

## **The Importance Of Proper Home Preparation For Showings And A Sale**

### **Ideas to Increase "Curb Appeal"**

The successful marketing of your home begins with the preparation of your home. With the knowledge that many prospective purchasers find their property by simply "cruising" neighbourhoods that they like, the importance of "curb appeal" will be understood. "Curb appeal" is simply preparing your home in such a way so that when potential purchasers see it from the street as they drive by, they will feel drawn to see it inside as well. It is absolutely critical to selling your home for the best possible price in the least amount of time.

The following ideas are provided as a guide to increasing your home's "curb appeal":

- Have yards and shrubs trimmed neatly.
- Make sure that all walkways, driveways and entry areas are clean and uncluttered.
- Make sure that cement/asphalt is clean and free from grease or oil spots.
- Try to keep cars in the garage and not parked in the driveway or in front of the house on the street.
- Provide lots of colour in the front yard in the form of flowers in the flowerbeds and in pots inside the home in visible areas.
- Window treatments as seen from the street can help or hinder the perception of your home by others. At the very least they should not clash with one another. At best they will work together to form a complementary whole.
- Prune all dead plant material in the yard.
- Try to make the interior of the home visible from the outside. Trim back shrubs and bushes from the doors and windows and make sure that drapes and curtains are left open during the day. Have the home bright and well-lit, inside and out.
- Make sure that the roof and gutters are free from debris.
- Make sure that all windows and exterior light fixtures and ornaments are clean and polished.
- Make sure that the front façade of your home, especially, and the garage door, trim and eavestroughs are clean and well-painted (i.e. no chipping or peeling).
- Keep the grass well-trimmed and edged.
- See that all gutters and eavestroughs are attached securely to the structure.
- Try to make the entryway warm and inviting, possibly by using potted plants and a rocking chair or porch swing, etc.
- Make sure there are no children's toys, games or bicycles cluttering the yard or entryway.

There is little doubt that the very best advertising dollars that can be spent are spent on giving your home the best "curb appeal" possible.

### **Preparing Your Home for Showings:**

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It has been my experience, and the experience of many realtors I have talked to about this, that too often when a home is being shown to prospective purchasers, it has not been prepared properly for the showing. By this I mean that the home was not prepared so as to be seen by potential purchasers to its best advantage. Even though Vendors have been cautioned to keep their home clean and uncluttered, most houses are not prepared as they should be for an effective showing.

I will always attempt to give you as much notice of showings as I can. If there are specific times of the day that you would prefer not to be disturbed, please let me know so that I can include this information on the MLS listing for the benefit of other realtors. But, if you have ever sold a home before, you will know that requests for showings seem to occur at the most inconvenient times. Keep in mind, though, that with this inconvenience comes the possibility of that one purchaser who will buy your home for the highest price.

When the call comes for the showing, it should not be a huge task to get your home ready. If the advance work has been done to get your home "show ready", a light dusting and some clutter collection should suffice.

There are certain things that should be done for all showings if possible. These include such things as having the lights turned on, a fire burning in the fireplace (in the proper season of course), a light-scented potpourri simmering on the stove perhaps (especially if there are smokers or pets in the home), all of the curtains open to allow light in during the day, and soft music playing.

Try to imagine how you would view your home if you were the potential purchaser. What would make you feel warm and comfortable?

### **Specialty Showing Techniques "Staging":**

"Staging" is simply preparing your home as if you were setting the stage for a play. This makes your home feel very comfortable to buyers as they tour the property.

"Staging" the dining room includes techniques such as setting the table complete with dishes, utensils, candles, napkins and flowers as if for a dinner party.

"Staging" a living room or family room might include such things as having a fire burning in the fireplace, pillows on the sofa, an open book on the coffee table, a rocking chair with a knitting basket beside it perhaps, quilts resting on or beside a sofa, and wind chimes hanging outside a partially open window.

"Staging" a bedroom might include quilts or bedding folded back in a turn-down fashion, pillows arranged near the headboard, candles burning, soft music playing and an open book on the nightstand.

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"Staging" has proven to be a powerful and effective showing technique. Be creative and have fun with it!

### **Should You be Present During the Showing?**

I always suggest that you vacate your home while it is being shown. Many potential buyers feel uncomfortable if you are home because they will want to inspect it very closely. This may include looking in closets, storage areas and snooping around in the garage and basement. These people are in the midst of making a major decision and you should want them to be as comfortable as possible while they are making it.

Having the owners present during the showing also makes the agent's job much more difficult. Showing a home properly involves reading "buying signals", both positive and negative, and getting as much feedback as possible from the purchasers. Some buyers, when you are in the home, will be very quiet in order to avoid hurting your feelings with comments about specific features of the home. Other buyers, and especially those who have read certain how-to books on home-buying techniques, will posture becoming very critical in a misguided attempt to enhance their bargaining position. Either way, the agent showing your home will have a more difficult time in reading their clients.

Of course, there will be times when it is not possible to vacate your home during a showing. In these situations, it is important for you to be as unobtrusive as possible. If the prospective purchasers or their agent ask you any questions, answer them as honestly as possible. You should not, however, under any circumstances, allow yourself to be drawn into a conversation by anyone viewing your home (and especially not by the agent), who may be "fishing" for some indication of your motivation to sell, etc. As they say in the movies, "Anything you say can and will be used against you".

Always make sure that the agent showing your home leaves a business card. I will want to keep in contact with him or her to monitor their purchaser's progress in coming to a decision, and to receive feedback on the showing itself to share with you.

I hope that the above has been of some use to you as you think about selling your home for the best possible price in the least amount of time with a minimum of inconvenience. Remember ... I'm with you all the way.

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