

Selling Your Home in a Tough Market

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Your home has only one chance to make a first impression on potential buyers. In all my years in real estate, the homes that sell the fastest are those that "feel" good.

Know how you walk into a house and you can feel that it's well taken care of? It's lived in, but feels loved and clean. There may be an open newspaper on the kitchen table, but it's placed next to a vase with fresh flowers from the garden outside. There are home-baked cookies cooling on a rack, the bathrooms are clean and sparkly, down to the grout in the shower stall, even though there may be a bathrobe hung on a hook on the back of the door.

The kids' rooms have toys piled up on their shelves and maybe a pair of little shoes just outside the closet door, the scene just says, "happy childhood."

There are lots of pretty pillows piled against the master bedroom headboard and a faint scent of lavender from the sheets, and the sun streams gloriously in through the sparkling clean windows.

When everything about your home says, "This is a happy home. We love it and we take care of it, you can see and feel how much we care about this home, then the prospective buyer feels at ease, "at home."

Maintaining a home that's on the market isn't complicated, but you need a plan. First, de-clutter. You want the home to show, not your stuff. Thoroughly scrub your kitchen and baths, making them sparkle. Get rid of all extra knick-knacks, old newspapers and magazines. If you can, have your windows professionally cleaned, or if you can do it yourself, with no streaks, by all means be our guest.

Not only should your interior spaces be clean and fresh, get your garage clean and organized and make sure the light works.

And finally, let's talk curb appeal. I'm sure you've had at least one experience when you've driven up to a house and thought to yourself, "What are these people thinking?" The trash is piled up in the can at the street, the front porch light is still on from last night, the flowers in the pots needed water last week, and now they're as dead as that chewed up stuffed animal over there in the overgrown bushes.

We know times are tough. None of us ever has enough time to get everything done. But now, we don't have enough time AND money is tight. If you're like a lot of folks, most of your money is tied up in your house, so if you want to sell it to access the cash, to upgrade, or to move away for that new job, remember the competition in the selling market is fierce.

Just remember the best way to sell your house is to clean up your act and start acting like you own the place, because you do . . . And now you want someone else to.