

The Art of Home Staging



When selling, detail your home like you detail your car. That's the concept behind home staging, a method of preparing homes for sale to create the greatest buyer interest. When a home is staged, a variety of strategies are employed to show your home in its best light. These include reducing or rearranging furniture, adding colors or accessories to create a focal point in each room, enhancing natural light & spaciousness, and inventing new uses for items to create interest and balance. Often, staging requires very little investment on the part of the client. Yet staged homes typically sell for more money, and in less time, than homes that are not staged.

Staging is not decorating, in fact it's often the opposite: depersonalizing your home, rather than personalizing it. And staging does not refer to condition, though your house does need to be in ultra clean condition, what stagers call "Q-tip Clean" before staging can occur.

If you're thinking of selling and want to make that all important best first impression on buyers, here are the ten recommended steps to staging:

1. Stand in the doorway of each room, to see what buyers see. If a buyer doesn't enter a room, they won't buy the house.
2. Pick a focal point. What is the purpose of the room?
3. Make a plan, guided by your focal point.
4. Clear the clutter! De-accessorize the room. Move everything to the hallway, so you can see the bones of the room.
5. Divide the accessories into piles of what will be kept, tossed, given away or sold.
6. Assess the furniture in the room. Remove anything that makes the room overcrowded, and consider moving pieces to another room. Perhaps that living room chair would add a cozy touch to your master bedroom.
7. Decide what furniture will stay.

8. Arrange the remaining furniture to highlight the room's focal point and draw your eye to it. Play with the furniture – try different arrangements to see what works best.

9. Rebuild the room with accessories. This is the fun part! Use the room's original accessories or scavenge from accessories in other rooms. Be creative in your choices, and remember that less is more.

10. Fine-tune. Go back to the doorway and check out the view. How does it look? Is there anything that can be removed without changing the look or feel of the space? Anything that needs to be added? If not, you're done!

As you go through each step, keep these guidelines in mind: Buyers love space and light. They are drawn by clean lines, greenery, and spick & span condition. In the kitchen, for example, clear counters, remove extra chairs from around the table, and make sure the pantry is neatly organized. Add a plant or bowl of fruit to the counter and open curtains wide.

Remember, too, throughout the house, to take down all those personal photos and put away the doll and memorabilia collections. Though they are special to you, they are personal items which can be distracting for a buyer. Buyers want to imagine themselves in the space, and think of it as a house they may want to purchase, rather than those nice people's home with the two beautiful kids. Remember that you want buyers to focus on your space, not your stuff.

Also in the clutter department, consider paring down the contents of your bookcases and china cabinet. It's amazing the difference it can make to remove many of the books; leaving just a few items on the



BEFORE, AND AFTER



shelves. Ditto for that hutch in the dining room; it really opens up the space and makes it visually appealing.

Staging extends to the exterior of your home, too. Be sure to check the condition of paint, gutters, windows and the like. Add mulch and prune the plants. Walk across the street and look at your house the way a buyer would see it. How's the curb appeal?

Throughout the house, the goal is to "set the stage" for the buyer, creating interest, balance and a feeling of positive energy. It's a project you can take on yourself, or consult a professional. If you'd like your home professionally staged before selling, consider locating a Realtor who is an Accredited Staging Professional (ASP), or hiring a professional stager. Stagedhomes.com has a searchable directory of individuals who fit these categories. ASP Realtors provide staging as a free service to their clients, or situation dependent, may suggest their client hire an ASP stager for the job.

For more information about the art of staging, please contact me or visit www.stagedhomes.com.

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