



STAGING ON A SHOESTRING: TIPS FROM THE PROS FOR QUICK HOME SALES

The real estate market is starting to show signs of improvement, which is welcome news for people wanting to sell their homes. This positive momentum alone isn't enough to close a deal, though – homeowners must make their property appealing to potential buyers so it positively stands out from the competition. The good news is it's easy to create an appealing atmosphere with a few staging tips and tricks from the experts.

“When people ask what is most important about home staging, I say, ‘delete, delete, delete and clean, clean, clean,’” says Cathy Mansour, an interior designer and director at Aqua Hospitality Carpets. “You can't be too tidy or too well-scrubbed.”

Start by eliminating all clutter. Not only does it make your home look unorganized, clutter also makes it look much smaller. Pack away papers, knickknacks, excessive photography or decor, and extra furniture. Uncluttered rooms highlight the space and personality of a home so buyers take notice of these attributes rather than the cluster of family photos or stack of magazines on the coffee table.

Once clutter is gone, it's time to assess the flooring. More buyers desire carpet because it is comfortable, reduces noise and improves indoor air quality. Sellers should highlight this feature.

“Carpet is warm and inviting in a family room,” says Karen Dembsky, owner of Peachtree Home Staging and president of GA Real Estate Staging Association. “Area rugs over hard surface floors make the room look smaller.”

While clean, fresh carpeting is an asset when it comes to selling a home, any floorcovering can be a drawback if it is dirty, dated or has an odor. Have carpets professionally cleaned before opening your doors for showings. The Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) recommends hiring only reputable carpet-cleaning professionals who will use effective cleaning solutions and equipment to do the best job possible. Ask about training and certifications, and whether a cleaner will come to your home for an inspection first to determine what type of cleaning or repair is required, including any stain treatments. visit www.carpet-rug.org to find cleaning professionals who use CRI-certified carpet cleaning products as part of their cleaning process.

If repairs can't be made, the carpet will need to be replaced. Dembsky stresses carpet is one of the most cost-efficient upgrades you can do when staging your home for sale. “Replacing carpet – you can always get your money back,” she says. “Just don't put it in the bathroom – buyers don't like that.”

Once your home is clean and clutter-free, it's time to let in the light. Dark houses look drab no matter how stylish or clean they are. Pull back drapery, turn on the hallway sconces and update wattages on dim bulbs. About 100 watts per 50 square feet is a good target. If you have outdated lighting hardware or lampshades, consider affordable replacements – it's typically an easy update that transforms a room instantly.

Once you let in all that wonderful light, some walls may look dated. A fresh coat of paint can liven up a room and make it look modern and clean. While there's often no need to repaint every interior wall, focusing on rooms where walls are dirty, damaged or feature a dated color can give your entire interior design a facelift.

What paint colors are best for attracting buyers? Stick to neutrals like warm honey or soft green so potential buyers can easily envision their own furniture and decor in the space. If you have a smaller home, consider painting adjacent rooms or spaces the same color. For example, a small dining room and a small kitchen painted in the same color tricks the eye so the space appears larger than it actually is.

Finally, remember sight isn't the only sense you want to stimulate when it comes to selling a home. How your house smells can make it appealing or distasteful to potential buyers. “Smells are a huge factor . People are often unaware that there is a specific odor,” says Mansour.

Because it's difficult to distinguish different scents in our own homes, invite a few guests over to give their honest opinions. A deep cleaning of any textiles as well as a few fresh flowers should do the trick. Before you know it, you'll be reviewing bids and moving forward on the sale of your home.

Visit carpet-rug.org and www.criblog.org to learn more.

