

Make Sure Your Home Stands Tall in a Competitive Market

**By Mark S. Bourque, President
Prudential Premier Properties**

Home sellers today must convince a new era of buyers returning to the market that their homes stand for value and quality.

The time-honored open house event remains a terrific way to expose your property to many consumers and gain distinction from the competition. While your real estate professional will advertise and manage the event, it is up to you to ensure that your home is seen in the best light possible. Remember, you only have one chance to make a first impression, so approach your open house event as your property's showcase. Here are several ways to make your property shine, inside and out.

Start with the outside. Do a visual check of the front of the house from across the street. Does your property have curb appeal? It should look inviting, with a trimmed lawn and flowerbed and a freshly painted front door. Polish door handles and knockers and replace worn items such as a rusty doorbell. Consider adding a new doormat and flowering plants at the entrance. Don't forget to wash your windows and clean any oil or rust spots from the driveway.

Be sure to inspect the side and back yards. Add some flowering plants to the back as well. Clean and rearrange the outdoor furniture to look inviting. Put away gardening tools, and tidy around the grill area.

Now focus on the inside of the home where cleanliness, space, smell and lighting are vital. First get your house in tip-top condition by cleaning and clearing away clutter. Steam clean and vacuum the carpet. Make sure your floors are waxed and shiny. Touch up nicks on walls and make sure the porcelain sinks and tubs and metallic fixtures shine.

Be conscious of any lingering odors such as smoke, pets or strong-smelling foods. You may need to air out your home prior to your open house event. Consider grinding fresh lemons in the garbage disposal. And don't forget to empty all trash containers.


Look at your countertops in the kitchen and bathrooms and the tops of your bureaus. Do they seem cluttered? Clear away and store as much as possible. You want your home to seem spacious.

Next, set the mood. Let your prospective buyers picture your home as their own. Rearrange the furniture so that rooms look more spacious, or consider removing furniture and accessories.

Lighting is also important to creating a desirable atmosphere. Bright lights provide a cheerful environment and make a small space appear larger. Pull back all the drapes and open the blinds. Turn on all the lights. Make sure all light sockets have fresh bulbs. Use softer lights for rooms in which you want a warm, cozy feeling.

Don't forget little touches such as fresh flowers, lighted candles in the bathrooms, new logs in the fireplace, or a bowl of fresh fruit on the kitchen counter. You may even want to set your dining-room table with color-coordinated table settings.

Home buying is steeped in emotion. Sellers shouldn't rely on buyers to use their imagination; they must capture buyers' imagination. Remember that buyers may see seven or eight homes in a single day. The most memorable home will be the one that seemed the brightest, the most spacious and the most cheerful.

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