



Understand Market Conditions

The real estate market is in constant flux, not only as a whole, but in particular areas as well. Knowing what is going on in the overall and local real estate markets will help you understand how these conditions can affect the sale of your home.

Current Market =

A Buyer's Market: The supply of homes on the market exceeds demand. Characteristics: High inventory of homes. Few buyers compared to availability. Homes usually stay on the market longer. Prices are stable or perhaps dropping. **Implications:** Buyers spend more time looking for a home, and when they negotiate, they usually have more leverage.

A Seller's Market: The inventory of homes on the market is low. The market demand is high for homes. More buyers and multiple bids on many homes. Move in condition properties sell quickly and at a higher price. **Implications: Seller:** Sellers have more offers to review and more choices to choose from when negotiating.

Make Your House More "Sellable"

Is Your House in Any Condition to Be Put Under a Microscope? That's what they say about first impressions. Now, take a look at your house as if you were a buyer. With a critical eye, examine your home from outside and inside. Determine what can be solved by a simple cleaning and what needs professional attention and repair. In any market, buyers still critique a home when looking.

Start with the exterior of your home. **Think of what you would like to see when you're viewing a home, or better still what you wouldn't like to see** -- cluttered yard, weeds crowding the garden, loose or dangling exterior features (like a broken door), paint peeling, broken fence, or an oil-stained, damaged driveway.

Take a good, objective look at the outside. Would what you're facing invite you to explore it further or make you ready to leave?

Simply having the lawn mowed will make a better impression. Also, remove any "cutesy" lawn decorations that may have home viewers rolling their eyes. And trim any overgrown shrubs or hedges. If you have a sizable property, you may also wish to hire a professional to weed and feed your lawn.

Flowers are a very effective way of adding color and warmth to your home. If you're selling during the spring, plant flowers to make the property colorful and inviting. A bouquet or two in your house also adds a nice touch.

The Next Step

You're in the home. Your five senses are alert. Is what you see clean and organized? Is there an odor? Old shoes? Stale cooking? Garbage? Pets? If there is, it could be a deterrent to potential purchases. Bake cookies or simmer potpourri before your home is shown to give your place a comforting smell. Also, clean your carpets and air out your home.

And speaking of carpets, cleaning them is fairly inexpensive. Without the grit, and with the carpet pile looking fresh, your home takes on a new appearance. Work your way from the ground up. Wash the walls or repaint soiled areas. Touch up chips or plaster nicks. If you've used severe designs or dark colors on your walls, you may wish to repaint your home so that has a more neutral move-in appearance. Also check the ceiling and plaster and repaint it white if necessary.

Clean and Shine

Put extra emphasis on your kitchen and bathroom. Replace moldy shower curtains and clean mold and mildew off of bathroom tiles. Caulk if necessary. Repair leaky faucets and replace cracked toilet seats. Ensure that the toilet flushes properly. Make certain that the drains are unclogged. Everything should sparkle -- faucets, floors, counters, mirrors.

In the kitchen, clean the appliances, organize the cupboards and wash the floor. Make certain your appliances work. Wipe the walls, touch-up paint or re-stick wallpaper if necessary. Clean the sink and ensure that it drains properly, without any leaks.

Are your stairs creaky? Are the handrails loose? Are there any missing pieces?

Examine All Doors and Windows

That means all interior and exterior doors. Look for structural or surface damage. Do the doors need repainting? Do the hinges squeak? Are the doorknobs worn - and do they work?

Are the windows drafty or are they properly caulked? Are they easy to open? Are they clean? It goes without saying that all windowpanes should be crystal clear and unbroken.

Take a Good Look At the Basement

If it is finished, make sure that it is as spotless as the rest of your home. If it is used as a storage area, eliminate the clutter and organize all boxes. (This will also help you with the move!) Check for any signs of dampness.

Have the Plumbing and Electricity Checked

Are there leaky pipes or electrical outlets that don't work? Have them repaired before you put your home on the market. Also, it's a good idea to replace any broken switch or outlet covers and match switches and covers to the room decor.

Make Sure the Furnace and Air Conditioner Work

Replace the furnace filter and have the furnace and air conditioner professionally serviced.

Don't Just Hide Clutter

Buyers will look everywhere -- into cabinets, under carpets, inside closets. (You think you had it bad with nosy relatives poking around!) Plus, a clean house gives the impression of being larger