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Getting Your Home Ready To Sell

Spring is in the air now and it's a time we take a closer look at our homes, cleaning and inspecting winter's damage. It is also a time many seem to assess their needs and consider if the home that once seemed perfect, just the way we liked it, still fits our needs. Maybe you are considering downsizing now that the kids have all moved out; maybe you wish to be closer to the grandparent or the grandchildren; maybe you are thinking to taking advantage of the crazy jump in housing prices, what ever the reason, if the time has come to sell your house, where does one get started started.

First off – bring in a Toronto Real Estate Board (TREB) trusted realtor to help you objectively evaluate your property, this will get you the most honest valuation of your home. Having a professional with years of experience and there fingers on the pulse of the current market really adds value and piece of mind. As well, they can tell you if your remodeling choices will help or hurt you.

So, if you are ready for a move, read on for some tips on getting your home ready to sell.

- **Depersonalize and Disassociate yourself from the home:** A house is a product to be sold much like a box of cereal. As emotional as it may be you must convert your home with all its personal touches to a house that will appeal to everyone.

Pack up the photos and heirlooms because buyers are naturally nosey and can't see past the personality to see what is there for them. You want a relatively blank canvas so they can imagine their own photos, artwork and heirlooms in the space.

- **De-Clutter – De-clutter – De-clutter!** It is amazing how much stuff we collect. Kids move out but leave all there stuff behind. Folks pass away so you move all those memories to your home. You bought 4 different exercise machines and rarely used them, but they're still around.

It may be difficult but consider this; if you haven't used it or looked at in over a year – you probably don't need it. Check out our past article on de-cluttering in our **Spring 2015 newsletter** which is on our website under vintage newsletters.

- **Half empty all closets:** Storage is something every buyer is looking for and can never have enough of. Take half the stuff out of your closets then neatly organize the rest, maybe install an organizer to modernize it. Buyers will snoop, and a half empty closet/cabinet leaves them thinking there is plenty of storage.
- **Finish your outstanding projects:** It is rare when buying a home that someone is willing to finish someone else's projects. There may be some, like me, that would consider buying a fixer-upper but the majority of homebuyers don't want that. Most buyers want a turnkey home; one that can be lived in and enjoyed right away.

To get your home to a turnkey state, finish those projects that you never got around too and pump up that value.

- **Fix Safety issues:** Unsafe items in a home can be a deal-breaker for buyers so be sure to address them. Loose handrails, broken and uneven steps, rotting decks and porches, tripping hazards, broken walkways and electrical issues stand out like a sore thumb so ensure they are fixed.
- **Paint over those bold colours:** A ReMax agent I know says more than 95% of house hunters scan the MLS listing on-line these days and the pictures of homes showing bold colour tend to be skipped over quickly. If you check out Pinterest, Houzz or the decorator sites you notice the trend – whites, greys, and tans. They may be somewhat bland but go with pretty much everything – appealing to the masses.
- **A Kitchen can close the deal:** A few years back I read an article saying that you are not actually selling your house, you're selling your kitchen – that's how important it is. The benefits of remodeling your kitchen are endless, and the best part of that is you almost always make your investment back and then some.
- The fastest and most inexpensive kitchen updates include simple painting and new cabinet hardware. Use neutral-color paint so you can present buyers with a blank canvas where they can start envisioning their own style. If you have a little money to spend, buy one fancy stainless steel appliance. Why one? Because when people see one high-end appliance they think all the rest are expensive too and it updates the kitchen.

- **Make the house sparkle:** A home that smells clean, and sparkles of cleanliness makes potential buyers believe the home was well cared for and will likely not have any maintenance issues. Replace worn looking drapes and carpets, wash windows, wash and wax all floors, steam-clean the carpets and basically scour everything so it is bright and shiny.
- **Light it Up:** After location, my dad (a very successful realtor) said good lighting is the one thing that every buyer cites they want in a home. Take down the heavy drapes, clean the windows, change the lampshades, increase the wattage of your light bulbs and cut the bushes outside to let in sunshine. Do what you have to do make your house as bright and cheery as possible – it will make it more sellable.
- **Curb Appeal matters:** No matter how good the interior of your home looks, buyers have already judged your home before they walk through the door. You never have a second chance to make a first impression. An agent I know with Keller Williams said he's had buyers that won't get out of car because they don't like the exterior of your home. This happens and you'll never get them inside for a close look at the rest of the house.

Ensure paint is in great shape, the walkway is in good shape and clear, your lawn is tidy and mowed and bushes are trimmed. Plant or create a grouping of pots with yellow flowers. They say the colour yellow evokes a buying emotion. Marigolds are inexpensive and low maintenance.

Lastly, be sure prospective buyers and agents can easily find you house number.

- **The Punch List:** The final thing to do when getting your home ready to sell is to make a punch list. A punch list is what project managers, and contractors call a list of deficiencies, damaged or minor repair items that need fixing before a building can be turned over to the owner.

Start in one room of the house and document all of the paint touch ups, trim repairs, or other not quite finished items in that room. Then move on to the next room and do the same thing. Keep doing this until you've hit every room in the house. Then head outside and do the same. Once your list is compiled you go back through it and start finishing up those items. Fix those squeaky hinge and loose door knobs. Touch up the walls where your buddies tried to move the couch down stairs. Redo the sealant around the tub. You get the idea.

As always, My Go-2-Guy would be only to pleased to assist with your project list and can recommend many skilled tradesmen for those specialty tasks.

Ross Simmons