

PREPARING YOUR HOME for potential buyers is important. Very important. When people visit your home they are inspecting it, evaluating it, and assessing its value in comparison to your asking price. This is not any different than what you, as a buyer, likely did when you bought your home.

When preparing your home for sale, be guided by these four objectives:

- (1) Entice People To Visit
- (2) Entice People To Buy
- (3) Optimize Pricing
- (4) Minimize Risk From Inspections

### Entice People To Visit

Refresh your home with repairs, some new items, cleanliness, and organization. Make it nice. You need people to visit.

*Most people are not going to buy a home without seeing it first.*

With a home refresh there should be far more positive content for the narrative and photos in advertising materials.

The extent of refreshing will vary for each home. Look at everything. Assess everything. Ask yourself, “Can that look better?” It doesn’t matter much whether or not *you* like it – it needs to look good to prospective buyers.

**MATERIAL CONDITION** Ensure everything works properly and is in good condition. Everything... Don’t forget:

Windows and Screens	Doors and Hardware
Faucets and Stoppers	Plumbing
Garbage Disposal	Appliances
Clothes Washer and Dryer	Flooring
Grout and Caulking	Cabinets
Hand Rails	Wall Surfaces, Trim
Lighting	Ceiling Fans
Shelving	Electrical Outlets/Switches
Fireplaces and Chimneys	Garage Doors and Controllers
Gutters and Drains	Decks/Porches/Patios
HVAC System	Pumps
Water Heater	Septic and Well Systems
Swimming Pool	Radon Mitigation System
Toilets	Window Blinds

**CLEANLINESS/ORDERLINESS** Deep clean, organize, and de-personalize. Buyers are often deterred by what they consider dirty messy homes, especially when they have seen other homes that are in better condition. Those other homes may be your competition. Consider the following:

- (1) *Deep clean everything. If you can see it, clean it.* Inside and outside.
- (2) *Remove unneeded items.* Declutter, be minimalistic.
- (3) *Organize what remains.* Items inside cabinets and closets, décor, furniture, garage, yard.
- (4) *De-personalize.* This may be difficult, but it can be important to remove very personal items such as political and religious items, intimate and highly personal items.

### Entice People To Buy

All the work you performed by now to make your property look good will also be valuable in enticing people to buy your home once they see it. We want buyers to be comfortable with your home. Keep your home presentable and ensure day-by-day your home is ready for visitors. Keep it clean, keep it organized, keep it smelling nice.

During this period when your home is available for buyers to visit, the standard for cleanliness is much higher. You should receive advance notice of scheduled visits by buyers – these are called “showings” and buyers will be accompanied by their real estate agents.

Daily To Do’s

- (1) Inspect and clean (wipe, sweep, vacuum, flush)
- (2) Remove trash
- (3) Stow extra items, only leave out décor
- (4) Deodorize
- (5) Keep trash bins away from walkways
- (6) Keep temperature comfortable
- (7) Clean (or hide) dirty laundry
- (8) Keep everything orderly
- (9) Use extra bright lights, keep blinds and curtains open
- (10) Remove animal items that can have odors
- (11) Remove or hide valuable items

### Optimize Pricing

Be guided by fair market value and appraisal potential, not emotions. Pricing is often an emotional topic for many people, yet if you include emotions you risk failure in selling.

This is business. A home owner is trying to sell a product (their home) to a customer (the buyer). The price should be fair for the seller, yet should also be fair for the buyer in order for the buyer to agree to buy the home.

Receive a Comparable Market Analysis (CMA) prepared by a Realtor. A CMA considers several factors in identifying fair market value for real estate. That CMA fair market value will often be the list price (i.e., the seller's asking price). CMA's are prepared in similar fashion as an appraisal. This is important because the potential appraisal value should also be considered when identifying a list price. Why? A buyer's lender will order an appraisal and use the appraisal value to set the limit of the home loan for the buyer. If a seller, with emotions, wants to ask a high price for their home, the seller can lose the deal when the appraisal comes in at a lower price. That's because buyers can void contracts when this happens since they will not be able to receive a home loan for the full purchase price.

Here's a partial list of items that CMAs and appraisals consider when identifying their respective values for real estate.

- Material Condition
- Age of Systems (HVAC, water heater, sump pump, etc.)
- Improvements/Upgrades
- Number of Rooms
- Floor Plan
- Style of Home
- Above Grade Finished Square Footage
- Below Grade Finished Square Footage
- Total Square Footage
- Accessories Like Decks and Patios
- Utilities
- Useability of the Property (often referred to as "utility")
- Obsolescence (i.e., something is outdated or nonfunctional)
- Easements, especially when they impede full use of the land
- Geographic Matters (i.e., amenities, activities, development)
- Building Code and Zoning Ordinance Compliance
- Location
- Views

- Trend In Sales Prices of Comparable Homes
- Inventory (i.e., quantity of homes sales)
- Buyer Trends
- Seller Concessions
- Type of Ownership, Liens, and Other Title Matters
- Zoning Issues
- Environmental Issues
- Recent Trend In Sales Prices
- HOA/Condo Association Status

### Minimize Risk From Inspections

Buyers in Virginia can have multiple inspections. And buyers may void contracts without penalty when they dislike the results of those inspections. Buyers can also ask sellers to resolve matters identified in inspections and this can cause delays in the sale.

*Sellers should ready their homes for inspections to minimize the risk of a delay in the sale or having a buyer void the contract*

Inspections cover all of the real estate. This can include a full inspection of the house and other structures, radon, wood destroying insects, wells, septic systems, specific systems, and more. So, carefully inspect your property and identify any potential issues that should be resolved before placing your home on the market.

*We Help You Prepare Your Home For Sale. Ask About Complimentary Refresh Services And Save Money.*

It is important to understand that buyers have options and they, understandably, want to spend their money wisely. Preparing a home for sale versus just sticking a For Sale sign in the yard can make a big difference. It may seem like there can be a lot to do to get a home ready for sale. Sometimes there is a lot to do. Sometimes there is very little that needs to be done. Take time to prepare your home and improve your selling experience.