renovate kitchen: \$12,000-\$15,000, 75-100%

Sell it with a great first impression

It's not a magic wand, but it is key to making property stand out from the competition

By Lena Sin,
The Province
June 21, 2009

During the housing boom, home staging was all about vaulting your property into the stratosphere above the asking price.

Today, it's about getting your house sold. Period.

Matthew Finlason, of the HGTV series *The Stagers*, has witnessed the housing arc of the past two years and says home staging is perhaps even more relevant in today's turbulent market.

"Whereas the objective in the previous market was how much over asking, now it's just about selling," says Finlason, who recently won a Leo award for best TV host.

Finlason, who works for home staging company Dekora in Vancouver, says in the first episode of *The Stagers*, which aired last summer, one house sold for \$100,000 over asking.

But by the end of the first season, some homes did not even sell, an indication of how quickly the market had changed.

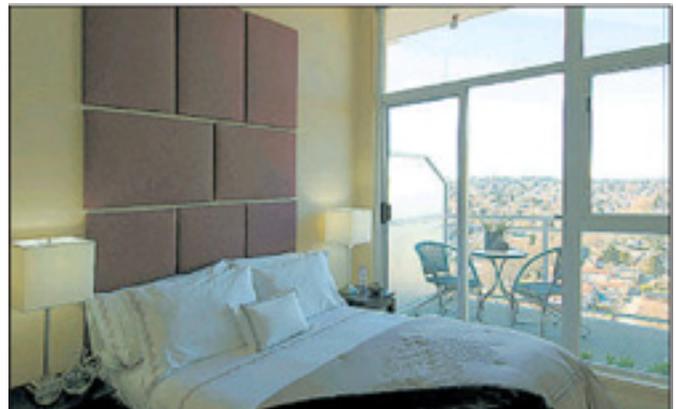
Today, many of his clients are in the stressful position of having to sell quickly and view staging as the key to getting their property stand out from the competition.

"Staging is about first impressions. It's about putting your best foot forward," says Finlason.

"The moment you list your home for sale, it becomes a product and like any product, it needs to compete."



Neutralize your colour palette and de-personalize by removing family photos. — PHOTO COURESY OF STAGING ETC.



Master bedrooms are important. If you don't have a headboard, create one from an upholstered fabric panel. – PHOTO COURTESY OF DEKORA

Lindsay Do, who runs Staging Etc. in Vancouver with her partner Alice Tam, says staging helps buyers make decisions more quickly because they're shown how a home would meet their needs.

"It's like having a person there showing you the function of the house . Rather than saying you can fit a queen-sized bed in here, you show them," says Do.

"In today's real estate market, buyers with purchasing power want more for their buck, so showcasing the potential lifestyle of a home is equally important as the actual architectural features and design, especially on the pricier homes."

Staging companies assist with everything from carpet cleaning to painting to bringing in new furniture.

The cost of staging varies widely, depending on the size of the home, how much furniture is in the existing space and the client's budget. Some companies, such as Staging Etc., provide free initial consultations while others charge a fee. Staging costs range from \$1,000 up to tens of thousands.

But in these lean times, even staging companies are getting creative to keep their clients' costs down. Finlason, for example, might rearrange the existing furniture rather than renting new pieces or will ask clients to do some DIY.

Do says she might purchase furniture for clients so they can keep it for their next move or re-sell it at a later date.

However, Finlason is clear that homeowners should not see staging as the "magic wand" that will sell any property.

"Price will sell your home," he says.

Rather, sellers should see staging as a piece of the overall marketing strategy. To prep for a sale, start with a detached view. De-clutter your home and keep personal items stored away.

"The biggest mistake sellers make is under-estimating the value of the emotional connection a potential buyer will have with a home in the first 10 seconds of walking through the door," says Do.

"When staging a home, our motto is 'Every impression counts.'"

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Six Staging Tips

- Neutralize your colour palette -- not just with paint, but accessories, too. Avoid beiges, yellows and loud colours. Instead, try neutral linen with a warm grey or brown undertone.
- Make your own art. Take a digital photo of the beach, trees or plants in black and white and pop it into a

black frame, suggests Matthew Finlason. Or cut out pages from a picture book and pop them into a vintage gold frame.

- Master bedrooms are very important. You might try to get an upholstered fabric panel to use as a headboard. "That's as simple as going to Home Depot and getting an MDF board, some fabric and a staple gun," says Finlason.

- De-clutter. If you haven't used it in a year, you can't make money with it or it's not a family heirloom -- throw it out or give it away.

- Once you've removed all your dated, worn items from your home, beg, borrow or steal that nice rug or beautiful armchair from your family and friends. "Think of it as community staging," says Finlason.

- Make sure your home smells clean, with no pet or other odours, says Lindsay Do.

- Season two of the *The Stagers* is currently being aired on the Home and Garden Network. For more tips, visit www.hgtv.com/the-stagers/show/index.html and www.stagingetc.com

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