

## Getting your home ready for sale

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Everyone wants his or her house to sell quickly and at the best price. One of the keys to success is the prospective buyer's initial impression. For those that are considering selling their house, preparation can make the difference a long wait and a quick sale.

A lot of studies have been done on buyer's perceptions and you as the seller need to step back and see your home through the buyers eyes. A buyer's perception of your home starts the moment they pull up to the curb. Take a look at your landscaping, although its not as inviting now as it will be in the spring, make sure the trees are trimmed, the leaves are raked and the Christmas lights are taken down. Look at the condition of the paint. If it needs paint, it may not make sense to get the whole house painted but painting the trim will give it a fresh look. Take a look at the front door entrance, is it inviting? Sometime a few decorations will warm it up.

Starting from the entrance, walk through your home and imagine it as a buyer would. If the house has had a lot of traffic, the walls are either going to need touch up paint or a total paint job. If you have bold-colored walls, you may want to consider painting them a neutral color. Get your carpets professionally cleaned. This is especially important if the house will be vacant. After all, with nothing in the house, all would-be buyers have to look at are the floors and walls.

Removing clutter from your home is your next objective. This is a good time to time to have a yard sale. Old exercise equipment, books, excess furniture etc. all have to go. This is also a good time to de-personalize your home. Your realtor can help with all of this. Part of the psychology is to get the buyers to imagine themselves living in your home. If you have your hallways lined with pictures buyers will spend more looking at you and less thinking about themselves buying the house. The same goes for your personal items.

For today's homebuyer, the kitchen is typically the most important room in the house -- an area where form and function are equally important. Buyers view kitchens as an area that has many functions -- preparing dinner, sharing meals, sorting mail, paying bills, and generally hanging out. In many cases, the kitchen will be the first room buyers will go to and you'll want to do all you can to make your kitchen look its best. Some of the problems I see with kitchens are that they dark, dirty and worn. You will want your kitchen to be clean and sparkle,

especially around the stove and sink. This is a good time to think about a quick makeover. Paint, new drawer pulls and a new faucet could give the kitchen a new look. If the kitchen is dark you will want to open it up. Take a look at the light fixtures and add stronger bulbs or under counter lighting. The kitchen is an area that collects clutter and you will want to remove everything but a few decorations from the counters. When showing the house be sure to leave the kitchen lights on and the blinds open.

Bathrooms are also high on the priority list. This is another area to clean and make sparkle. Starting at the tub, is there any mold or mildew in the grout or caulk? If so, it needs to be removed and re-caulked. If you have a shower curtain, consider buying a new one, as they are difficult to clean and can be purchased for a modest amount. If you have shower doors, make sure they are clean. Matching towels along with a few decorations are a nice touch.

Odors can make a distinct impression on a buyer. Studies have shown that if the home smells pleasant, it has a positive impression on the buyers. A pleasant smell is somewhat subjective but an easy way to achieve this is to find room deodorizers that you like and spread them unobtrusively around the house. Don't go overboard or the perception could be that you're trying to cover up something. If smokers have lived in the house, that will be an automatic turnoff to most buyers, however a one-day treatment with an ozone generator will eliminate the problem in most cases. This treatment also works for most pet odors except, urine in the carpeting.

In the winter your landscaping will not look it best, however you can still show buyers what it will look like in spring or summer. Create a picture book that shows the house and landscaping in the different seasons.

If your home is 5 years or old consider having a pre-sale or listing inspection. This inspection is similar to what a homebuyer would do. A pre-sale inspection gives you the advantage of fixing any issues that may be an obstacle later in the negotiation and the report becomes a marketing tool that attests to the condition of your home. Also, consider having a radon test. In Boulder County, we have a greater than normal level of radon and most real estate transactions will include a radon test. If the reading are above the EPA guidelines doing the test in advance gives you the opportunity get competitive estimates and fix the problem before it becomes a negotiation obstacle. Place the inspection report and radon results along with your picture book on the kitchen counter. Most interested buyers will go through them and have a greater level of confidence about the condition of your home.

Good preparation can make the difference in how buyers will perceive your home. Just remember, one room in your home can often make or break an offer, you'll want plenty of light, a sense of order, and a room that is odor-free. Limit the number of inspection issues by having a pre-sale inspection and a radon test.

Remember, perceptions are reality in the buyers mind and good preparation can ensure that buyer have the best possible impression of your home.

Rick Bunzel is the Principle Inspector at Mountain View Property Inspections. If you would like to know more about your home go to **[WWW.MVPinspection.com](http://WWW.MVPinspection.com)** If you have questions or comments, Rick Bunzel can be contacted at Mountain View Property Inspections @ 303-443-9063 or MVPInspection@comcast.net