



Home

Enhancement

Guide

Designed to help you realize the best price obtainable for your property
in the shortest period of time.



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*Andrea
Joy*



The First Impression

You know how important first impressions can be. But did you know that within 15 seconds a buyer has already developed an opinion on your property? That is why establishing the right first impression is critical to achieving a successful sale. The following is an outline of those elements which create the overall first impression, including suggestions on how to make sure the buyer reacts as favorably as possible.

The Home Front

Your property's landscape is not limited to the lawn and shrubs but encompasses everything from the street to your doorstep. For this reason, you must make sure each component of the visual landscape looks its best. The real estate industry refers to this as "curb appeal".

Street

Make sure the street in front of your house is free of litter or debris. If necessary give it a fresh sweep.

THE MODEL HOME EFFECT

The best way to make a buyer "feel at home" is to create an environment similar to that found in a model home. Obviously, you cannot recreate the feeling of a perfect display home without starting from scratch, but there are some valuable techniques to be learned.

When walking into a model home you will notice several key points.

- The environment is neutral.
- The colors and interior decorating accent the home's features.
- The smell is new and clean.
- The sound is either quiet or enhanced by subtle background music.
- All details are looked after from the manicuring of the lawn to a floral arrangement in the entry.

On the following pages you will see how to achieve many of the same effects of a model home when preparing your property for sale. The most surprising fact of all is that these can be accomplished while spending little time and money!

Fence

A freshly painted fence gives a home a crisp look. You should never let a peeling, tired-looking fence or squeaky gate stand between a prospective buyer and a positive first impression.



Mailbox/Light Fixtures

A quick painting of an old mailbox will let the buyer know you care about the details. If outdoor lamps look rusted and worn out, new ones will cast a positive light on your property.

Landscaping

Neatly trimmed shrubs are essential. Taking the time to do this costs little, but has a big impact. Besides being freshly mowed and trimmed, a lawn should look healthy. If there are spots that look beyond help, a little sod goes a long way to restoring the look of a well-maintained lawn.

WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

- DOES YOUR YARD LOOK WELL MAINTAINED?
- ARE THE TREES AND BUSHES TRIMMED?
- IS YOUR LAWN MOWED AND EDGED?
- IS YOUR LAWN FREE OF WEEDS?
- ARE THE DECKS AND PATIOS CLEANED?

Front Walkway

Like the sidewalk, the walkway should be clean and free of weeds. If sections are badly cracked, consider having them repaired.

Driveway

There are two elements of the driveway with which you should be concerned. The first is the surface condition. If stained or otherwise worn-looking, consider resealing it with a high quality sealer product. Second is the appearance of the car parked in the driveway. A newly waxed, well-maintained automobile will make a much different statement about you and your property than an unattractive, poorly cared for car. If you think your car will be a detriment to the look of your property, park it down the street.

Paint

A fresh coat of paint can be one of the best investments you can make to increase the value of your property. If you do not want to spend the money to paint the entire house, consider just the shutters or the front of the house.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR:

- DOES YOUR HOUSE NEED PAINTING?
- ARE THERE ANY HOLES OR CRACKS?
- ARE YOUR WALKS AND PORCHES CLEAN AND IN GOOD REPAIR?



Windows

Attractive windows can help increase the appeal of your property.

- Replace any cracked or broken glass.
- Make sure the windows are sparkling clean.
- Install window boxes with bright flowers.
- Apply touch-up paint where needed.

Roof

The roof may be the single most important aspect of your home front. A well maintained roof will say a lot about the overall condition of the property.

- Replace any broken or missing shingles or tiles.
- Repair flashing where needed.
- Paint eaves and fascia boards.
- If the roof is old and needs to be replaced consider having the work done before showing the property.

Gutters/Downspouts

Neat and trim-looking gutters and downspouts make a house look shipshape. Consider replacing highly visible ones if they are in need of serious repair. If run off areas are eroded, you can install concrete (or other) "spillways".

Doorway

- The doorway is the focal point of your house.
- Repaint the door.
- Apply new door hardware.
- Install a brass kick plate.
- Replace house numbers
- Put a flower box or planter alongside the door.
- Install a new front light fixture.

Appeal to the Senses

There are many ways to create a more exciting and saleable interior, at surprisingly little cost.



Light

It is proven that people react more favorably to property shown under bright light than dark. The following steps should help you keep your home as bright as possible.

- Keep windows clean.
- Use adequate wattage in light bulbs.
- Consider replacing older fluorescent lamps, which darken with use.
- Use mirrors to magnify the feeling of light and space.
- Use track lights to create a high-tech look.
- Use light wall colors.
- Open drapes and blinds and turn on lights prior to showings.

THE PERSONALIZATION OF YOUR HOUSE

When considering a home for purchase, the buyer often visualizes what it would be like living there. If the home is dominated by strong personal statements, buyers are less likely to feel comfortable, and therefore less able to visualize the property as their own.

- Personal statements are reflected in many areas.
- Unusual wall colors or heavily patterned wallpaper.
- Heavy odors from pets, tobacco or cooking.
- Sounds of loud music or television.
- Noisy children or barking dogs.
- Strong political or religious statements.
- Unusual art or furnishings.

Any of the above may create a feeling that the house is dominated by someone else and may interfere with the buyer's ability to "feel at home."

Color

A fundamental rule when selling your house is to keep colors neutral and light.

- White, beige and gray are the most popular exterior colors.
- Shades of white, off-white and very light pastels are the safest choices for the interior.
- Avoid highly patterned wallpaper whenever possible.
- Try to limit bright colors to accents like fresh flowers, towels, area rugs and shower curtains.



Sound

The sounds of peace and quiet are some of the best sounds to have when your home is being shown to a prospective buyer. But there are other sound considerations you should also be aware of.

- Avoid barking dogs and noisy children, if possible.
- Also avoid sounds of work like vacuums, dishwashers and lawn mowers.
- Make sure there are no sounds of mechanical problems like banging pipes or faulty appliances.
- Light classical or instrumental music can be effective in creating a pleasant atmosphere.

Smell

Smell has more impact than you might expect. It can work for or against you.

- The smell of newness is positive. This scent can be achieved by applying a fresh coat of polyurethane to natural wood or latex paint to walls.
- The smell of cleanliness is important to the selling environment of your house. Beyond actually cleaning, lemon oil or lemon wax can help create a lasting scent of freshness. Fresh flowers can also be effective.
- For a real heart-warming touch, place a dish of vanilla in a warm oven to create the aroma of fresh-baked cookies or bread.
- Sweeten the refrigerator with a box of baking soda.
- Smells to avoid include strong pet odors, tobacco, cooking and oil or gas.

Packaging the Interior

Entry

The entry is where the first impression of the interior is created. Here you have the opportunity to make a big statement in a small area.

- Repaint the entry using light, neutral colors.
- Move a prized antique or attractive furnishing to the entry, where it will have maximum impact.
- Install simple chair rail molding to the wall.
- Apply a fresh coat of polyurethane to a wood floor.
- Tile or linoleum flooring should shine.
- Replace plastic switch plate covers with brass or porcelain.
- A new hall light fixture can make a great impression.
- Make sure the room is well lit.



WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR:

- ARE YOUR CARPETS CLEAN AND IN GOOD CONDITION?
- DO YOUR CARPETS NEED STRETCHING?
- ARE THERE SPOTS OR FADED AREAS ON YOUR CARPET?
- ARE THERE ANY PET OR SMOKING ODORS?
- DO YOUR WALLS HAVE ANY CRACKS OR HOLES?
- DO YOUR WALLS NEED PAINTING?
- WHAT ABOUT THAT WALLPAPER?
- DO YOUR CEILINGS HAVE ANY WATER STAINS, CRACKS OR PEELING?
- DO YOUR CEILINGS NEED PAINTING?

Kitchen

The kitchen is perhaps the most important room in the house. It can have a major impact on the value of your property. If your kitchen needs some real help, you may want to make extensive improvements. The following is a list of ideas to increase the appeal of your kitchen without spending a great deal of money.

- Make sure the room is virtually spotless and smells fresh. Try putting a quarter section of a lemon in the disposal and grind it up.
- Consider replacing outdated light fixtures with new track lighting.
- If your appliances are dated by colors like harvest gold or avocado, consider having them professionally refinished in a new color like almond or plain white. This will make appliances look new at a fraction of the cost of actually replacing them.
- Spruce up kitchen cabinets by installing new knobs or hardware.
- If your cabinets look especially old, you can have a professional replace the doors or door fronts.
- Organize your kitchen cabinets to demonstrate how much room you have. Cabinet organizers are very good for this.
- Remove small kitchen appliances and gadgets from countertops to create an uncluttered look.
- Chipped or damaged countertops should be repaired or replaced.
- If your linoleum floor is badly worn, replace it with neutral no-wax flooring or tile.
- A freshly painted kitchen may be well worth the investment.



WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR:

- ARE YOUR APPLIANCES CLEAN AND IN GOOD WORKING ORDER?
- ARE YOUR CABINETS IN GOOD CONDITION?
- ARE YOUR COUNTERTOPS IN GOOD CONDITION?
- IS YOUR TILE GROUT CLEAN?
- IS YOUR SINK STAINED, CHIPPED, OR IN NEED OF RECAULKING?

Bathroom

The bathroom has become an important selling feature in today's home. It is a room that has moved from the utilitarian to the exciting. There are many ways you can improve deficiencies and create interest through various levels of enhancement.

- Place a vase of fresh flowers on the vanity.
- Install a wall telephone for a high-tech look.
- Replace an old toilet seat with a new one.
- Replace an old light fixture with a new style light strip or make-up light.
- Refinish an old porcelain tub using a porcelain finishing service.
- Place all personal care articles out of sight.
- Freshen the air with lemon scented products.
- Replace an old towel rack with a new one.
- Add color and richness with new towels and shower curtain.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR:

- DO YOUR FAUCETS SHUT OFF COMPLETELY?
- DO YOUR SINKS DRAIN FREELY?
- ARE YOUR TOILETS IN GOOD CONDITION?
- ARE YOUR SHOWER DOORS SHINY?
- DO YOUR TUBS NEED CAULKING?
- IS YOUR FLOOR IN GOOD CONDITION?
- ARE YOUR VANITIES AND MIRRORS IN GOOD CONDITION?



The Impact of Small Details

Small details make big statements about the perceived condition of your property. A house that shows poorly as a result of an overgrown lawn, peeling paint, or simply the smell of mildew, may create an overall feeling that the property has not been cared for. If your house leaves a buyer with this impression, it could cost you valuable time and money.

Living Room

The living room is an area we do very little living in yet it is a major selling point of the house. Buyers look for elegant and impressive living room to make the right statements to their friends and relatives.

- Use mirrors whenever possible to enhance the perception of size. The strategic placement of a mirror over a mantle or across from a window can make a room look brighter and larger.
- Use less expensive “can” lights to create dramatic visual effects behind large plants or pieces of furniture.
- Use chair rail or cornice molding to create a feeling of elegance.
- Professionally clean wall-to-wall carpeting or large area rugs.
- Sand and refinish stained hardwood floors.
- Clean windows and light fixtures.
- Make sure all cosmetic plaster cracks are repaired. (This applies to every room in the house)
- Use lemon oil on hardwood furniture to create the right look and aroma.
- Liberal use of fresh flowers and plants will enhance the environment.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR:

- ARE ALL DRAPES, SHUTTERS OR SHADES CLEAN AND WORKING PROPERLY?
- ARE ANY WINDOW SCREENS BENT?
- DO ALL THE WINDOWS OPEN AND CLOSE EASILY?
- ARE THE WINDOWSILLS CLEAN?
- ARE YOUR DOORS IN GOOD CONDITION?
- DO ANY DOORS SAG OR STICK?
- DO THE LOCKS WORK?
- IS THE PAINT IN GOOD CONDITION?
- DO THE DOORS SEAL TIGHTLY?



Bedrooms

- The bedrooms can do as much to sell your house as they can to turn off a buyer.
- Make sure the bedrooms are absolutely spotless. Rugs should be cleaned, windows washed and fresh smells from flowers or lemon oil should be in the air.
- Organize closets to increase their perceived size. Rubberized wire closet organizers do a great job of helping fully utilize space.
- Mirrored closet doors can add dramatically to the feeling of size in any bedroom.
- Bedrooms should be well lit. You may want to add track lights in the master bedroom.
- A ceiling fan can be attractive and a practical accent to any bedroom.

Garage

A well-organized garage says a lot for your house.

- Keep the garage neat and organized.
- Clean up any oil stains from your car.
- Paint the garage floor oil-based gray.
- Install a garage door opener.
- Hang gardening tools and loose articles on the walls.
- Hold a garage sale to dispose of unused items that create clutter and may distract a potential buyer.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR:

- IS YOUR GARAGE ORGANIZED?
- IS IT WELL LIT?
- IS THE FLOOR SWEPT?
- ARE THERE OIL SPOTS OR OTHER STAINS ON THE CONCRETE?

By showing attention to detail and understanding the buyer's need to visualize your house against a neutral backdrop, you can dramatically increase the saleability of your property.