

## STAGING YOUR HOME

Staging your home? Over the years, I've had sellers ask me if they should paint the kid's bedrooms a neutral color, replace a vinyl floor that's worn or outdated, or is it necessary to clean up all the toys in the FROG that's used as a playroom? My answer was always, "don't worry about it. The buyers need to have a little vision. You can't anticipate what a buyer will want. If you do anything, it'll be just the opposite of what they would do." I would also tell a seller the basic tips, "turn on all the lights, open blinds, be sure the beds were made and do not leave dirty dishes in the sink. And don't forget to bake some cookies to make the home smell good."

That was then and this is now. Over time, I've sure changed my tune. Staging a home in today's market is a key element in the selling process. Staging is the practice of positioning the home in the best possible light to make it sell faster and at a higher price. It has become somewhat of an industry now. There are certified stagers, staging assessments, and a great deal of literature has been written on the subject.

When a buyer is in your home, you want their first impression to be positive so they can be emotionally attached to the home and they can imagine themselves there with their furniture. If you have all your personal photos all over the house (your kids artwork on the refrigerator and the family photos over the fireplace), it's hard for them to see their family there; it's distracting. Part of the home-staging process is you take all the photos down, you limit what's on your walls so that they can see how big the walls are and you may need to take out the extra pieces of furniture so that they can get a sense of how large the room really is. Because that's what you're selling – you're selling space. People will pay more for more space, even if it's not literally extra square feet – there's the sense that it feels bigger.

The staging strategy is certainly not limited to the inside of the home; the outside is just as important. If the curb appeal is not there, a potential buyer might just keep on driving. The lawn and landscaping must be well maintained as well as the front door, garage door and cleaning the roof and gutters.

Professional stagers are also available as consultants; they will rearrange furniture, provide accessories, and even rent furnishings all to assist buyers in creating a vision. When a home is decorated, it is personalized for its owners. Staging is depersonalizing a home so it will appeal to the home buying public. Statistics confirm that homes that have been staged sell faster and at a higher price.

Back in the good old days, if a buyer was interested in living in a particular neighborhood, he might have two or three homes to choose from. In some cases, he now can choose from two or three in one block of the neighborhood. Competition is the key today; with fewer buyers and more inventory, a seller must make his home stand out in a crowd. If you're selling a home today, home staging is certainly advisable.

Real Estate Talk is written by Dan Douglas, owner and broker-in-charge of Douglas & Company Real Estate, LLC. For questions or comments, please contact him at (803) 945-0301 or email at [dan@douglasandcompanyllc.com](mailto:dan@douglasandcompanyllc.com).