

PREPARING YOUR PROPERTY

what you can do to maximize the value of your investment

Think of your home as a product or service. To create a demand for it, you'll need to "package" it attractively.

Here are some fast, inexpensive changes that could make your home stand out among similarly priced homes in your neighborhood.

THE EXTERIOR: Your yard and the exterior of your house are the first impressions potential buyers will have of your property. Make sure to capture their interest.

- ❑ **Yard:** Keep your lawn neat and well trimmed, with well-proportioned shrubs. Consider planting flowers or creating a flower bed to enhance the appearance of your yard. Make sure the lawn is raked at all times, and your driveway and walkways are clear.



- ❑ **The Front Door:** The door should be tight on its hinges, and should be neat and clean. Paint it, if needed. If the door is in poor shape, consider replacing it. A holiday ornament on the door, like a wreath, adds a nice touch. Consider adding an inviting welcome mat.
- ❑ **Home Exterior:** Check for flat-fitting roof shingles; straight lines on gutters, shutters, windows and siding; and solid caulking around roofs and seams. Apply fresh paint where needed. Also, make sure the windows are crystal clear; potential buyers often peer through the windows.

THE INTERIOR: The outside should invite buyers in, and what's inside should seal the deal. Attention to detail counts.

- ❑ **Lights:** During the day and evening, whenever you have potential buyers in the home, make sure all the lights are on. This makes rooms look more inviting and spacious. Also, make sure curtains are always up to let in as much sunlight as possible.
- ❑ **Pets:** If you have pets, have them removed from the home when showing. Have someone walk the dog, or have a neighbor take care of them for an hour or so. Litter boxes should be removed. Most importantly, make sure the home does not have that off-putting animal smell.



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- ❑ **Carpets:** Area rugs may be used if the carpets or floors are in bad shape; they add warmth to the home as well. This way, buyers' eyes are not drawn to the floor; instead, they will focus more on the house. A credit for carpet should be offered if the flooring is not repairable.
- ❑ **Smell:** Use a vanilla-scented air freshener that applies directly to your air filter. This gives your home that "new model" aroma.
- ❑ **Furniture:** Remove as much furniture from the rooms as possible. This would make them look dramatically larger.
- ❑ **The Living Room:** Strive for a lived-in, cozy feeling. Discard worn, chipped, frayed furniture. Add lamps if it is dark. Open curtains and blinds. Set out fresh flowers.
- ❑ **The Kitchen:** Many buyers judge the housekeeping by the oven and stove. Appliances should be spotless and everything working perfectly. Replace or repair anything that sticks, squeaks or drips. Clear clutter and small appliances from countertops and refrigerators. This room should shine!
- ❑ **The Master Bedroom:** After the kitchen, this is the second most appealing room to a buyer. Remove any excess furniture to make the room appear larger. Show the true size of the closets by removing or packing items that can be stored elsewhere.
- ❑ **Bathrooms:** Make sure bathrooms are always neat and clean. Remove clutter from sink or vanity countertops. Make sure showers are free of soap scum and tile grout is in good shape. Most buyers pay close attention to this. Make sure any water damage is repaired. Clean decorative towels should be displayed, and drawers should be organized. Cabinets should be cleared of all unnecessary items. This room should sparkle!



WHEN YOU LET POTENTIAL BUYERS IN: Part of the sale depends on the mood you set. A little time spent on setting the mood can pay huge dividends.

Now that you've made sure that the exterior and interior are both in order, go one step further and appeal to the potential buyer's senses.

Make sure the lights are on, the home has a pleasant aroma, and perhaps soft classical or jazz music is playing on the stereo in the background.