



Tips to sell your house

When you are ready to sell your house you'll want to enlist the help of a Realtor. He or she will provide the professional advice and service you need to make the selling process go smoothly.

Showing you ways to make your home as marketable as possible is just one of the many ways your Realtor can help. Here are a few tips from the experts:

Clean everything in and out of sight

With clipboard in hand, take a tour of your home. Take note of every opportunity to remove clutter and dirt. Rooms, closets and cupboards will appear larger and more inviting when you get rid of unnecessary stuff and tidy up what's left. Remove bulky or unused furniture and rearrange the rest to make the best use of space.

Most of us are pack rats, so apply the following test to every questionable item: Have I used this in the past six months, or will I need to use it soon? If the answer is no, throw it away, store it elsewhere or sell it in a yard sale.

Be equally aggressive in disposing of dirt. Pay particular attention to the two most important rooms in a buyer's mind: bathrooms and kitchens. And once you've removed all the dirt: keep everything clean, every day. You never know when the person who will ultimately buy your home will visit.

Repair as much as you can

During your home tour identify the things that are broken, cracked, stuck or just plain don't work anymore. These can include: leaky faucets, holes in window screens, stuck or broken windows, lights that don't work, doors that squeak or don't close properly, missing or broken cupboard handles, cracks in the walls and ceilings, and dozens of other "little things" you've been meaning to do for years. Now is the time.

Certain items, such as roof or basement leaks, must be repaired, along with any water damage. Electrical or heating system problems must be fixed. Some repairs, however, may not be necessary. Will that hairline crack in the driveway really make or break the sale? How about a chipped floor tile in the entryway? Some buyers will have their own ideas about how to deal with these problems. You may find it easier to adjust your selling price to reflect the cost of these repairs, rather than pay for them yourself.

Depersonalize your home

Your house reflects you. It is decorated with your taste and your sense of style. Unfortunately, that heart-shaped table lamp your grandmother left you may distract potential buyers from seeing the home itself. Grit your teeth and store all personal items (framed family photos, trophies, etc.) out of the way.

If you have brightly coloured accent walls or heavily patterned wallpaper, consider repainting or wallpapering these areas with light, neutral colours that enhance a room's size and make it more flexible to receive any kind of furniture. Remove area rugs, light fixtures and other items that buyers might find too difficult to imagine in "their home", even if you were not intending to include these in the sale.

Beautify the house and yard

Peeling, dry paint is relatively easy to fix or replace and can make all the difference in your home's appearance. If your carpet or other floor covering is in really bad shape, consider replacing it. The same holds true for badly tattered window coverings such as drapes and blinds.

Outside the house, weed the flower beds, remove dead tree branches, keep your lawn well-mowed and edged, trim the hedges, rake the leaves, sweep the sidewalks, fix and paint the deck or fence, plant a few flowers and do anything else you can think of to enhance your home's curb appeal.

It may sound like a lot of effort, but these tips, and the assistance of a Realtor, will help you sell your current home quickly so you can move on to your next dream house.