

Tips for Selling Your Home

Is Your Home Physically Fit?

To give your home a competitive edge when it's time to sell, make sure it is in good physical condition. This not only makes your home more attractive and desirable, it also simplifies the negotiation process when the time comes for the buyer's pre-purchase inspection.

According to home inspection experts, approximately half the resale homes in the market today have at least one significant defect. Routine maintenance is the best way to prevent major, costly problems from developing in the first place. If you have been putting off those repairs, now is the time to make them.

A Home Seller's Check List

Over the years we have identified a list of common problems that typically appear on buyer's home inspection reports. Early correction of these problems can increase a home's appeal and its selling price. It also sets the stage for a favorable home inspection report for the buyer, and thereby helps to expedite the sale. The following 6-point checklist can help you achieve these marketing goals.

1. CHECK THE MAJOR SYSTEMS

After size, style, and location, a home buyer's primary concern is the condition of the home's basic structure and major mechanical systems. Most buyers do not want to invest a great deal of money correcting problems in such critical areas.

A pre-listing home inspection of the visible and accessible home components can reveal most of these problems, and include recommended repairs, if needed, on the following major items:

- Roof structure and covering
- Foundation, basement, and/or crawl space
- Central heating and air conditioning systems
- Electrical system
- Plumbing system

2. MAKE MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENTS

A number of maintenance improvements are relatively easy and inexpensive to make, yet they can substantially improve a home's appearance, efficiency, and comfort. A professional home inspector may make helpful maintenance suggestions, such as:

- Trim trees and shrubs which touch or overhang the house
- Apply new caulking and weather stripping as needed around windows and doors
- Clean gutters of debris and leaves; repair or replace cracked or broken gutters, downspouts, and extensions to ensure proper drainage
- Replace bathroom caulk or grouting where necessary to prevent seepage and improve appearance
- Ventilate closed basements and crawl spaces, or install a dehumidifier, to prevent excessive moisture build-up
- Regrade soil around the foundation, as needed to keep water away from the house
- Replace dirty filters in the heating and air conditioning systems
- Have the heating and air conditioning systems professionally serviced
- Have chimneys professionally cleaned, and install chimney hoods or caps as needed

3. PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS

Fixing even minor items can go a long way toward improving that important first impression of our home. Here are some typical improvements which might be suggested by the home inspector's findings:

- Repair leaky faucets
- Tighten loose doorknobs
- Replace damaged screens
- Replace broken panes of glass
- Replace burned-out light bulbs
- Secure loose railings
- Repair and coat driveway
- Patch holes or cracks in walls and ceilings, then repaint
- Repair peeling wallpaper

4. TAKE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Home inspectors also pay attention to items relating to protecting the home and its occupants from danger. They can alert you to important safety precautions which home buyers will appreciate, such as:

- Installing smoke detectors on each level
- Installing Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI's) in "wet" areas, such as kitchen counters tops, bathrooms, and exterior outlets
- Keeping flammable products away from heaters, water heaters, and fireplaces

5. MAKE COSMETIC IMPROVEMENTS

An attractive, clean, and neat home will appeal to a buyer's emotions. In addition to making repairs such as those listed above, remember to:

- Keep the lawn mowed and the house neat
- Clean the exterior walls and trim; repaint if necessary
- Open windows shades and curtains to create a bright, inviting atmosphere
- Keep the kitchen and bathrooms clean, since buyers scrutinize these areas
- Remove excessive clutter.

6. PREPARE FOR THE BUYER'S INSPECTION

It's a good idea to assemble in advance various house records that can be used to answer questions from buyers and home inspectors. In addition, move excessive storage and furniture away from foundation walls in the basement and make sure all access doors are clear and accessible.