



You only have **ONE CHANCE** to make a first great impression!



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## Getting Started . . .

Go outside, across the driveway or street, and take an objective look at your home. As if you were seeing it for the first time. Try to understand how a buyer may view your home through their own eyes & be as critical as they will be! I would suggest starting with the following:

- List anything and everything you can see that is not satisfactory, regardless of cost or time.
- Include all cleaning, uncluttering and repairing to be done.
- Review the list and see what you can do yourself and what you might need to hire someone else to do. Buyers begin to wonder about unseen problems when they see areas of concern.
- Establish a timeline to help you determine what needs to be completed to improve the overall presentation of the home. In general, it's best to un-clutter, pre-pack, depersonalize, and deep clean your home before putting your house on the market. Don't depend on your buyer's imagination to see your property's potential.

**REMEMBER:** Most buyers today are looking to purchase a home that does not require a ton of work. In fact, they are often willing to pay more for a house that has been taken care of, so do your best to showcase your home as close to a turn-key property as possible. Be prepared to spend some money to do this. Or, market the house as “needs TLC”, and forfeit some market value. You'll need to decide what is best for you.

# Exterior

Your exterior says a lot about how your home is maintained both inside and out. It creates a lasting impression when buyers drive by your home, or view photos online. Show them that your property is well cared for! When buyers see an attractive exterior, they will be excited to view the interior as well.

Most buyers form an opinion before they ever step through the door. Right or wrong, most buyers do “judge a book by its cover”.

**The Front Entry:** It’s the first area the buyers will see as they stand and wait for the Realtor to open the front door. Making an extra effort to spruce this up is time well spent! Here are some simple ideas:

- Put a fresh coat of paint on the front door and door trim.
- Check the upper and lower corners for cobwebs, dirt and debris.
- Add an attractive new door mat that buyers can use to wipe their shoes.
- A colorful pot of flowers is an easy way to add color and pizzazz!
- Check to see if the lock, door knob, and doorbell are working properly.

**Access:** The approach to the front door should be hazard free.

- Repair any loose stones or bricks in the walk ways and clear away any debris.
- In the winter, ALWAYS keep driveways clear of snow and ice.
- Trim branches and plants back to create an open path.

## Roof and Chimney:

- Check for loose or cracked shingles.
- Check the flashing condition.
- Check for loose bricks on the chimney.

## Siding

- Repair loose shingles or siding.
- Siding should be dirt and mildew free. Consider power washing vinyl siding.
- If necessary, scrape the peeling paint and have the house painted.
- Shutters should be in place, good repair and add a fresh accent to the house.

**Gutters and Downspouts:**

- Both should be securely attached.
- Clear gutters of debris.
- See that downspouts direct water away from the foundation and are flowing freely.

**Windows:**

- Clean windows will make your house sparkle inside and out!

**Patios and Decks:** Both should be free of clutter. If you are not taking furniture with you, dispose of it now.

**Fences:**

- Repaint, repair and remove as needed.

**Miscellaneous:**

- Keep garbage cans and recycling bins out of sight.
- Coil and store hoses out of the way.
- Replace tired or rusty mailbox.
- Clean all exterior light fixtures and replace bulbs with the brightest allowable bulbs.
- If you are going to be out of town, arrange for yard upkeep.

**Landscaping and Lawns:**

- Have your lawn cut on a regular basis.
- Trim back shrubs and create air space between the house and shrubs.
- Trim tree branches and shrubs away from the windows to allow natural light in to the house.
- A fresh layer of mulch will certainly spruce up a tired yard and it smells wonderful.

# Storage

Storage is one of the top items on a buyer's list; therefore, it is necessary to show that your home has the space desired.

- Remove unnecessary clutter.
- Pre Pack...you are moving!
- Put away anything typically left out. It will be assumed there is no room for it.
- Garage, Attic or Basement: Use the 1 year Rule, if you haven't use it in the past year, it's time to get rid of it.
- Anything you don't plan on taking with you to the new home, discard.
- Consider renting a storage unit to store out of season items. Remember, the idea is to create more space in your existing house.

## **Things to think about:**

- Does each room in the house feel spacious?
- Do closets feel spacious? Pre-pack ½ of what's currently there?
- Do kitchen cabinets feel spacious? Pre-pack unused appliances, pots and pans.
- Is your home clean from top to bottom?
- Pre-pack all items that you do not need while selling your house – anything off-season.
- Decide where you can store your boxes and extra items.
- How does your garage look?
- If your basement is unfinished and used for storage, how does it look?

# Main Selling Rooms

Buyers want to fulfill a wish list, not a to-do list! When they see a bunch of fix-up projects, they'll turn away faster than you can say "water damage". Often times it's not one big thing, but a cumulative list that turns buyers away. If there are problems and a significant to-do list, your house will drop to the bottom of the list, or, attract an offer for much less money than your market value. Present buyers with a complete package that is move-in ready. A home they can be comfortable and happy in!

## Things to think about:

### Front Entrance

- Does your entrance feel inviting?
- Does your entrance feel spacious?
- How do the rooms look from where you are standing?

### Kitchen

- How does the kitchen look and feel when you walk into it?
- Determine what needs to be done if your kitchen requires some updating.
- How do your cupboards look?

### Living Room

- Does this room feel inviting?
- How is your furniture positioned?
- Are there any repairs or upgrades needed in this room?

### Main floor family room

- What is the focal point of this room? Is it apparent?
- Are there any upgrades or repairs needed?
- How is the furniture positioned?

### Front Entrance

- Does this room Show it's function?
- Are there any upgrades or repairs needed?
- How is the furniture positioned?

### Master bedroom

- Do you feel calm walking into this room?
- How is your furniture positioned? Are there any updates or repairs needed?



# Flooring

Flooring is very important in preparing your home for sale. Buyers want a home that is move-in ready, and the flooring will reveal how well the home has been maintained.

Up-to-date flooring is one of the most attractive features for buyers.

## Things to think about:

- Most buyers prefer hardwood floors.
- What condition is your carpet in?
- Do you have hardwood under your carpet?
- What color is the carpet?
- What style is the carpet - Cut pile or Berber?
- Take into consideration the rooms you are carpeting, as this will help determine what style to select.
- If you need to replace carpet, do you need to re-do every room? If not, select something that will work with the rest of the carpet in the house.
- What style of vinyl floor do you have?
- Does it need to be replaced?
- Do you have hardwood & does it need to be refinished?

# Paint

Buyers want to purchase a home that is move-in ready, and this includes the interior paint color. If the house is painted a very bright or unusual color, potential buyers may be turned off or feel they can negotiate the asking price.

Neutral colors are restful to the eye. Most buyers would like to live in the home a while before deciding if they want to change the paint color.

## Things to think about:

- When was the last time you painted the house?
- Is it painted a neutral color?
- If they are already neutral, do they need a fresh coat of paint?
- Determine whether or not your house has a warm tone or cool tone before selecting your paint color. Ask Susan Mogren which colors are most popular with buyers.
- Do you have wallpaper?
- Remove all wall paper from walls and paint them a neutral color.
- Do your doors and trim need a fresh coat of paint?
- Repair any holes or cracks in the walls and ceilings.
- Put a fresh coat of paint on the ceiling to give the entire room a clean look.



## Pre-Packing/Clutter/Editing/Deep Cleaning

Your home needs to be neat, very clean, and orderly, when preparing for the sale. Organizing and pre-packing items that are not regularly used, will create a spacious feeling. People buy spaciousness and lifestyle. This is all about preparing a showroom condition house, not comfortable living.

Think about what you do when you sell your car. You change the oil, put on new wipers, pull out maintenance records, repair the window that sticks, make sure it is current with inspection, see whose name is on the title, and then deep clean interior, and exterior. Same!

To maximize your selling price, and reduce your marketing time: Prepack, clutter and edit before deep cleaning. People tell me they fall in love with their house again, after they do this!

- Wash floors.
- Clean carpets.
- Clean Light fixtures.
- Wash and vacuum walls.
- Vacuum corners, baseboards, and ceilings for cobwebs.
- Clean blinds and draperies.
- Clean doorknobs, switch plates, heat registers, stair risers.
- Consider a cleaning service - they can do it all!

# Depersonalizing

“Depersonalizing” is an important step in selling your home. Since you’ve made the decision to move, you need to commit yourself and remove your identity from the house. You need to let go emotionally, and this can be a tough process. Focus on turning your home into a “model home”.

By disconnecting yourself from your house, you enable the prospective buyers to emotionally connect. They will then be able to envision themselves living there, and not feel as if they are guests in your home.

## Things to think about:

- Remove all personal or family photos.
- Remove all memorabilia.
- Pre-pack books and music that do not appeal to a wide range of buyers.
- Pre-pack your collections.
- Remove and pre-pack any items that could be potentially offensive or disagreeable.
- Store away and organize children’s toys, games, and books.

# The Kitchen and Baths Need Special Mention!

**Kitchen:** Clean, clean, clean, until it shines!

- Clean sink, stovetop, oven, backsplash, cabinet doors, and scrub floors.
- If your tile grout is dirty, call me, I have a resource.
- Older cabinets? Consider updating hardware (knobs etc.) and/or a coat of fresh paint.
- Is the room dark? A fresh coat of paint and/or light colored flooring would do the trick.
- Clear the counter top of most - or all.
- Clear the front of the refrigerator.
- Organize cabinets and drawers. Clear them of clutter. Make it seem as if you have more than enough room for your stuff.
- Clean all light fixtures and replace bulbs with the brightest allowable.
- Repair or replace all kitchen appliances that are not functioning properly.

**The Bathroom:** Clean, clean, clean, until it shines!

- Clear the counter top of most, or all. No personal items should be out.
- Install a fresh shower curtain or clean the shower doors.
- Pick up an inexpensive set of matching towels and bath rug to put out for showings.
- Neutral colors are best.
- Scrub the tub. Gel Gloss or other similar products will renew acrylic or plastic tub and shower enclosures.
- Organize linen closet, cabinets, and drawers. Clear the clutter, make it seem as if you have more than enough room for your stuff.

# Furniture Placement and Lighting

Less furniture makes a room look larger. Proper furniture placement helps present a room to its full potential. Allow for ease of traffic through your home. Remove furnishings that block doorways and hallways.

Lighting is also a key factor. Turn on all lights for the best photos and for all showings. When your furniture and lighting are properly placed, you show off the prime features and allow buyers to see the specific function of each room.

## **For a light and bright appearance:**

- Raise the blinds and open the drapes.
- Use light colors.
- Repaint any room that is showing signs of wear and tear.
- Electrical Fixtures – be sure all fixtures are clean and in good working order.
- Maximize light by installing the brightest allowable bulbs.

## **Things to think about:**

- How much furniture is in each room?
- How is your furniture placed?
- What size is your furniture?
- What condition is your furniture in?
- Do you need to rent or purchase new furniture?
- How much lighting do you have in each room?
- What condition are your permanent light fixtures in?

## Air Quality/Odors/Pets/Holidays

Buyers want to envision themselves living in this house, and if the home is not offered in a manner that will allow them to do that easily, most will move on.

### Things to think about:

- Have you had any water issues?
- Check for mold or mildew.
- Avoid cooking with strong seasonings and foods that have a lingering smell.
- Remove your pets while the house is on the market.
- Remove signs of the pets (i.e.: food and water bowls, toys litter box, leashes)
- If your pets must stay in the house, hide any sign of your pet during showings.
- Keep the litter box out of sight and cleaned daily.
- What time of year are you selling?
- Are there going to be any holidays during that time?
- Decorate using items that are simple and nondenominational.
- Any holiday specific decorations need to be removed immediately after celebration.

# Property Exclusions

What is meant by an exclusion? Certain items, as a matter of law, are deemed to be a permanent part of the property. In some cases an owner added features over the years that he feels a personal attachment towards. These items may fall into the category of being permanently attached to the house

If the owner wants to take those items with him, when he/she moves, he/she should exclude them from the sale of the property. The exclusion should be identified in writing: in the listing and indicated in the property profile sheet place in the house, to avoid confusion.

Some examples of items a Seller might want to exclude:

- A hard wired light fixture
- An antique plumbing fixture
- Custom curtain rods, (but not curtains)
- Built in cabinets
- Stained glass window
- A special plant or tree in the yard

Again, these items must be identified and pointed out to prospective buyers before a deal is made. Otherwise you stand to lose out on that item if the buyer decides to hold you to the contract.

The best advice that I can give is to remove the item before the property is ever put on the market. Replace the item with a feasible replacement that won't detract from the beauty of your home.

Please talk to me if you have questions about property exclusions.

Almost all buyers will make an Offer to Purchase your home contingent upon a satisfactory home and property inspection. It is typically scheduled just after the offer is accepted and paid for by the buyer. It is their unbiased, independent analysis of your home, looking to uncover hidden or unknown defects, and a hands-on owner's manual of how your home works. You will need to vacate for 3-5 hours to allow them freedom to get to know your house.

## Home Inspection

Consider having your home inspected before you list it. In doing this, you will learn if there are any major repairs needed and you can address them before the house goes on the market. This also shows the buyers, and their agent, that you have been proactive. You will experience less hassles with:

- Surprises.
- Price concessions to be negotiated.
- Higher prices from contractors to interrupt their backlog.
- Scheduling challenges to complete repairs before a close date.

When it comes to finding the right home inspector, call Susan to recommend someone. Once the inspection is completed, you will be able to determine the next steps in preparing your home for sale.

### Things to think about:

- What year was your house built?
- Do your lights flicker, or breakers or fuses blow?
- Do you have a fuse box or electrical panel?
- Do you have aluminum wiring or knob and tube?
- What condition is your plumbing in?
- How old is your furnace or boiler?
- Do you have documented yearly service?
- How often do you replace your furnace filters?
- Do you have a water softener?
- Is your roof in good condition?
- Are your windows in good condition?
- When was your hot water heater last replaced?
- What condition is your foundation in?



- If you have a deck or patio, what condition are they in?
- Do you have any water problems?
- Have you had problems with mold or mildew?

If an inspector calls for further evaluation, subsequent appointments may require access by contractors, plumbers, electricians, chimney inspectors, structural engineers, etc., for a fuller evaluation and pricing quotes.

Inspectors will educate buyers on regular maintenance and delayed maintenance that turns into potential problems.

**Life expectancy:** Every system in your house has a finite life expectancy. Those items in your property near the end of their expected life have a diminished value relative to a new items.

**What is inspected during the Home Inspection?** Everything can be inspected, and probably will be inspected. Inspections include but are not limited to the following.

### **The Electrical System**

Including the exterior electrical service drop and meter, the electrical service panel, (AKA the fuses or circuit breaker box), plugs, switches, (including the GFI protected plugs) and attached or built in light fixtures and appliances.

### **The Plumbing System**

Including fresh water supply, waste pipes, faucets, drains, toilets, sinks, tubs, and hot water supply.

### **The Heating or Cooling Systems**

- Warm Air Furnace
- Forced Hot water – Boiler
- Steam Heat- Boiler
- Electric baseboard
- Hybrid (Hydro-air, Geo-Thermal, etc.)
- Heat Pump

### **Fuel types**

- Natural gas
- Oil
- Propane or electric

### **Cooling types**

- Central Air
- Built-in Wall Units

**Radon, Mold and Lead Paint Testing** - These tests seek to confirm the presence or absence of those toxic substances.

- **Radon:** This test requires your cooperation. Set it up in the lowest living area in your house. It gets picked up at a later time.

### **Structural Systems**

- Roof System: shingles, rafters, gutters etc..
- Siding Types: Cedar, Aluminum, Vinyl, T-111, and Asbestos.
- Maintenance: cleaning, repairing, scraping, painting and staining.
- Foundation Types: Poured concrete, stone block.
- Framing Types Wood, Brick, Block.
- Issues: Wood Boring Insects.

### **Water and Waste Systems**

- **Water Supply:**
  - Municipal Water
  - Private Well - Quantity Flow Test and Quality
- **Waste System:**
  - Municipal Sewer: (Betterments and Easements)
  - Private Sewer Systems: (Title V certification requirement)

Home inspectors usually advise the potential Buyers to ask the current home owners for a history of the property. A detailed history including details of regular maintenance, repairs, and upgrades will help you get the highest possible price and terms. It will also help reassure the anxious buyers! Start putting together your property's history with the following:

- Warranties of all appliance and repairs.
- Service Contracts.
- Repair and replacement histories.
- The property plot plan and deed.
- Most current tax bill.
- Utility bills for the last 12 month period.

# ARE YOU READY TO SELL?

## Updates and Repairs

Take an objective look at your house and determine what updates and repairs are necessary. Establish a timeline and budget to determine what needs to be completed to improve the overall presentation of the home.

Buyers today are looking to purchase a home that does not require work. They are also willing to pay more for a house that has been taken care of, so show them that your house is in turn-key condition.

### Things to Think About:

- What is your timelines and budget?
- What updates have you been putting off?
- What repairs are needed?
- Repair or replace even the smallest items.
- What condition are our windows in?
- What condition are your permanent light fixtures in?
- What conditions are your doors and trim in?
- Do you have any holes or cracks in your walls?
- Do you have any cracks in your foundation?
- Do you have any leaks that need attention?
- Is your roof, water heater, or furnace near the end of its life?
- Is it time for new appliances?
- Do you have adequate insulation?
- Is your front door welcoming?

## Does Your House Have Good Bones?

By Susan Mogren

Over the years, clients and potential homebuyers have turned to Realtors for help in determining if a particular house has the potential to meet their needs. They also want to know if the house has "good bones". We've all heard the term, but what does it actually mean?

A house that has “good bones” has the basic framework necessary to meet the needs and desire of buyers. These are key features:

**Quality construction** – A house with good bones is well-built. "Walk" a building looking for fundamental structural problems. How does it feel? Does it bounce or does it "feel" solid? In the basement, look along the bottoms of the floor joists. Do they seem to be in a flat plane or do they sag in the middle of their span? Are the joists notched into the sill or resting on their full depth? When looking down along the foundation wall, does it look plumb or is it listing outward? When outside the building and stepping back looking at it, do the walls have bows or are they straight? Does the roof of the front porch sag?

**Solid infrastructure** – It's relatively simple to replace aging roofing shingles or update plumbing fixtures, but it is far more complicated if the basic infrastructure of the home is lacking. If the foundation, roof, heating, plumbing and electrical systems are in good shape, renovations become much easier.

**Good floor plan** – Is there good flow between frequently used rooms? Are rooms arranged logically? Look at how traffic travels through the house as a whole. You can renovate to make particular rooms more livable, but it is far more costly and complex to make fundamental changes because the entire home's floor plan just does not work.

**Well-proportioned rooms** – Are the home's rooms a useful size and shape, or can they be easily changed? Many older homes have small rooms that are unsuited to modern lifestyles. It is often possible, however, to move walls and open up spaces relatively easily. On the other hand, sometimes there are fundamental problems that are not easy to correct.

**Character** – Houses with good bones have a personality. They don't look like they were stamped out by a developer with a cookie-cutter. Sometimes even the quirkiest architectural detail can be used to advantage to create a fascinating focal point. Look for artistic features.

**Natural light** – A sunny, airy home feels happier and more spacious, but don't automatically give up on a house because it is dark. Consider small changes that could bring in more light. Sellers or buyers can add skylights, transom windows and even cut openings in walls and floors to help light spread throughout a home.

*Preparing your property for the market is a critical element in helping you obtain the highest possible price, and selling within your time frame. Let me know if you have questions.*

*Boundless energy to you!*  
**Susan Mogren**

**Notes:**