

GETTING READY©

Clean Up, Fix Up, or Toss Out
Allison D. Mooney, CRS, GRI

Today more than ever, a home that stands out among similarly-priced, competitively-financed houses is the home that sells! WHY? Because it makes a good first impression – one that will last all the way to the settlement table.

While you may not be able to improve the market value of your house (finish the basement, remodel a kitchen or bathroom, etc.) you can improve its marketability. This can usually be done with more elbow grease than hard cash.

Start by viewing the home from a “buyer’s perspective”. Let’s explore the possibilities:

The Exterior:

Begin with “curb appeal”. BASICS: Trim lawn, shrubs, tree limbs. Remove lawn tools, garden hoses, toys, etc from the yard. If you have a dog or other pets make sure their area is clean and in good repair. Check the roof, gutters, shutters, windows & siding. Clean and clean windows. Clean and consider painting the front door. Keep walkways clean and clear of debris. EXTRAS: Brass door knockers, house numbers or kick-plate. Seasonal door decoration or flowering plant at entrance.

The Front Hall:

Remember this is the beginning. BASICS: Lots of light, clean, no squeaking doors or non-functioning light fixtures. At night lighting is critical – turn all the lights on. Include a fire in the fireplace if appropriate. From the front throughout make sure woodwork, is clean and unmarred, all floor coverings should be clean and in good repair, fresh paint (neutral colors) is always a plus. Remove worn or unsightly throw rugs. EXTRAS: Door chime, new door handles, locks and bolts.

The Living Room:

Uncluttered but cozy and lived-in is best. Discard worn, frayed or chipped furniture and pack away extra pieces. Remove clutter. Store newspapers, magazines and books neatly. Room should be well-lit, open drapes too. Fresh flowers, even a drop of vanilla on light bulbs for a subtle scent will add to the atmosphere of the room.

The Kitchen:

Buyers tend to judge the whole house from kitchen – particularly the stove and refrigerator. BASICS: Spotless, in working order & clean appliances are an absolute must. Replace or repair anything that sticks, drips or squeaks. De-clutter counter tops, cooking and eating areas. Make sure the walls and windows are clean and resistant to grease and moisture.

Master Bedroom:

After the kitchen & garage this is the next critical room to most buyers. BASICS: Uncluttered furnishings, define the sleep, dressing & sitting areas. Clean the closets! Less is better – it will look larger. Store out of season clothing.

Bathrooms:

Attractiveness & practicality rule. BASICS: Bathtub, sink, toilet, tile, and shower curtains need to be immaculate – no soap scum or discolored caulking. Fix leaky faucets and remove rust stains. Bright but not harsh lighting. EXTRAS: Potpourri and attractive decors (matching curtain, rugs, towels)

The Family or Recreation Room:

An atmosphere of relaxation, fun and activity prevails. BASICS: Uncluttered space. Comfortable seating & play spaces. Clean fireplace or wood stove and make sure it is in good condition (chimney sweep). EXTRAS: Track lighting. Ceiling Fan.

The Garage:

Convenience is paramount here (the perfect garage holds cars only ☺). BASICS: Uncluttered space. Giveaway, sell or toss unnecessary articles. Clean oily cement floor. Strong overhead lighting. Have orderly storage area, tidy workbench.

The basement:

Organize is the most important factor. Hang tools on peg boards & put things on shelves. If damp cure with de-humidifier or absorbent suited for this problem (bag of limestone or specially made products found in home stores). Clean water heater outside, change furnace filter, make inspection access easy. Brighten basement by painting walls & cement flooring.

The attic:

Don't overlook this space. Tidy it up, light it up and again pack anything you're going to move. Get rid of everything else. If unfinished area make sure everything is visible and in good condition.

NOTES:

- Follow recommendations from your salesperson about getting prepared to sell the house. Proper "Staging" will create more attention and result in a faster selling situation. Remember - it may make the difference between your house and another of similar type and style.
- Redecorating is not recommended except and unless it is absolutely necessary. Best to stick to fresh paint in very neutral colors and present a sparkling clean house without the redecorating expense.
- Don't over improve. Consult with your listing broker to determine if added improvement means added marketability.
- Consult with your tax preparer to determine if "fixing up expenses" will be deductible.

Good luck!

