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Attract Buyers With A Home That Has Eye Appeal

The housing market has become much more competitive. Many communities are beginning to see homes remain longer on the market and the bargaining pendulum swing in favor of the buyer. This is called a buyer's market, as the number of available homes outnumbers the buyers. As a seller, your challenge is to turn a buyer's market to your advantage.

The right price is vital, because overpricing your home can cause you to eliminate potential buyers and lengthen the time that your home stays on the market. But equally important is making sure that you give your home a competitive edge by giving it creative eye appeal.

Many homeowners make the mistake believing they are selling "their home," but once on the market your home is actually a product. You need to create an environment the buyer can't resist. In other words, do everything you can to make the home so attractive, charming, cozy, inviting, comfortable and exciting that a buyer will want to buy that lifestyle for himself.

This can be accomplished by making just a few improvements in your home's presentation. Here are some guidelines to make your property distinctive and memorable.

1. Eliminate clutter. Have you ever noticed how model homes are perfect with no mess, clutter, or mass of personal belongings heaped about? There should only be a few exquisite and well-placed accessories on tables, desks, chests, etc. Also, clear kitchen and bathroom counters and furniture of everything except decorative accessories. Put the personal things--cosmetics, toiletries, clothes, bills, papers, and homework—out of sight. Tuck wastebaskets under counters or inside cabinets. Clutter and personal belongings detract from the important features of the home.

2. Create a color theme. If you embark on any investment decorating, like painting, wallpaper, draperies or new furniture purchases, create a color theme that's consistent. Wall-to-wall carpeting should be the same throughout the house. Neutral colors are best to please all tastes.

3. Rearrange the furniture. Just the slightest readjustments can make a big difference. Pull the furniture from against the walls to create a more intimate setting. Move furniture from one room to another. That extra armchair in the living room may create a cozy sitting area in the guest bedroom.

4. Create custom spaces. Luxury master bathrooms, decorator kitchens, built-in cabinets, computer workstations, exercise rooms, and children's play areas are the kinds of features that

generate sales appeal. Even if you don't have these specific custom spaces, you can fashion them or suggest the potential for creating them. Accessories, mirrors, plants and fluffy new towels can generate a feeling of luxury even in a plain-Jane bathroom. Turn an extra bedroom into an exercise room if you've got the equipment, or a loft space into a child's play area or hobby center.

5. Keep it clean and pristine. Dust, vacuum, mop and polish on a regular basis. You're not selling the furniture, but a high shine on wood furniture and floors can make a room sing. Touch up nicks on walls and make sure the porcelain sinks and tubs and metallic fixtures shine. Windows should sparkle. Keep yards and landscaping neat and attractive. Add color spots of flowers to perk up entryways and yards.

6. Consult with a professional. There are decorator professionals trained to "stage" a home for sale. They are able to offer an objective view of what buyers are looking for in your competitive market. Depending upon location, neighborhood, demographics and price range, the special touches that turn on buyers may range from splashy master bathrooms and gourmet kitchens to children's play areas or home offices.

You don't have to spend a great deal of money to give your property the competitive edge. Just try to imagine the kind of lifestyle your target buyer would enjoy, and use a few decorative touch-ups to create it.

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