

# A Helpful Guide To SELL YOUR HOME



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## INTRODUCTION

Our goal is not simply to sell your house, but rather to help realize the best price obtainable for your property in the shortest period of time.

To help achieve this goal we have developed this A HELPFUL GUIDE TO SELL YOUR HOME.

Based on proven marketing techniques, this informative guide will introduce you to practical ideas on how to successfully prepare your house for sale. These suggestions require a minimum of time and expense to complete and are designed to make your house stand out over the competition.

As your agent, I am ready to assist you in developing a home enhancement plan for your property that will take full advantage of the ideas presented in this guide.

## CREATING THE PACKAGE

When prospective buyers look at a house, they are influenced by many subtle factors. Making sure these factors are working in your favor is what we refer to as “Packaging Your Property” for sale. And effective packaging can make a big difference to you.

There are two fundamental packaging issues you should be aware of when preparing your house for sale.

### *The personalization of your house*

When considering a house for purchase, the buyer often visualizes what it would be like living there. If the house is dominated by strong personal statements the buyer is less likely to feel comfortable, and therefore less able to visualize the property as his or her own.

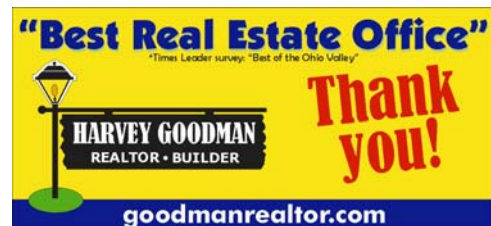
Personal statements are reflected in many areas;

- Unusual wall colors or heavily patterned wallpaper.
- Heavy odors from pets, tobacco or cooking.
- Sounds of loud music or television.
- Noisy children or barking dogs.
- Strong political or religious statements.
- Unusual art or furnishings.
- Numerous family photos

Any of the above may create a feeling that the house is dominated by someone else and may interfere with the buyer’s ability to “feel at home”.

### *The impact of small details*

Small details make big statements about the condition, or just as important the *perceived* conditions of your property. A house that shows poorly as a result of an overgrown lawn, an area of peeling paint, or simply the smell of mildew, may create the overall feeling that the property has not been cared for. If your house leaves a buyer with this impression, it could cost you valuable time and money.



## THE MODEL HOME EFFECT

The best way to make a buyer “feel at home” is to create an environment similar to that found in a model home. Obviously, you cannot recreate the feeling of a perfect display home without starting from scratch, but there are some valuable techniques to be learned.

When walking into a model home you will notice several key points.

- The environment is neutral.
- The colors and interior decorating accent the home’s features.
- The smell is new and clean.
- The sound is either quiet or enhanced by subtle background music.
- All details are looked after from the manicuring of the lawn to a floral arrangement in the entry.



In the following pages we will show you how to achieve many of the same effects of a model home when preparing your property for sale. The most surprising fact of all is that these can be accomplished while spending little time and money!

## THE FIRST IMPRESSION

You have probably heard how important the first impression is to the value of your house. But did you know that within 15 seconds a buyer has already developed an attitude toward your property? This is why establishing the right first impression is critical to achieving a successful sale. The following is an outline of those key components which create the overall first impression, including suggestions on how to make sure the buyer reacts as favorably as possible.

## THE VISUAL LANDSCAPE

Your property’s landscape is not limited to the lawn and shrubs but encompasses everything from the street to your doorstep. For this reason, you must make sure each component of the visual landscape looks its best. The real estate industry refers to this as “curb appeal”.

### *The Street*

Make sure the street in front of your house is free of litter or debris. If necessary give it a fresh sweep.

### *The Fire Hydrant*

Although you do not own the fire hydrant in front of your house, you should still be concerned about how it looks. If it needs a freshening-up, get permission from your town to paint it.

### *The Sidewalk*

Sweep your sidewalk if needed and remove weeds that may be growing between the cracks.

### *The Fence*

A freshly painted fence gives a home a crisp look. You should never let a peeling, tired looking fence or squeaky gate stand between the prospective buyer and a positive first impression.

### *The mailbox and Lamppost*

A quick painting of an old mailbox will let the buyer know you care about the details. If your lamppost is beyond help, a new one will cast a positive light on your property.

### *The Shrubs*

Neatly trimmed shrubs are essential when selling your house. Taking the time to do this costs little, but has a big

impact.

### *The Front Walkway*

Like the sidewalk, the walkway should be clean and free of weeds. If sections are badly cracked, consider having them repaired.

## **THE HOME FRONT**

### *The Lawn*

Besides being freshly mowed and trimmed, a lawn should look healthy. If there are spots that look beyond help, a little sod goes a long way to restoring the look of a well-maintained lawn.

### *The Paint*

A fresh coat of paint can be one of the best investments you can make to increase the value of your property. If you do not want to spend the money to paint the entire house, consider just the shutters or the front of the house.

### *The Siding*

If you have vinyl or aluminum siding, have a cleaning service wash or repaint it using a product designed for these materials.

### *The Doorway*

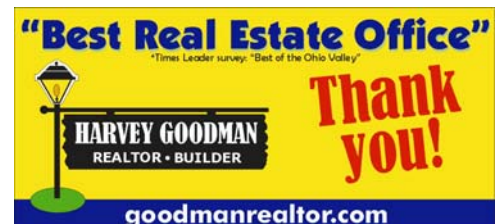
The doorway is the focal point of your house. Dress up your front door by following a few guidelines.

- Repaint the door.
- Apply new door hardware.
- Install a brass kick plate.
- Replace house numbers.
- Put a flower box or planter alongside the door.
- Install a new front light fixture.

### *The Windows*

The windows of your house can help increase the appeal of your property. These inexpensive steps can make them more attractive.

- Replace any cracked or broken glass.
- Make sure the windows are clean.
- Add shutters to the front of your house.
- Install window boxes with bright flowers.
- Apply touch-up paint where needed.



### *The Roof*

The roof may be the single most important aspect of your home front. A well-maintained roof would say a lot about the overall condition of the property. Here are a few guidelines.

- Replace any broken or missing shingles/tiles.
- Repair flashing where needed.
- Paint eaves and fascia boards.
- If roof is old and needs to be replaced consider having the work done before showing the property.

### *Gutters/Downspouts*

Neat and trim looking gutters and downspouts make a house look shipshape. Consider replacing highly visible ones if they are in need of serious repair. If run off areas are eroded, you can install concrete (or other) "spillways".

### *The Driveway*

There are two elements of the driveway with which you should be concerned. The first is its surface condition. If stained or otherwise worn looking, consider resealing it with a high quality sealer product.

Second is appearance of the car parked in the driveway. A newly waxed, well-maintained automobile will make a much different statement about you and your property than an unattractive, poorly cared for car. If you think your car will be a detriment to the look of your property, park it down the street.

## **PACKAGING THE INTERIOR**

There are many ways to create a more exciting and saleable interior, which can be achieved at surprisingly little cost. Before we provide you with suggestions on how to improve each room, we will briefly discuss the sensory selling tools that can have enormous impact.

### *Light*

It is proven that people react more favorably to property shown under bright light than dark. The following steps should help you keep your house as bright as possible.

- Keep windows clean.
- Use adequate wattage in light bulbs.
- Consider replacing older fluorescent lamps, which darken with use.
- Use mirrors to magnify the feeling of light and space.
- Use track lights to create a high-tech look.
- Use light wall colors.
- Open drapes and blinds and turn on lights prior to showings.

### *Color*

A fundamental rule when selling your house is to keep colors neutral and light. The following are specific suggestions.

- White is the most popular exterior color.
- Shades of white, off-white and very light pastels are the safest choices for the interior.
- Avoid highly patterned wallpaper whenever possible.
- Try to limit bright colors to accents like fresh flowers, towels, area rugs and shower curtains.

### *Sound*

The sounds of peace and quiet are some of the best sounds to have when your house is being shown to a prospective buyer. But there are other sound considerations you should also be aware of.

- Avoid barking dogs and noisy children, if possible.
- Also avoid sounds of work like vacuums, dishwashers and lawn mowers.
- Make sure there are no sounds of mechanical problems like banging pipes or faulty appliances.
- Light classical or instrumental music can be effective in creating an upbeat atmosphere.



## Smell

Smell has more impact than you would expect. The following are points where smell can work against you.

- The smell of newness is positive. This scent can be achieved by applying a fresh coat of polyurethane to natural wood or latex paint to walls.
- The smell of cleanliness is important to the selling environment of your house. Beyond actually cleaning, lemon oil or lemon wax can help create a lasting scent of freshness. Fresh flowers can also be effective.
- For a real heart warming touch place a dish of vanilla in a warm oven to create the aroma of fresh-baked cookies or bread.
- Sweeten the refrigerator with a box of baking soda.
- Smells to avoid include strong pet odors, tobacco, cooking and oil or gas.

## Entry

The entry is where the first impression of the interior is created. Here you have the opportunity to make a big statement in a small area.



- Repaint the entry using light, neutral colors.
- Move a prized antique or attractive furnishing to the entry. It will have maximum impact here.
- Install simple chair rail molding to the wall.
- Apply a fresh coat of polyurethane to a wood floor.
- Tile or linoleum flooring should shine.
- Replace plastic switch plate covers with brass or porcelain.
- A new hall light fixture will have great impact in the entry if yours is tired looking.
- Make sure the room is well lit.

## Kitchen

The kitchen is perhaps the most important room in the house. How attractive you make it look will have a major impact on the value of your property.

If your kitchen needs some real help, you may want to make extensive improvements. The following is a list of ideas designed to increase the appeal of your kitchen without spending a great deal of money.

- Make sure the room is virtually spotless and smells fresh. Try putting a quarter section of a lemon in the disposal and grinding it up.
- Consider replacing an outdated light fixture with a new track light.
- If your appliances are dated by colors like harvest gold or avocado, consider having them professionally refinished in a new color like almond or plain white. This will make appliances look new at a fraction of the cost of actually replacing them.
- Spruce up kitchen cabinets by installing new knobs or hardware.
- If your cabinets look especially old, you can have a professional replace the doors or door fronts.
- Organize your kitchen cabinets to demonstrate how much room you have. Cabinet organizers are a good investment for this.
- Remove small kitchen appliances and gadgets from counter tops to create an uncluttered look.
- Chipped or damaged counter tops should be repaired or replaced.
- If your linoleum floor is badly worn, replace it with neutral no-wax flooring or tile.
- A freshly painted kitchen may be well worth the investment, especially if you do it yourself.

## Bathroom

The bathroom has become an important selling feature in today's house. It is a room that has moved from the utilitarian to the exciting. There are many ways you can improve deficiencies and create interest through various levels of enhancement.

- Place a vase of fresh flowers on the vanity.
- Install a wall telephone for a high-tech look.
- Replace an old toilet seat with one of oak.
- Replace an old light fixture with a new style light strip or make-up light.
- Refinish an old porcelain tub using a porcelain finishing service.
- Place all personal care articles out of sight.
- Freshen the air with lemon scented products.
- Replace an old towel rack with one of brass or oak.
- Add color and richness with new towels and a shower curtain.



### *Living room*

The living room is an area we do very little living in yet it is a major selling point of a house. Buyers look for elegant and impressive living rooms to make the right statements to their friends and relatives.

- Use mirrors whenever possible to enhance the perception of size.
- A fireplace is one feature that everyone can appreciate. If you have one, show it off to its best advantage. Sweep it clean and make sure the screen is in good condition. If your house is being shown during the winter, make a cozy, crackling fire. During warm months, you can dress up the hearth with fresh indoor plants or dried flowers.
- Use inexpensive freestanding “can” lights to create dramatic visual effects behind large plants or pieces of furniture.
- Use chair rail or cornice molding to create a feeling of elegance.
- Professionally clean wall-to-wall carpet or large area rugs. Sand and refinish stained hardwood floors.
- Clean windows and light fixtures.
- Make sure all cosmetic plaster cracks are repaired. (This applies to every room in the house.)
- Use lemon oil on hardwood furniture to create the right look and aroma.
- The liberal use of fresh flowers and plants will enhance the environment.
- The strategic placement of a mirror over a mantle or across from a window can make a room look brighter and larger.

### *Bedrooms*

The bedrooms can do as much to sell your house as it can to turn off a buyer. The following tips will be useful.

- Make sure the bedrooms are absolutely spotless. Rugs should be cleaned, windows washed and fresh smell from flowers or lemon oil should be in the air.
- Organize closets to increase their perceived size. Rubberized wire closet organizers do a great job of helping fully utilize space.
- Mirrored closet doors can add dramatically to the feeling of size in any bedroom.
- Bedrooms should be well lit. You may want to add track lighting in the master bedroom.
- A ceiling fan can be an attractive and practical accent to any bedroom.

### *Basement*

The look of the basement can say more about the condition of your house than you may think. A buyer who sees a meticulously clean and organized basement will have more confidence in your property than if it were in a state of disarray. The following ideas will help.

- Paint a bare cement floor oil-based gray.
- Paint the stairway down to the basement.
- Clean the boiler of furnace room as well as the heating plant.
- Make sure there are no signs of pest infestation. If needed, call in a pest control company to remedy the problem before the property is shown.
- Hang as many objects as possible on the wall to minimize clutter.

- Clean and organize your laundry area.
- Make sure all lights are working.
- Eliminate dampness with a dehumidifier.

### *Garage*

A well-organized garage speaks well of your house. You should take these steps to show your property has a thoughtful owner.

- Clean up any oil stains from your car.
- Keep the garage neat and organized.
- Paint the garage floor oil-based gray.
- Install a garage door opener.
- Hang gardening tools and loose articles on the wall.
- Hold a garage sale to dispose of unused items that create clutter and may distract a potential buyer.

## CONCLUSION

By showing attention to detail and understanding the buyer's need to visualize your house against a neutral backdrop, you will increase the saleability of your property.

Packaging your house properly will help you achieve the best price obtainable for your property in the shortest period of time.

On the following pages you'll find a Home Enhancement Worksheet designed to help you organize your enhancement projects. Your real estate agent will be happy to assist you with recommendations to help your house sell for the highest price obtainable in the shortest possible time.

# "Best Real Estate Office"

\*Times Leader survey: "Best of the Ohio Valley"

# Thank you!



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