



When your home looks it best, buyers are more likely to make an offer. You don't have to spend \$50,000 on a room remodel, though. It could take just a few hundred dollars spend on smart fixes and added details that buyers have an eagle-eye for and that create a more impressive look and feel in your home, which sells it more quickly and at a higher price.

Here are tips from real estate experts on how you could spend a \$500 fix-up fund on your property:

Think about what buyers will touch. "Buying a home is an emotional process. Agents can talk all they want about taxes, school districts, etc., but buyers won't make an offer unless they fall in love," says Jay Hart, president of Sold with Style, a real estate consulting firm. He says buyers connect emotionally and kinesthetically. "So think hard about everything that the buyers will touch during their tour of the property: doorknobs (\$25), cabinet pulls (\$2), light switches (\$15) and faucet handles (up to \$250). By updating these items, sellers give the impression that the property is updated and well cared for. The best part is, these improvements are low cost and high impact."

Paint interior rooms. Jerry Grodesky, managing broker of Farm and Lake Houses Real Estate Inc., says that painting rooms deliver the best bang for your buck, getting rid of dirty walls and obsolete room colors. Choose more neutral colors. Lighter colors make rooms look larger. Darker colors make rooms look smaller.

Improve your home entrance. "What is the first thing buyers evaluate for one to three minutes as we await entrance to your property? The front door area! Broken screen doors, peeling paint and non-working doorbells make the buyer put the rest of your property under a microscope," says Grodesky. You might paint exterior molding and put in a new doorbell, and Sam DeBord, managing broker at Coldwell Banker Danforth, suggests for the front door area "a new, modern set of house numbers, a new lock and handle set, a bright light and flowers." First impressions go a long way.

Improve the bathroom's hardware. DeBord says a low budget improvement that impresses buyers is new towel bars, displayed with clean, new towels. And a new mirror or vanity light makes the entire room look bigger and more spa-like.

Hire a stager, Jennifer Scully, president of ReDesign for Dime, says she has helped stage houses that sold in just a few weeks for full asking price. A pro's design eye for furniture and decor can create a more modern, stylish look that helps buyers envision themselves living in that home.

Get professional photos. Link Moser, a real estate professional at NHFineHomes.com, says, "With 90 percent of homebuyers starting their search online, professional photos not only help a property stand out from the competition, but they help develop that "emotional" connection early and increase a property's odds of making the "short list." According to a Wall Street Journal study back in 2010, homes with professional photos

sold for at least \$9334 more at closing and up to \$116,000 more for luxury homes.”

De-clutter and depersonalize. Take down personal items like family photos and kid’s artwork, “so the buyer can picture his/her family’s memories, not the sellers, ” says Moser. “Plus, for smaller homes, by trimming down one’s personal effects, it can make the home look larger in size.”

Get carpets professionally cleaned to make them look new and fresh, and remove stains and odors.

Get a pre-listing home inspection. “Almost every home buyer will need to have the home inspected as a contingency of their initial offer, and the homeowner can save hundreds or even thousands of dollars by being proactive and solving the found flaws themselves,” says David Whiteley of Whitley Home Inspections LLC. Some common fixes he suggests getting ground fault circuit interrupter protection on outlets within 6 feet of a water source, which Whiteley says can cost just \$12 to \$15. “ If the homeowner did not have the prelisting inspection done, and these issues were found when the potential buyer had a home inspection performed, the potential buyer would likely call in an electrician for much more money.” Whiteley also recommends installing carbon monoxide and fire detectors throughout the home, installing safety

Sensors for auto –close garage doors, and making sure that all landscaping plants are cut back at least 12 inches from the side of the house. If you don’t do this latter task for free, a buyer could call in a garden/landscape contractor and want to deduct the cost from their offer on the home. “If a home has already been checked over by a home inspector and problems corrected by the homeowner, prospective buyers will get a sense that there was “pride of ownership” when looking at your house, and they’ll be more likely to make a full-price offer. “