

Getting to Work

Unfortunately, very few homes are already picture perfect when the owners make the decision to sell. Most will require anything from minor repairs to major renovations. How little or how much work you wish to put into your house is entirely up to you. However, remember the more attractive your home, the more appealing it will be to prospective Buyers. And the more appealing it is ... the faster the sale and the higher the offer!!

To assist you with this important element of house selling, we have made up individual charts for each of the areas normally found in and around a home. If you have additional areas, such as a library or home office, most of the ideas listed will also apply to these locations as well. You will also find a column for noting which work has been completed.

All Through the House ...

- Clean all windows, including those in the garage
- Replace any cracked or broken windows
- Repair any wood rot
- Check window screens.
- Repair or replace caulking and weather-stripping around windows and doors
- Exterior doors lock properly.
- Oil any squeaky door hinges
- Doorbells are working properly
- All doors and walls are free of fingerprints
- Illuminate any dark corners
- Repair any squeaky floors
- Replace loose floorboards or floor tiles
- Repair any woodwork (door frames, baseboards, chair rails, etc.) if chipped
- Give woodwork a fresh coat of paint, if necessary
- Smoke detectors are operating
- Fire extinguishers are in proper locations
- All electrical outlets are functioning properly. Try not to have extension cords running all around a room
- All electrical switches are working
- All electrical switches have plate covers
- All electrical wall plates are free of fingerprints
- Fumigate house, if bothered by pests or rodents
- Eliminate unpleasant odors ... cooking, pets
- House at a comfortable temperature
- Soft music playing
- The aroma of coffee brewing, or something baking in the oven
- All interior doors wide open to create a sense of spaciousness
- Curtains open (you don't want to look as though you have dirty windows)
- Interior lights on to create a warm ambiance
- No pets or children racing through the house
- An unobstructed "walking path" through the house
- Buyers shouldn't have to maneuver around too many pieces of furniture
- A planned spot for the buyers and your agent to sit and discuss the house – possibly the kitchen – with tea, coffee and cookies ready on the counter

The Entryway...

- Clean and polish hardwood flooring.
- Professionally clean carpeting.
- Thoroughly clean out the entryway closet. Leave only the coats you are currently wearing.
- Entryway is unobstructed.
- Entryway is brightly lit.
- Add a tri-light lamp to change the mood.
- If entryway is dark, consider painting walls a pale cream color to bounce some light.
- Consider hanging a mirror along one wall to open up the space and give either a sense of depth or width.
- Consider a small table.
- If you have a table, make sure it is uncluttered.
- If you have a wall with a collection of interesting objects, consider setting it off with track lighting.
- Repair any loose carpeting or slippery areas on the staircase.
- Consider removing carpeting and painting the steps.
- Handrail on staircase is secure.
- Staircase is free of clutter.
- Upstairs landing is well lit and free of clutter.
- Clean and polish hardwood flooring.
- Paint woodwork and doors a semi-gloss white enamel. This will give a fresh clean look and will pick up color tones in your wall paint.
- Clean all dirt and scuff marks from walls and doors.
- Repair any chipped plaster.
- Consider wallpapering or adding a wallpaper border to entryway.
- A colorful mat at the front door.
- Space in the closet to hang the Buyers' coats.
- A polished table with a bouquet of silk flowers.
- A little wicker basket on the table to hold the mail.
- The overhead light on a dimmer switch.
- Mirrors giving the illusion of more space.
- Beautiful wallpaper border that carries color and pattern as far as the eye can see.
- A tall vase of ornamental grasses.
- If an old house, a framed piece of original wallpaper.
- An unusual art object or collection of furniture (e.g.: Edwardian hats, a child's rocking horse, old maps, an interesting piece of sculpture, colorful bird houses, shiny walking sticks, or bright ceramic flower pots).
- A set of small framed botanical or floral prints on the staircase wall.
- A little round or oval rug on the floor of the upstairs landing.
- On the upstairs landing ... a staged grouping consisting of a small table with a reading lamp and a selection of interesting books, a rocking chair with a small colorful quilt draped across its back and a basket of dried flowers on the floor beside the chair.

The Kitchen...

- Clear off counter tops of practically everything.
- Buyers don't want to see a clutter of small appliances, gadgets, mixing bowls, etc.
- Clean refrigerator, stove and microwave.
- Clean vents and exhaust hoods.
- Check lights and timers on appliances.
- Wipe down surface of cupboards and drawers.
- If cupboards are old, consider giving them a fresh coat of paint.
- Cupboard doors close tightly.
- Replace any broken handles.
- Drawers open and shut without sticking.
- Add a box of baking soda in the refrigerator to absorb odors.
- Kitchen sink is spotless.
- Use grout cleaner around sink and re-caulk if necessary.
- Repair / replace chips in countertops.
- Clean any stains on countertop.
- Repair any leaky faucets or under-the-sink pipes.
- Wash and wax floor. Remove old wax build-up.
- If linoleum is worn, replace or cover with an area rug.
- Clean curtains and window blinds.
- Clean ceiling fan.
- Clean light fixtures.
- Copper pot display is shining.
- Get rid of any unhealthy plants.
- Clean pet "dining area".
- Kitchen is well lit.
- Dust the furniture.
- Vacuum rugs and sweep the floor.
- Colored glass bottles in the window.
- A countertop arrangement of an open cookbook, a cheery bowl of fruit and a vase of garden flowers.
- New dish towels and matching pot holders (bring them out if buyers are coming).
- Colorful burner covers on the stovetop.
- A new area rug at the sink (bring it out if buyers are coming).
- Mini-blinds, café curtains or a dramatic valance in the windows.
- The overhead light on a dimmer switch.
- The table set with bright place mats and napkins.
- Wallpaper, and/or wallpaper border.
- Window ledge with tiny terra-cotta pots of herbs.
- Small basket with scented soaps.
- Sponges and dish mops in a porcelain bowl by the sink.
- Cooking utensils hanging from a rack near the stove, or in a pottery container beside the stove.

The Dining Room...

- Refinish or polish hardwood floors.
- Professionally clean the carpeting or area rugs.
- Repair any worn spots on carpeting, or replace with area rugs.
- Professionally clean window treatments.
- Be consistent with window treatments on all the windows in the room.
- Clean ceiling fans and make sure they are operational.
- Remove any “extra” furniture that crowds the room.
- Remove and box any unnecessary dishes from your china cabinet.
- Clean the lighting fixtures.
- Repair and stain any nicks or scratches in the Furniture.
- Vacuum the carpet / rugs and sweep the floor.
- Dust the furniture, windows and lights.
- Polish any wooden pieces.
- Polish and shine any brass hardware.
- An elegantly set table for four – with china, crystal and silverware.
- A low centerpiece of either silk flowers or candles.
- A lace or embroidered runner on a side table.
- A side table arranged with a tea set, cups and saucers, and a couple of ceramic bowls of fruit.
- The interior lights on in the china buffet.
- A grouping of pretty painted dishes on the wall.
- The overhead chandelier on a dimmer switch.
- A small decorator lamp for accent lighting.
- A large, framed mirror across one wall to add a sense of depth.
- A dramatic curtain swag across the tops of windows (and sliding door).
- Potted palm trees and hanging ferns drawing your eye away from bare corners.
- A large accent rug on the floor in the center of the room.
- The use of chair rail molding, wallpaper and/or wallpaper border within the room.

The Living Room...

- Refinish or polish hardwood floors.
- Professionally clean the carpeting or area rugs.
- Repair any worn spots on carpeting, or replace with area rugs.
- Professionally clean window treatments.
- Clean any window blinds.
- Be consistent with window treatments on all the windows in the room.
- Clean ceiling fans and make sure they are operational.
- Remove any “extra” furniture that crowds the room.
- Pull furniture away from the walls and group pieces together in more intimate settings (i.e.: around a coffee table, an area rug, or in front of a fireplace).
- Keep the television hidden behind closed doors of TV unit.
- If television is open in the room, keep it dusted and secure any loose wires with Velcro strips.
- Clear away into boxes any tapes, videos or CDs that cannot be stored out of sight.
- Remove newspapers at the end of the day, and only keep the most current magazines.
- Keep magazines in a magazine rack.
- Immediately clear away any food or beverages as soon as they have been consumed.
- Remove any and all plants that are not in the optimum of good health.
- Lower hanging planters so that buyers are looking into them and not up at the bottom of dirty pots.
- Clean all the light fixtures.
- Use tri-light bulbs in table lamps, to control the degree of lighting you wish to display.
- Clean the fireplace. Remove any build-up of ashes or charred bits of wood from the grate.
- Polish fireplace implements.
- Dust the furniture, windows and lights.
- Vacuum the carpet / rugs and sweep the floor.
- Clusters of pillows around the room in complementary & contrasting colors.
- (Winter) A fire crackling in the hearth ... only if someone will be present in the house!
- (Summer) A fire laid with pretty logs, or a basket of dried flowers, or ferns, in front of the fire screen.
- A comfy chair by the window, with soft pillows.
- Next to it a little table with a bright reading lamp, a dish of mints, a mystery novel ... and a footstool.
- Two chairs grouped together around a small table with a jigsaw puzzle underway – and a colorful dish of pretzels.
- A coffee table with a bouquet of flowers and a sumptuous “coffee-table book”.
- Music sheets on a piano.
- The use of chair rail molding and/or wallpaper border within the room.

The Bedrooms...

- Professionally clean carpeting.
- Polish hardwood flooring.
- Clean the curtains.
- Remove excess furniture to create a feeling of space.
- Clear personal items from the dresser.
- Valuables are hidden from view.
- Sliding closet doors open easily and are not obstructed.
- Closet doors open and close tightly.
- Organize closets and keep only what is totally necessary. Box and label the rest for moving.
- Keep shoes on a shoe rack in closet.
- Use closet organizers.
- Make the beds.
- Hang-up and put away clothes.
- Dry clean comforters and bedspreads.
- Clean light fixtures.
- Use tri-light bulbs in table lamps.
- Clean ceiling fan.
- Dust furniture.
- Vacuum the carpets and sweep the floor.
- Use boxes under the bed for hidden storage.

Master Bedroom

- Pretty sheets, matching comforter and a cloud of pillows on the bed.
- Window treatment co-ordinated with comforter and bed linen.
- Small, colorful scatter rugs.
- A “thinking corner” with a comfortable chair, little table with a lamp, a plate of cookies and a magazine.
- A ceiling fan above the bed.
- A mirror on the wall, reflecting the view from the window.
- A night table with a table runner, a framed photo, a reading lamp, a book and a single flower in a vase.
- A writing desk by the window.
- Lovely framed prints on the walls.
- Wallpaper / wallpaper border / chair rail.

Child's Bedroom

- Colorful wallpaper border ... a child's theme (sky and stars, nursery rhymes, a secret garden ...).
- Large, brightly colored baskets for toys.
- Hanging net hammocks filled with stuffed animals.
- A child's table set for tea.
- An easel displaying the latest piece of artwork.
- Pastel painted walls.
- The bed turned down, with a small doll or animal waiting on the pillow.

The Bathroom...

- Remove any personal items (shampoo, medicine, cosmetics, hair blowers, etc.).
- Clean all glass and mirrors.
- Remove any mildew.
- Re-caulk if necessary.
- Repair grouting if necessary.
- Remove rust stains from toilet, sink, tub and shower.
- Repair any chipped porcelain.
- Scour the bathtub and shower.
- Wash shower curtain.
- Replace any discolored shower curtain or shower door.
- Clean soap build-up from shower door.
- Shower door is easy to open and shuts tightly.
- Clean and wax the floor. Remove any wax build-up.
- Replace any stained, cracked or loose tiles.
- Tighten loose toilet.
- Replace old toilet seat.
- Toilet flushes properly.
- Wash toilet seat cover and bath mats.
- Toilet freshener in toilet.
- Clean vanity, sink, and polish all faucets.
- Soap and soap dish are clean.
- Repair dripping faucets.
- Area under sink is organized.
- Pipes under the sink are clean and not leaking.
- Use shelf paper as liners in drawers which are stained, or on linen closet shelves.
- Clean the lighting fixtures.
- Launder the curtains.
- Arrange towels neatly on towel racks.
- Laundry basket is out-of-sight.
- Vacuum / sweep floor.
- Thick new towels in vibrant colors (bring out when buyers are coming).
- Colorful guest towels laid out on the vanity.
- A full length mirror.
- A lock on the door.
- Dishes of tiny ivy plants.
- A collection of scented (but unlit) candles.
- A glass bowl of potpourri.
- A mirrored tray with a collection of fancy perfume bottles.
- An antique water pitcher filled with dried, silk, or fresh flowers.
- Window ledge with tiny terra-cotta pots of herbs.
- A pretty plate of little guest soaps.
- A grouping of framed prints on the wall.
- A rod of hanging lace in a high window, instead of blinds.
- A room done in one color with one bright accent color (all white with a wallpaper border of sky and clouds, and sky blue towels).
- For an ensuite bathroom, wallpaper and towels to co-ordinate with the bed linen and curtains in the master bedroom.
- A hand painted sink.

The Basement / Laundry...

- Ventilate ... no smell of damp or must.
- Make sure the entire basement is brightly lit.
- Clean the furnace, humidifier, hot water heater and circuit breaker box.
- Change any filters.
- Cover water heater with insulated jacket.
- All light switches work.
- Pull chain lights have chains, and are easy to reach.
- Arrange basement contents so it is easy to walk around.
- Handrail on basement stairs is secure.
- Arrange for an exterminator, if necessary.
- Clean and deodorize any pet areas.
- Fix any water leakage and repair damage.
- Electrical system is up-to-date and fuse box is not overloaded.
- Clean laundry appliances.
- Appliances are in working order.
- Keep dirty clothes out of sight.
- Floor and walls around washer and dryer are clean.
- Laundry area is brightly lit.
- All pipes and connections are in working order.
- Vacuum, sweep and dust basement.
- Unfinished basement has freshly painted walls.
- Colorful area rugs in basement and in laundry area.
- Artificial greenery in laundry area.
- Laundry has a "drying rack".
- Owner's manuals conveniently placed so buyer can check them.
- An "interrupted" board game laid out on a table in a Recreation Room.
- A sofa, two comfy chairs and a coffee table arranged in front of a television. A warm afghan folded in the corner of the sofa. A bowl of popcorn and a movie video placed on the table.

The Garage...

- Have a garage sale.
- Clean the trash cans to eliminate any unpleasant smell.
- Make sure the space is brightly lit.
- Sweep the floor.
- Clean any oil and rust stains from the floor.
- Clean the windows.
- Replace any cracked or broken window glass.
- Get rid of cobwebs.
- The garage door is easy to maneuver up and down.
- Pile up cartons together in one corner.
- Recycle old magazines and newspapers.
- Hang bicycles on hooks.
- Hang tools on peg board.
- Hang rakes, shovels, brooms, hoes, etc. from hooks.
- Clean off the work bench.
- Put up shelving for paint cans, containers of nails and screws, bags of fertilizer, etc.
- Place all balls in bins so they are not bouncing around.
- Organize gardening equipment.
- All children's toys, strollers, wagons, etc. are organized together.
- Replace outside basketball hoop if net is torn.
- Window boxes filled with flowers.
- Curtains in the windows.
- A weathervane on the roof.
- Ivy growing on outside wall.
- Flowering shrubs around the exterior.
- Colorful hooks to hang implements.
- A large wall clock.
- An intercom into the house.
- A hobby project on the work bench...possibly a piece of furniture being refinished.

The Exterior...

- Clear away any litter between the street and your front door.
- Remove any oil stains from the walkway and driveway.
- Repair any cracks or broken bits on walkway and driveway.
- Clear bikes and toys from the driveway. (When showing the house, keep driveway free of cars).
- Remove weeds and grass growing in walkway.
- Trim back shrubs protruding into the walkway.
- Trim the shrubs away from house windows (for security and to make interior rooms brighter).
- Weed the flower beds and add a layer of mulch.
- Prune dead branches and pull back anything creeping across the house.
- Cut the grass.
- (Autumn) Rake the leaves.
- (Winter) Shovel snow. Salt/sand icy patches.
- Dispose of any pet debris.
- Wash down vinyl siding, if necessary.
- Clean out the eaves trough.
- Repair eaves trough and downspouts.
- Repair any parts of the roof which could be leaking.
- Repair and/or replace any missing or loose roof shingles & flashing.
- Repair any house foundation cracks.
- Clean all windows, including those in the garage.
- Repair any wood rot.
- Replace any damaged window screens.
- Repair and/or replace caulking and weather-stripping around windows and doors.
- Exterior doors lock properly. Easy to open and shut.
- Oil any squeaky hinges.
- Doorbells are working properly.
- Remove any seasonal house lights and ornaments.
- There is a working light by the front door.
- Tighten any wobbly porch or deck railings.
- Secure any loose porch or deck floor boards.
- Place gardening tools in the garage or basement.
- Neatly coil any garden hoses.
- Property is free of clutter, particularly scattered toys.
- Gates open and close easily.
- An all-season wreath on the front door.
- A shiny brass door knocker.
- An attractive door mat.
- Flowers clustered around a lamppost or mailbox.
- Hanging planters.
- Groupings of pots with flowers on porches and decks (Winter: plant small evergreen trees in pots).
- Wood chips around trees and shrubs.
- Brightly colored bird houses.
- A hammock in the trees.
- Children's pool toys neatly arranged by the pool.
- A tray with a pitcher and glass tumblers on the deck table – all ready to be filled with cold lemonade.
- A bird book lying open on a chaise lounge (with a pair of binoculars on the table next to it).

“Don’t Panic...Buyers Are Coming”

This is a helpful reminder list of things to do just prior to showing your home to prospects.

The Last Minute

- Clear away any litter from in front of your house.
- Make sure all outside bikes, toys and gardening implements are in their proper places.
- Remove any pet debris.
- Garage is empty of vehicles and garage door is shut.
- (Winter) Snow and ice removed from sidewalks.
- Trash cans are not causing the garage to smell.
- Garage floor is swept.
- All lights are on in each room (and in the basement).
- Start a fire in the fireplace (if someone is home).
- No lingering odors in the house.
- Start coffee brewing in the kitchen.
- Turn on soft music in the living room.
- There is an unobstructed path through the house.
- Open all interior doors.
- Open the curtains and roll-up any blinds.
- The house is at a comfortable temperature.
- Vacuum and dust (if there is time).
- Close TV cabinet doors in the Living Room.
- Remove any glasses and plates of food from rooms.
- Put away any clutter in hallways, or on staircases.
- Make sure there is space in entry closet to hang coats.
- Remove any dead flowers from floral arrangements.
- If china buffet has interior lights, turn them on.
- Make sure kitchen appliances are spotless.
- Take out any kitchen garbage.
- Check that the pet “eating area” is clean.
- Clear the countertops.
- Put out new dish towels and tea towels (and placemats on the kitchen table).
- Clear all dirty dishes into the dishwasher.
- Personal items are hidden from view in the bathrooms.
- Put out new bathroom towels.
- Tubs and sinks are clean.
- Shower curtains are pulled back.
- Toilet seats are down.
- Beds are made.
- Clothing is put away.
- Personal items are put away off the bedroom dressers.
- Toys are picked up in children’s bedrooms.
- Turn off any televisions.
- Turn off any radios.
- Turn off dishwasher.
- Turn off washing machine and / or dryer.
- All “Finishing Touches” are in place.
- Don’t forget the pets.
- Don’t forget the children.
- Relax. Go somewhere and have fun.