



FOR SALE SECRETS Liz Tomey

QUICKLY SELL YOUR HOME FOR MORE PROFITS!

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Have you been considering selling your home in the near future? If you have, then it wouldn't be a bad idea to take a good long look at your home, using an unbiased eye.

After all, a clean, appealing, well maintained home has much better odds of selling, selling for more, and selling faster.

When looking at your house, the thing you need to keep repeating to yourself is that "first impressions are lasting impressions." This couldn't be truer when it comes to selling real estate.

However, this doesn't mean that you should take on a major renovation project just so that you can sell your property. Remember, there are no guarantees that you would recover the costs of an enormous overhaul.

Instead, take a more conservative approach, and have a look at the different cosmetic improvements that can be made for an overall improvement. These can include things such as cleaning, painting, refinishing, and other such efforts. These are the projects that don't require all that much capital, and yet they make an immeasurable improvement to the overall look of your home.

Before you take on any fix-up-for-sale projects, take on the mindset that you are sprucing up your home in order to sell it. Don't think of it as fixing it up for someone else. You're trying to create more of an appealing look than you are a perfect home.

If you fix up the house with a certain person in mind, you're limiting your market. Limiting your market will usually mean a slower sale, and a lower selling price.

So instead of tackling a whole mess of huge projects, just focus on making the home attractive, clean, presentable, and well maintained. Let the new owners do their own customizations.

This guide will take you all around your property and let you know the very things that you can do to get the most out of your sale, without having to dump huge amounts of time, money, and energy into repairs.

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There isn't a realtor in existence that wouldn't tell you that one of the most important terms that you can learn when you're trying to sell your house, is "curb appeal."

Therefore, while you're sprucing up your home, it's wise to start outside, and work your way in. Begin by a good walk around the grounds to give yourself an idea of what you're up against, and then use these tips as a sort of checklist to get yourself on the right track.

If you take the effort to ensure that the outside of your home is appealing, then it will make certain that potential buyers will want to look at the interior as well. Therefore, it's obvious that you should work on the outside of your home for precisely that reason.

So let's get started with some tips you can use outside your home...

Tidy Up Outside

Take the time to walk around your property wearing good thick gloves, and carrying a garbage bag. Pick up every bit of refuse, yard waste, and other unsightly things, and throw them away. When the garbage is gone, then do another lap and remove all of the clutter outside. This can include things such as:

- Kids' toys
- Yard care tools (wheelbarrows, lawn mowers, weeding tools, garden hoses, etc.)
- Tools
- Bicycles

Depending on how you usually keep your property, this one effort can make a staggering difference to the outer appearance of your home.

Trim Shrubbery

Shrubbery and other greenery that has an unkempt appearance can often be misconstrued as a sign of neglect, and gives a bad impression of your house overall. Prospective homebuyers who see shrubbery that has not been well maintained may not even be aware of their observation, but it will have an impact on the way they view your property as a whole.

If they do observe the unkempt shrubbery directly, they may make the assumption that the rest of the home has not been properly maintained.

Keep bushes and shrubs neat, and well-shaped, to give the overall impression that the entire property has been well cared for.

For that added touch, try to keep the shrubbery in line with the other greenery and outdoor decorations that you have on your property. This will be even more eye-pleasing from the street level, creating more interest.

Should the size of your shrubbery be such that it makes walking up to your home a challenge, you should consider taking them out. Shrubby that is too large not only makes the home appear much smaller, but it also creates a hazard where safety is concerned.

This may also make prospective buyers think of it as a hindrance because they'll think of it as something that will need to be taken care of; this even before they've even entered your home.

It's a very inexpensive task that you can do yourself, and it shouldn't take more than a couple of hours of your time to get done. If you don't have the time, the ability, or the inclination to trim the shrubbery, don't just let it go. This can only risk losing a lot of time and money in the long run.

Instead, consider hiring a professional. This will cost approximately \$35 to \$45 per hour, but it will be well worth the small investment in the end.

With a bit of luck, you'll only need to do it once before your home is sold – a one time effort that will go a very long way.

Plant Some Flowers

Flowers, especially bright flowers, can liven up the exterior of your home very inexpensively and easily. They needn't be expensive or exotic. Even the cheapest, easy-care, low maintenance flowers will do just fine, such as:

- petunias,
- marigolds,
- sweet alyssum,
- zinnias,
- bachelor's buttons

Your local garden center will be able to help you make the best choice for your location and purpose. Remember that annuals are cheaper than perennials, so they'll suit your purpose perfectly. Keep

in mind also that mixing bright colors like pink and yellow give a much happier appearance to the home than darker purples.

Flowers are an especially nice touch under windows, on porches, and in flower beds. They create a special level of warmth and depth, making your property appears cared for as well as enjoyed.

Landscaping: Mow the Lawn

A property that has a well manicured lawn has one of the best chances at showing pride in ownership than any other outdoor technique.

For one thing, there is a large upswing in the priority that homeowners place in their outdoor living spaces.

Therefore, the landscaping of your front yard (especially) as well as that of your back yard should look its very best when it's selling time. Your landscaping will make a huge contribution to the resale value of your home, so make sure that it's doing its best to help you out.

In fact, studies have shown that when the landscaping of a home is in excellent condition, it can sell for about 4 to 5 percent higher, while homes with landscaping in very poor condition can sell for 8 to 10 percent less. That's a huge difference in the overall selling price of your home.

You might be wondering exactly how much time you should dedicate to sprucing up the landscape of your property. How much time and money is worth it for your sale?

Even if you put a minimal amount of money, effort, and time in to your landscaping, it will help you in selling your home, and perhaps even getting a boost in the selling price. Every effort you make will help.

However, don't overdo it. Remember that it's not a selling feature; it's only something to help the overall appeal of your property, so that the other selling features will be better appreciated.

You should keep your lawn mowed so that it is even, and neatly short. Keep it well weeded, as these will only appear as blemishes to your landscaping. Make sure to use a weed eater to do the edges, as this gives your work a superior finish touch.

If there are any “bald” patches in your lawn, buy a small bag of seed and care for the spot, filling it in. This is especially important if you have a dog who digs or who leaves “pet damage” where s/he does his or her business.

After you fill in the dead spots that your dog has left, make sure to water the areas after your dog “waters,” to prevent new dead patches from forming. Watering the areas will dilute the urine to stop it from burning the grass.

This effort makes an immeasurable difference in the overall neatness of the house, and the impression that it will leave potential buyers.

Keep Porches and Railings in Good Repair

After taking a beating from the elements, and having worn from time, porch railings have been known to become wobbly. This is a safety hazard, to say the least, but it’s also very unattractive.

Railings that are loose can damage the steps to which they’re attached. This can only mean a higher cost for repairs that are made, in order to ensure that the steps are safe.

If your railing is a bit loose, have a good look at it. Many times all that is required is a tightening of bolts, and the railing is as good as new.

The majority of porch railings are attached with lag bolts; these are large screws with a head that looks like a bolt. Should these become loose, all you need is an adjustable wrench to tighten them (turning them clockwise...remember: leftie = loosie and rightie = tightie).

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At times, if the railings have been screwed into the brick of your home, the sheath may have broken or worn down. If this happens to your railing, you need to replace the sheath. Don't worry; this is neither expensive nor costly. You can buy them at any hardware store.

When you remove the screws and sheaths to replace them, the railing will come off, so be sure you're ready to support it and then put it somewhere. You'll need a screwdriver and about twenty minutes to accomplish this task.

Once the new sheath is in place, just screw the railing back on. Make sure to test the railing for security when you get it on again.

If you are extremely challenged in the home-repair department, or if you simply don't have a moment to spare, you can always hire a professional to do the job. They'll cost anywhere from \$40 to \$100 per hour to do the job.

Maintain Shutters

Shutters can be a charming touch to any home. When they're well maintained and in good shape, they can add a warm, comforting touch to brick, stone, or just about any other finish.

However, if they're not well maintained, and are in bad shape, they are one of the fastest ways to make your home appear to be neglected; especially to prospective buyers.

Fortunately, they don't take a lot of skill or time to repair if they're looking a little bit rough. When it comes to the majority of shutters, a quick sanding and one or two coats of exterior house paint can make your shutters look as good as if they were new.

Though it might take a little bit of extra time, it's wise to remove the shutters from the house before you start sanding and painting them. You can make an excellent work table out of an old plank or door set up on two sawhorses.

Clean the shutters of any dirt with a clean rag, then give them a light sanding. Wipe them again, to remove the dust from sanding. Now they're ready to be painted.

You can either spray paint them, or brush on the paint; either will give a nice end result. They will need either one or two coats, depending on your preference, and the appearance you want to attain. Make sure that they've been allowed to dry fully before you reattach them to your home.

Touch up Painting

A large number of houses are made out of brick, with small amounts of wooden trim. These wooden touches are usually located on porches and small areas on the ends of your home.

As time passes, these wood places have a tendency to become worn, with cracked and dull looking paint.

Give your wooden accents a touch up of paint and the entire exterior of your home will have a fresh new look.

Depending on how much wooden trim you have, once you purchase the right amount of exterior paint, it shouldn't take you more than two or three hours to finish this task.

Occasionally, you may need to sand the area before you can paint it. Sanding helps the new paint cure much better than if you'd applied it directly onto the old paint – especially if the previous coat had a cracked surface.

A palm sander is the ideal solution to getting this part of the project done quickly and easily.

Beyond the wooden points, have a look at the paint on the downspout, gutters, and anywhere else that has paint. None of these should be cracked, faded or peeling. If they are: repaint.

Make Sure Your House Numbers are Visible

Though this may seem like a rather silly little task, it will make all the difference when it comes to selling your home. This isn't because potential buyers want to see clear numbers before they purchase your home – it's because they need to be able to find your home if they want to find out more about it, or have a look.

If a prospective buyer can't find your home due to a lack of visible house numbers, all of your other efforts to create lovely curb appeal may have been in vain ...

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