

**SOLD**

Preparing Your Home For Sale

A few great tips on creating an atmosphere that will charm buyers and make them want to buy your home. Remember that you'll never get another chance to make a first impression. And first impressions are what counts! Follow these simple tips and create the competitive edge that may help you sell your home more quickly.

Drive-up Appeal

- Trim trees and shrubs, clean out flower beds and invest in a few flats of seasonal flowers, paint the front door, make sure doorbell is working properly, wash the mailbox, keep the porch swept and get an attractive mat for people to wipe their feet.

Absolute Basics

- Start by airing out the home. Most people are turned off by even the smallest odor. Odors must be eliminated, especially those caused by dogs and cats; soiled diapers and/or cigarettes.
- Wash all the windows in the home, inside and out.
- If it has been over a year since the carpets have been cleaned, now is the time to have them cleaned. Bare floors should also be waxed or polished.
- Put bright light bulbs in every socket made for a bulb. Buyers like bright & cheery.
- Clean out closets, cabinets and drawers. Closets should look like they have enough room to hold additional items. Get everything off the floor and don't have the shelves piled to the ceiling.
- Make sure rooms are not overcrowded with furniture. Select pieces that look best, and store the rest.
- Keep the kitchen sparkling clean. Make sure all appliances are clean at all times. Straighten cupboards that appear cluttered and keep floors gleaming.
- Bath tubs, showers and sinks should be freshly caulked. The grout should be clean and in good condition. There should be no leaks in the faucet or traps.

Maximizing First Impressions

Exterior and Curb Appeal

Experts say most Buyers make their decision at first sight. Please see the article on the next page.

General Exterior

Prospective Buyers will react well to signs your home has been meticulously maintained.

- Manicure landscaping: mow, edge and water lawn, trim hedges, weed and fertilize flowerbeds, and prune trees.
- Keep driveway clean and free of parked cars, and keep the garage door closed.
- Repair or replace loose or damaged roof shingles.
- Minimize cracks or crumbling on walkways, walls, or steps, and keep them clean and free of obstructions like toys or snow.
- Items from RVs to waste cans left out can contribute to a cluttered busy appearance. Make sure that from the street, your property appears clear.
- Inspect appearance of interior window coverings from the curb.
- Repair any peeling paint or loose caulking on windows or other areas.
- Take steps to eliminate insect or rodent pests.
- Pick up after pets or neighborhood animals.

Doorway

While agents work the lockbox for a key, Buyers have idle time to notice detail.

- Apply a fresh coat of paint to the front door and frame.
- Consider adding pots of flowering plants in the entryway if the weather permits.
- Eliminate cobwebs and groom doorway area windows, porchlight, or decorative glass.

Interior Appeal

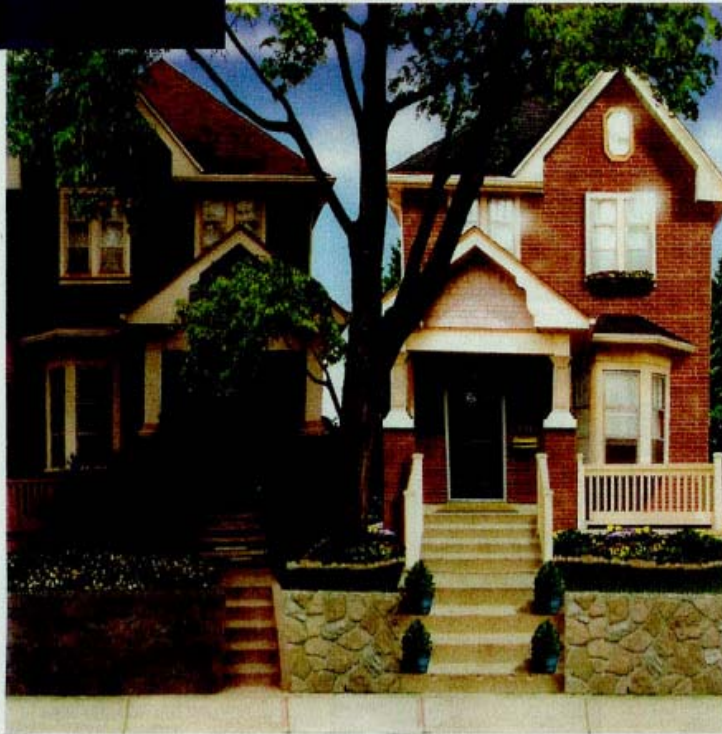
Once inside, experts say most Buyers are reaffirming their curbside decision.

Clean, Clear, Light and Bright

- Give every room in the house a thorough cleaning and remove all clutter. Hiring a cleaning service may pay for itself by adding to a Buyer's perceived value of your home.
- For a sleeker, more spacious look, consider placing furniture from crowded rooms in storage.
- Clear kitchen counters of everything other than perhaps a few decorative items. Ask yourself: "Would a professional decorator put your choice of items on the counter of a model home?"
- Remember: closets will be opened! Keep closets, cupboards, and even your attic orderly and neat. Since you are anticipating a move anyway, consider holding a garage sale or boxing and storing unused belongings.
- If necessary, repaint or clean/replace dingy, soiled or strongly-colored walls, and window and floor coverings with a light, neutral shade. Bright rooms look bigger, and neutral colors help Buyers envision their own furnishings and décor.
- Repair dripping faucets, burned-out light bulbs, or cracked window panes.
- Repair cracks, holes or damage to plaster, wallboard, wallpaper, and tiles.

Warm and Homey

- Subtle scents of potpourri in bedrooms or baths and fresh baked cookies or cinnamon in the kitchen can make your home more inviting.
- Keep an attractive set of towels in each bathroom to be brought out only for showings.



What's on the outside counts

We've all been warned not to judge a book by its cover. But, hey, consumers do anyway.

Encourage sellers to spruce up their listing's exterior, so buyers will have no reason to turn on their heel. Well-chosen improvements can draw buyers into the home and add value. Both the facade and yard should say: "This house is loved."

Sources: Steve Berges, Symphony Homes LLC, homebuilders, Davison, Mich.; Kevin Gladd, Potomac Valley Brick & Supply Co., Rockville, Md.; Donna Kozik, author, *29 Days to a Smooth Move* (www.29DaysToASmoothMove.com, 2003); John Kuroski, Kuroski Development Co., Littleton, Colo.; Gabe Pasquale, Spectrum Communities, homebuilders, Valhalla, NY; Kathy Peterson, author, *Kathy Peterson's Great Outdoor Decorating Makeovers* (Watson-Guptill, 2004); Cary Senders, GroundScape Technologies, Brooklyn Heights, Ohio; Tim Thoelecke, Garden Concepts Inc. (www.gardenconceptsin.com), Glenview, Ill. For information about caring for masonry, call Prosoco Inc., at 800/255-4255, a formulator of specialty cleaning products based in Lawrence, Kan.

1. Touch up painted surfaces. Sellers should remove peeling paint and repaint the affected areas. Do a good deed for the planet: Encourage sellers to use environmentally friendly paint. Look for No-VOC or Low-VOC labels.

2. Perk up a front porch. Give sellers a blueprint to turn a porch into an outside room. Add large seasonal flowers in big pots, planted window boxes, a new welcome mat, and some comfy furniture. If they already have seating, make sure they clean the upholstery. Advise them to repaint or stain worn wooden floorboards in a color that complements the facade and door.

3. Make windows sparkle. Use a garden hose to wet outside windows before washing; it helps loosen dirt. Second- or third-story windows may necessitate professional help.

4. Clean dirty masonry. Atmospheric pollution and Mother Nature can take their toll on all types of exterior materials, such as brick and stucco. Use a nylon rather than a steel-bristle brush, and avoid cleansers that damage color and finish. Manufacturer Prosoco Inc.'s Web site, www.prosoco.com, suggests safe cleaning choices.

5. Paint gutters to match the trim. Sellers will find a large selection of colors in enamel paints that adhere to metal.

6. Illuminate the site. Too many lights make a walk look like an airport runway. But a home should look safe and attractive. Add a few lights in trees for a special glow.

7. Tidy landscaping. Recommend sellers remove dead trees and leaves, prune overgrown shrubs, edge beds, and plant seasonal flowers. To keep a tip-top lawn, sellers should plant, fertilize, and water according to a schedule that reflects the climate and soil conditions. Instead of traditional mulch, consider GroundScape Landscape, made from shredded recycled tires and colored to simulate natural mulch or wood chips. It's heavier than mulch so it won't blow away; and it repels weeds, insects, and mold.

8. Remember the pièce de résistance. A front door should be clearly visible since it's the entry and focal point for prospects. A polished knocker adds cachet. RM

Getting Ready

Advanced preparation is the key to making the selling process smoother and more efficient. Before you put your home on the market, there are a few steps you should take to make sure it is ready to be seen by prospective buyers.

Perform a Self-Inspection

- Walk through the home and ask yourself, "Would I buy this home?"
- Try to remove any emotion and sentimentality you may have for the home and look at it objectively.
- Make a list of things you'd like to repair/change.
- Don't make major changes that will cost more to do than you will get for them.
- Prioritize the list in relation to when the house is going on the market. (Projects that require numerous resources such as contractors, remodelers, etc., should be first.)
- Prepare a timetable to have all repairs/changes made and stick to it!

Repair and Cleaning Checklist

A clean, neat home that looks nice and maximizes space will sell faster and at a higher price. Keep in mind, a small investment in time and/or money could make your home much more attractive to buyers.

Exterior

- Replace peeling and chipped paint with new paint (choose a color that sets the home apart, but doesn't clash with the rest of the neighborhood).
- Clear gutters and downspouts.
- Make sure there is good exterior lighting and all walkway lights are in working order.
- Inspect and clean the chimney.
- Repair and replace any damaged or missing roof shingles.
- Paint or stain worn areas on wood decks.
- Remove grass growing in concrete cracks.
- Clean grease and oil stains from the driveway.
- Clean all fencing; make sure it is secure, with no missing slats or posts.

Yard

- Mow and trim grass; re-sod to make all areas look even.
- Be sure to water the grass on a regular basis.
- Prune any overgrowth.
- Remove or replace any dead or diseased trees, shrubs or plants.
- Weed flower beds.

Front Door

- Polish hardware.
- Apply a fresh coat of paint or stain to get rid of nicks and scratches.
- Clean storm door.
- Make sure the doorbell operates correctly.
- Make sure there are no squeaks when the door is opened and closed.

Windows

- Clean all windows inside and out.
- Add a fresh coat of paint to trim and sills if needed.
- Make sure all windows open and close easily.
- Replace any cracked window panes or broken sills.
- Replace any window screens with tears or holes

Entry

- Clean floors and any rugs in entry.
- Downsize clutter in every closet to make them appear spacious.
- Check to make sure lighting works properly.

Living/Dining/Family Rooms

- Add a fresh coat of paint if necessary.
- Repair cracks and holes in ceilings and walls.
- Make sure all wallpaper is secure.
- Repaint any worn or chipped woodwork.
- Clean draperies and blinds; make sure they open and close easily.
- Steam-clean carpets; clean any other flooring.
- Position the furniture to showcase the size and shape of the room.
- Remove and replace any attached items, such as chandeliers and draperies that you will be taking with you in the move.
- Put away toys, hobby supplies, and additional clutter.

Kitchen

- Make sure countertops and sinks are clean and stain free.
- Fix dripping faucets.
- Organize pantry and cupboards so they appear clean, neat and spacious.
- Make sure the refrigerator and freezer are defrosted and odor free.

Bathrooms

- Sinks, tubs, showers and counter tops should be clean and free of stains.
- Repair leaky faucets.
- Remove grout and soap stains from tile.
- Replace any missing or cracked tiles or grout. Caulk all joints.
- Check all fixtures, including heat lamps and exhaust fans, and make sure they are all in working order.
- Install a new shower curtain.
- Hide all supplies and clutter like toilet paper, shampoo bottles, cleansers and magazines.

Bedrooms

- Repair cracks in ceiling and walls.
- Apply fresh paint if necessary.
- Make sure wallpaper is secure.
- Clean draperies and blinds; make sure they open and close easily.
- Put away clothes, toys and other clutter.
- Neatly make all beds

Tidy Extras

- Plant flowers to brighten walkways and enrich the entry. Hide or remove any indoor plants that are brown or losing their leaves.
- Remove all fixer cars, campers and boats from the property.
- The first thing people notice is the garage door. If yours needs to be replaced, replace it with a sectional garage door with some interesting windows that make it stand out.
- Removing clutter is key. Some sellers even rent a storage space to house some of their furniture, creating a sleeker, more spacious look.
- You can spruce up a kitchen by simply replacing cabinet knobs and drawer pulls.

Helpful Links

<http://www.reliableremodeler.com>

Tips on minor repairs and remodeling

<http://thecityofaustin.com/lawn>

Lawn service companies in Austin

<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us>

Texas Department of Public Safety

<http://www.improvenet.com/ext/paths/8/index.html>

Have contractors in your area bid on your job

http://g.moving.com/Moving_and_Planning/Quotes

Compare movers in the Austin area

<http://www.123movers.com/?se=goo15>

Get competitive price quotes from movers in any areas

http://www.moving.bz/self_storage/texas/austin

Find storage in Austin

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/library>

Find resources at the Austin Public Library

<https://moversguide.com/?referral=USPS>

U.S. Postal Service official Change of Address form

<http://www.1800gotjunk.com>

Phone # 1-800 Got Junk (1-800-468-5865)

They will haul off any belonging on or in the property for you. No Boxing or Bagging is necessary. Free Estimates. Their Pricing is Based on how much Volume is loaded into their Truck.

*This List does not represent an endorsement or recommendation.
(It has been compiled for your convenience only)*

Flooring Services

Stanley Steamer

Phone # 1-800 STEAMER (1-800-783-2637)

Stanley Steamer will provide you with superior carpet cleaning. Most Stanley Steamer operations offer a full menu of additional services to help you care for your home, such as tile and grout cleaning, air duct cleaning, carpet and flooring sales, hardwood floor refinishing, and even 24-hour water damage restoration

Crown Carpet Cleaning

Phone # 512-244-2199

Crown Carpet Cleaning offers residential and commercial carpet cleaning. They will steam clean and deodorize individual rooms or whole houses with an additional charge for stairs. Additional landscaping services are also available, including mowing, edging, and blowing.

Able Water Restoration and Carpet Cleaning

Phone # 512-671-8800 or 512-653-2300

Able Water Damage Restoration and Carpet Cleaning is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to restore your place to top shape. They have been serving Central Texas for over 20 years in the water damage restoration and carpet cleaning business. For your protection, they are bonded and insured.

America's Carpet Outlet

Phone # 512-451-4202 7512 N. Lamar Blvd. Austin, TX

Locally owned, they have all colors, styles, and grades - from rental property to high-end designer. They also stock the unique and hard to find. They have remnants and roll ends as well as full rolls to do an entire house or office. They can offer savings of up to 50% off normal retail, because they are a true outlet store and buy carpet for much less than what it normally sells for. They can also set you up with professional installation, usually within a day or two.

The Carpet Stop

Phone # 512-419-1144 1542 W. Anderson Lane Austin, TX

Locally owned, they have a full service stocking warehouse offering the public the lowest prices on all types of floor covering everyday. They stock remnants as well as full rolls to do a room or the whole house. They offer professional installation, usually within two days.

*This List does not represent an endorsement or recommendation.
(It has been compiled for your convenience only)*