

A house that "sparkles" on the surface will sell faster than its shabby neighbor, even though both are structurally well maintained.

From experience, REALTORS® also know that a "well-polished" house appeals to more buyers and will sell faster and for a higher price. Additionally, buyers feel more comfortable purchasing a well-cared for home because if what they can see is well maintained, they assume that what they can't see has probably also been well maintained. In readying your house for sale, consider:

- how much should you spend to prepare your house for sale?
- exterior and curb appeal
- interior appeal

Before putting your house on the market, take as much time as necessary (and as little money as possible) to maximize its exterior and interior appeal.

### **How Much Should You Spend to Prepare Your House for Sale?**

In preparing your home for the market, spend as little money as possible. Buyers will be impressed by a brand new roof, but they aren't likely to give you enough extra money to pay for it. There is a big difference between making minor and inexpensive polishes and touch-ups to your house, such as putting new knobs on cabinets and a fresh coat of neutral paint in the living room, and doing extensive and costly renovations, like installing a new kitchen.

Your REALTOR® is familiar with buyers' expectations in your neighborhood and can advise you specifically on what improvements need to be made and which improvements are most effective. Don't hesitate to ask for advice.

### **Maximizing Exterior and Curb Appeal**

When preparing to put your home up for sale, your first concern is the home's exterior. If the outside, or "curb appeal" looks good, people will more than likely want to see what's on the inside.

Here are some tips to enhance your home's exterior and curb appeal to buyers:

- Keep the lawn edged, cut and watered.
- Regularly trim hedges and weed lawns and flowerbeds.
- Be sure your front door area has a "Welcome" feeling.
- Paint the front door.
- In spring and summer, add a couple of pots of showy annuals near your front entrance.
- In snowy areas, keep walks neatly cleared of snow and ice.
- Check foundation, steps, walkways, walls and patios for cracks and deterioration, and fix any problem areas.
- Remove and repaint any peeling paint on doors and windows.
- Clean and align gutters.
- Inspect and clean the chimney.
- Repair and replace loose or damaged roof shingles.
- Repair and repaint loose siding and caulking.
- Reseal old asphalt.
- Keep the garage door closed.
- Store RVs and old cars elsewhere while the house is on the market.

### Maximizing Interior Appeal

You want your home to look as spacious, bright and clean as possible. Also the home should look neutral – without a lot of your personal and sentimental objects - so buyers can begin to imagine living there.

Here are some tips to enhance your home's interior appeal to buyers:

- Give every room in the house a thorough cleaning and remove all clutter. This alone will make your house appear bigger and brighter. Some homeowners with crowded rooms actually rent storage garages and move half their furniture out, creating a sleeker, more spacious look.
- Use a professional cleaning service every few weeks while the house is on the market.
- Remove the less frequently used, and even daily-used items from kitchen counters, closets, basement and attic to make these areas more inviting.
- Make sure that table tops, dressers and closets are free of clutter.
- Pay special attention to the kitchen and bathrooms: they should look as modern, bright and fresh as possible. It is essential for them to be clean and odor free.
- Repair dripping faucets and showerheads.
- Buy showy new towels for the bathroom, and put them out only for showings.

- Spruce up a kitchen in need of more major remodeling by installing new curtains and cabinet knobs, or applying a fresh coat of neutral paint.
- Clean walls and doors of smudges and scuff marks.
- If necessary, repaint dingy, soiled or strongly-colored walls with a neutral shade of paint, such as off-white or beige. The same neutral scheme can be applied to carpets and linoleum.
  
- Check for cracks, leaks and signs of dampness in the attic and basement, and fix any problem areas.
  - Seal basement walls if there are any signs of dampness or leakage.
  - Repair cracks, holes or damage to plaster, wallboard, wallpaper, paint and tiles.
  - Replace broken or cracked windowpanes, moldings and other woodwork.
  - Inspect and repair the plumbing, heating, cooling and alarm systems.