

The Strategic Home Seller's *Prep Guide*

**Your Guide To Preparing Your
Home For The Market**



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REALTY

Start The Journey Of

Selling Your Home

People make snap decisions in new situations. This is especially true during the showing of a home. In preparing your home for the market, we need to turn this trait of human nature to our advantage.

During a showing, buyers will make judgments about your home as they view it through the "lens" formed in those first 15 seconds. Remember, people judge what they cannot see, by what they can see. So much of what a home has to offer are things that you cannot see. We need to ensure that what can be seen is presented perfectly.

When you place your home for sale, whether you like it or not, it becomes a product in the eyes of home buyers. Just like any product on the shelf at your local store, it has features and benefits, pluses and minuses, and there are other products to compare to yours. To gain an edge in the marketplace, your product must be priced right and look better than the competition.

Your home needs to make an instantly favorable impression on the potential buyers. Think about it this way: when you sell your home, you are going to have to move. When you move, you are going to have to pack. Most of the principles of staging just mean that you are going to pack up some of your things early. It is a little bit of work, but you are going to have to do it anyway. Let's do it now so we can get top dollar for your property.

Sometimes it is difficult to think of your home as a mere product because of the emotional connection and memories attached to it. Remain objective so you can make smart decisions and get top dollar for your property- that is the purpose of this booklet.

And remember, we are here to help in any way possible.

BEST,

Justin Hamker

Factors That Will Affect The

Sale Of Your Home

Four factors that affect the sale of any property –

1. Price

When it comes to pricing your home, setting it at or slightly below market value will increase the visibility of your listing and drive more buyers your way. This strategy actually increases the number of buyers who will see your home in their search process. Instead of trying to win the negotiation with one buyer, you should price your house so demand is maximized.

2. Terms

This refers to market conditions: interest rates, employment levels, and confidence. We do not control any of these but they do impact us as we market your home. The type of market dictates what types of terms we can expect to see in offers for your home. We will walk you through the pros and cons of each so you can make the right decision for your personal situation.

3. Marketing

My team will work diligently on the marketing for your property. I truly believe that all homes deserve Million Dollar Marketing, regardless of price-point. We employ high quality cutting-edge digital and conventional marketing campaigns that no other agent in the Triangle is using. Rest assured, your home will receive the most exposure with our marketing plan.

4. Condition

This can be as important as price. If the condition is not model-home perfect, price will have to be adjusted. If you have ever been in a model or show home, you know how great they look. When homes have that kind of appeal, they sell quickly and usually at the top of the market for similar homes. This is what we focus on with this guide.



Here's To Making A Great *First Impression*

In 15 Seconds...

YOUR HOME WILL MAKE THE ONLY FIRST IMPRESSION

Implement the suggestions in this booklet as soon as possible because, just like you cannot redo your first kiss, you cannot redo the first impression of your property! You only get one chance!

After the initial surge of interest, the only people to look at your home will be buyers new to the marketplace or people looking to submit low-ball offers. The initial impression we make with your property is critical.

Use the Checklist

The blanks in the checklist are for marking items complete. It may sound strange, but there is a sense of satisfaction that comes with marking things off of a list... and there are *plenty* of items on this list!

Fix What Needs To Be Fixed

If you have a "honey-do" list or know of items that need to be addressed, take care of it before your home goes on the market. Do not let the buyer wonder if you have cared for your home. Fix anything that needs addressed upfront and avoid headaches later.

Get A Pre-Listing Home Inspection (Optional)

Oftentimes, getting a home inspection prior to listing your home for sale will uncover issues with your home that you didn't even know about. Repairing these issues before listing your home is often cheaper than waiting until the buyer of your home completes their inspection and you have to repair the items last minute.

I Will Help You!

My years of experience in marketing and selling homes will allow me to guide you in making low cost, high value enhancements to the positioning of your property.

Let's Get Started!

Set The Stage With Immaculate *Curb Appeal*

CURB APPEAL

Any agent will tell you that one of the worst things that happens to them in the course of showing property to qualified buyers is to drive up to a home and have them say:

"I don't even want to look at this house"

- before you have even put the car in park. It happens, and this impression is nearly impossible to overcome.



Continued...

Curb Appeal

GENERAL EXTERIOR

Start by standing in front of your home with this checklist and pen. Jot down anything that leaps out at you. Then walk around the entire property and take notes.

FRONT YARD

- Shrubs and landscaping should enhance, not hide, the home. Shrubs should be trimmed to, at most, the height of the home.
- As a rule of thumb, all tree limbs should be far enough from the ground so you can walk under them.
- Flowers add color and beauty to the home. Flowerbeds should be clean and look good in all seasons.
- Keep the lawn mowed and neatly edged. A perfectly manicured lawn does wonders for presence. You may have to mow twice per week during the growing season.
- Aerate and seed any bare or thin spots in your lawn. Consider using sod if necessary.
- Arrange for a lawn fertilization company to set up an accelerated program to keep your lawn a deep green color and weed-free.
- Mulch will do wonders to boost the presence and stature of your home at any time of year. Always make sure that all beds are freshly mulched. During the winter, at the very least, the front yard and approach beds should be mulched.
- Check your flower beds, lawn areas, and driveway for weeds. It is better to pull them than to use chemicals. Chemicals take a long time to work and the dead and dying weeds look awful as they go from yellow to brown. Only use herbicides to maintain these areas once general weeding has been completed.
- In the fall, be sure to rake leaves from your lawn and from planting beds. This may need to be done every couple of days.
- Inspect your property and remove all trash cans, discarded wood scraps, and trash. Re-stack firewood piles if necessary and remove all storage containers, children's toys and other unnecessary objects.
- Make sure that the windows are spotless. This includes frames around the windows, sills and shutters.
- Consider painting or cleaning any ornamental fences, light posts, and railings.

Continued...

Curb Appeal

- Vacuum and clean the glass on all of the exterior light fixtures.
- If you have a covered entryway, add a bench or attractive set of chairs to help people imagine themselves relaxing here. If these items already exist, make sure they are clean, inviting and someplace a person could actually sit. A bright patterned set of outdoor cushions can make the area feel extra welcoming.

OTHER YARD AREAS

- Mow, open up and clear any pathways to water or other amenities on your property. This includes trimming low hanging branches. It is important to remove these items as they should not obstruct the path.
- Clean up, rake and check any shoreline or beach areas.
- Keep the driveway swept. If not paved, rake and add more gravel if needed.
- Clean the gutters and wash or paint the trim if needed.
- Consider pressure washing the exterior.

FRONT DOOR

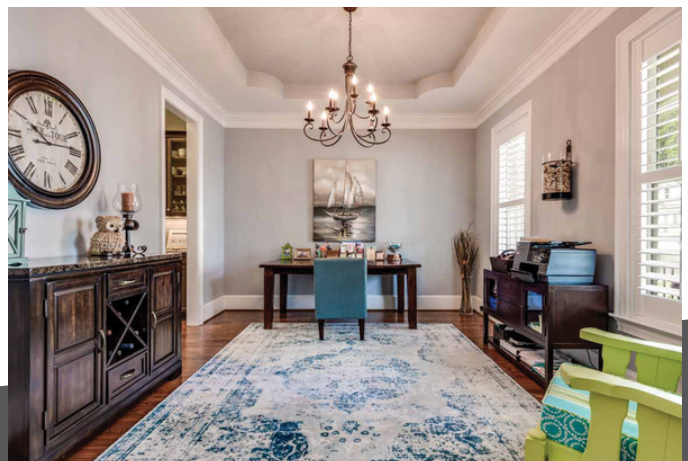
- Consider a fresh coat of paint or varnish on the front door. At the very least, clean the door and hardware.
- Nothing says lack of maintenance like rotted door jambs. If the bottom corners of your exterior door frames have begun rotting, consider replacing them.
- Make sure that your doorbell functions properly and is not cracked or broken.
- Keep your porch swept.
- Have an attractive welcome mat for people to wipe their feet. A second mat inside is important during bad weather.
- Make sure that the mailbox is clean; consider the cost of rust proof paint.
- Verify that the house numbers are large and visible. We want to make sure buyers and agents are able to find your home!

Wow Them With The Heart Of The Home

INSIDE APPEAL

You see your home through your heart. To get the highest price, you have to appeal to potential buyers who will see your home through cold, calculating eyes. If buyers have the choice between two comparable properties that are similar in price, they will choose the one in the best condition.

The following checklist will help you give the inside of your home the greatest presence.



Continued...

Inside Appeal

GENERAL

- Get the home aired out. Someone who lives in a place is the last person to notice any peculiar odor that may be obvious to visitors. However, if you do notice any bad odor, search for and eliminate its source.
- Wash all the windows inside and out. Clean the window sills and the bottoms of the window jambs. Wash the blinds and vacuum the drapes.
- If your carpets look dirty or have not been cleaned in over a year, get them professionally steam-cleaned. Buyers only know what they see... not the way it is going to be. Unless your home is a "fixer", badly worn or very out of date carpets should be replaced before coming on the market. Offering a buyer a credit to pick their own new carpet or discount off the price is far less effective and usually ends up costing more money and slowing down the selling process.
- Clean or polish all floors.
- Clean all the closets, cabinets, and drawers. Get rid of things you have not used in the past 5 years and pack everything that you have not used the past year (this will also give you a head start on moving).
- Make sure the closets look like they have enough room to hold additional items. Ensure doors do not stick and nothing will fall out when opened. Get everything off the floor (unless very neatly arranged) and do not have the shelves piled to the ceiling. If necessary, box up off-season clothes (this is another head start on moving). All coats should be facing in the same direction.
- There should not be too much furniture in each room. You will be far better off selecting the pieces that look best and putting the others in the garage or in storage.
- Make sure fireplace mantels are not overloaded with items on display. A couple of well-placed items like a vase or small flower arrangement is all that is needed.
- Make the fireplace a focal point, the star of the room. Arrange seating to face the fireplace. Remove the television if large and in a formal living room.
- Clear the ashes out of any fireplace if it is not actively being used.
- Clear out family photos and all other items that say "You do not live here" to a potential buyer. Fill any holes and touch up the paint.
- Put the maximum safe wattage of light bulbs in all fixtures to create the brightest space possible.

Continued...

Inside Appeal

- Clean all wall switches and replace broken switch plates.
- Make sure that any pull-down staircase is strong enough to be used safely.
- Consider whether the posters currently in your children's rooms are likely to offend any buyers. If so, store those posters for now.
- Remove all ashtrays. If there is a smoker in the residence, all smoking must be outside (not in the garage) while property is on the market.
- Invest in some new and luxurious bedding (comforter, sheets, and accent pillows). You can take them when you move, and they will improve the look of the bedrooms while your current house is on the market.
- If your house is the least bit dated, consider changing items that will increase your home's desirability such as dated wallpaper, light fixtures, etc.

KITCHEN

The kitchen may be the most important room in the home. Clean this room like your sale depends on it- because it does!

- Clean the oven and keep it clean; even if this means eating out (or getting deliveries) more often.
- After cleaning the range, put new drip pans under the burners if yours are beyond salvageable.
- Clean around the seal of the dishwasher door.
- Look at the kitchen as if you were a health inspector. Paying particular attention to:
 - a. Garbage area
 - b. Cracks
 - c. Corners
- Make certain you get rid of all junk and disorganized items that have accumulated in the kitchen drawers and cabinets.
- Keep everything put away that can be put away, especially on counters.
- Make sure all cabinet door handles are tight.
- Check the cabinet doors and door handles for fingerprints.

Continued...

Interior

LAUNDRY ROOM

- Put soaps and supplies in cabinets or in storage containers.
- Keep the counters and sink clean and empty.
- This is the one room to take special care with lighting. Many laundry rooms are way too dark. Upgrade wattage in light fixtures if safe to do so.
- Make sure that any pull-down staircases, such as to an attic, are working. Be sure that there is a working light in the attic, if equipped.

BATHROOMS

- Repair all leaky faucets.
- Caulk bathtubs, showers, and sinks.
- Coordinate towels in one or two colors. Fold clean towels in thirds and hang onto racks each day. Purchase new towels if necessary.
- Clear all items out of shower stalls and tubs except for necessities.
- Clean or replace shower curtains and deep-clean shower doors.
- Fresh flower arrangements do wonders for a bathroom, both in appearance and aroma. No plug-in air fresheners or scented candles.
- If you have pets, be sure to clean around their food areas and empty litter boxes frequently.

GARAGE

- Clean and sweep the garage. Remove any dust and cobwebs from the walls, ceiling, and around the water heater.
- Store away dangerous tools and chemicals, and arrange others neatly. Use containers and tool boxes as necessary.
- Ensure garage doors open and close smoothly, and verify safety sensors are operational.
- Check the garage windows and screens. Windows should be clean and screens free of rips and tears.
- Remove all "junk" from the attic, basement, closets, garage, and tool shed. Large storage areas appeal to buyers.

Generating Interest Relies On *Photography*

PHOTOGRAPHY

To produce the best possible listing brochure and internet tour, we recommend completing the following before we arrive to photograph your home. The interior and exterior of your home will be photographed from multiple angles. Every room will be photographed, including bathrooms, laundry room and garage.

- Front and rear yards should be clear of lawn equipment, toys and debris.
- Schedule a mowing and lawn edging for the one to two days before if possible.
- Garage doors should be closed.
- Cars should be in the garage or parked on the street away from the front of the house if possible.
- Clear lawn and gardens of leaves and fallen branches.
- Close the lid on the grill and open any deck or patio umbrellas, no matter the time of year. Built-in grills need to be spotless.
- Tidy piled up hoses, lawn decorations, etc.
- If you have a pet, please pick up any mess in the yard and remove the pet from the home for your photography appointment.
- Turn on all lights and replace any blown bulbs to make the home as bright as possible.
- Open all the window covers and shades completely.
- All dirty dishes should be washed, or at least loaded into the dishwasher.
- Clear all unnecessary articles from countertops, coffee tables, dressers and bathrooms.
- Remove items that would impact the buyers' ability to focus on the home such as family photos, collectibles, piles of magazines/books, coats, boots, etc...
- Beds should be made and all unnecessary articles should be removed from floors and doorways.
- If you have any photos, reading materials, videos or other items that would not be appropriate for all age groups to see, please put them away.
- Put pet food dishes and litter boxes out of view of the camera.

Last Minute Tidy Up

Your property looks great and you have scheduled showing appointments. Here's how to get ready quickly.

- Open all drapes and window shades.
- Open all doors between rooms to give an inviting feeling.
- Turn on all lights including lamps.
- Turn off the TV.
- Look around for clutter, including newspapers and magazines and clear them away.
- See that the kitchen counters are free of unnecessary items and that any dirty dishes are put away.
- Remember to take out the trash. If you have pets, get them out of the way and take care of their food and/or litter area.
- Make sure beds are made and clothes are picked up.
- Verify that the bathroom is straightened up: toilet lids down, counter tops cleared off, towels hung neatly, etc.
- Remove any prescription medications from medicine cabinets and store in a safe place.
- Move any jewelry or other valuable objects to a safe place.
- If it is fireplace season and you have a gas log, consider lighting the fire as buyers arrive.
- If it is hot out, consider bumping down the air conditioning a degree or two.
- NO air fresheners or scented candles. They can aggravate allergies and create an image of covering up or masking issues.
- Keep your home well lit. Buyers will drive by at odd hours and you want your home to stand out. Keep ample lights on-both inside and out-until at least 9:00pm every day.

Have A

Showing Plan

Whenever you leave the house please leave it as if you are sure it is going to be shown. Many buyers will make last minute plans to tour homes. Yes, it is difficult sometimes and it might even mean you have to get up a little earlier in order to take care of these important items, but you never know when the right people are going to look at your home. This way, you will always be ready for them!

Please try to accommodate all showings. Buyers tend to look at multiple properties during each outing and may find another before you are able to reschedule.

If your electric bill does not go up while your house is on the market- you are doing something wrong! While on the market, your house will have the lights left on in case of a showing and a comfortable temperature should always be maintained.

Keep pets out of the way during showings-preferably out of the house. Many people are uncomfortable around animals and may even be allergic to them.

During a showing, leave the premises. Take a short break while your home is being shown. Buyers are uncomfortable when sellers are present and tend to hurry through the house. Let the buyers be at ease, and let the agents do their jobs.

Agents should leave the home exactly as it was when they arrived. They do not know if you have another showing after they leave. So, if you would like certain lights turned off or blinds closed, please leave a note at your home.

If you need the name of a painter, house cleaner, handyman, roofer, electrician, etc... just give us a call. I would be glad to refer you to vendors we have worked with and from whom we have received excellent service.

SELLING A HOME IS A MAJOR UNDERTAKING.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HELPING YOU OPEN THE DOOR TO YOUR NEW HOME!

AS YOUR REAL ESTATE AGENT, YOUR BEST INTEREST IS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO. YOU CAN TRUST
IN US TO REPRESENT YOU AND GUIDE YOU THROUGH THIS PROCESS SO YOU CAN HAVE THE BEST
POSSIBLE EXPERIENCE.



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Ask us about the
Market!

