



Now that you have made the decision to sell your home, it is time to start preparing. Remember that to a prospective buyer, the value of your home is not just the price paid, although pricing the home correctly is the most important factor in selling the home.

Value is defined as that which makes anything worth possessing. While looking at homes, buyers are motivated by what the house will do for their family. Could they be happy here? Will they be proud to have friends over? Does the house fit the needs of the family?

A house can grow on buyers, but most of the time the first impression is the one that a buyer will carry away with them. You can figure that most buyers have already looked at 3 or 4 homes by the time they get to yours. In order for it to stand out, it must be the best of the homes in the price range they have seen on that particular day.

To make your home stand out as the best possible choice, there are many minor things that you can do to the home with a little work and a little money. Remember that the better it shows, the better the price you will be able to get. If you are willing to spend some time and money to make it the best it can possibly be, then read on so that you are ready to go when you meet with Brian to put your house in the market!

Don't forget to ask Brian about our "Certified Pre-Owned Homes" program or visit our web site at www.cpolistings.com.



It Starts At The Mailbox!

- Remove any signs of deterioration. If the post needs painting or replacing, do it!
- Replace house numbers on the box.
- Brighten up the flag on the mailbox by giving it a touch of red paint.
- If there are flowers/flower beds at the base of the mailbox, clean them up.

The Yard: Front AND Back

- Mow on a regular basis. In North Carolina, this means once per week between March and October and as needed in the fall and winter.
- Fertilize a couple of weeks prior to putting the house on the market. This will give the grass some time to “green up” and you can also over seed the lawn with special attention to bare spots.
- Keep weeds out of your flower beds.
- Cut the shrubs back. If you have any plants or trees touching the exterior of the house, trim them back. Vegetation can cause damage to exterior siding.
- If you have vines growing on the railings, remove them. You may like them, but the buyer wants to see the house, not the vines. Vines and plants with chutes also can cause wood rot.
- Clear any leaves or dead tree branches from the yard and make sure that any tree branches are not at eye level so they don’t hit a buyer in the face.
- Clean out any features that have water. This includes ponds, birdbaths, fish ponds, and fountains. Make sure they have clean water and that there are no leaves in them.
- Spruce up bird houses with a little paint. Also, make sure your bird feeders are full, especially before weekend showings.
- If you have yard ornaments, go ahead and remove most of them. One or two is okay, but more can be distracting for a buyer.
- Do you have a pile of wood? If so, straighten it up. If there are bark scraps or chips, pick them up to make the appearance a little cleaner.
- If there is a swing or playground equipment that transfers with the house, clean it up. Many buyers that like the yard will sit in the swing and discuss all your house has to offer!
- If your swing squeaks, put some WD-40 on it!
- Remove all scrap wood from the yard and from the crawlspace. This attracts termites and it will neaten the appearance.
- If you have piles of flower pots, concrete blocks or anything else, remove them from the yard.



- Outbuildings need to be in good condition. Paint if needed and make sure the locks and latches all work properly. If wired for electricity, make sure that there are no burned out bulbs.
- Make sure all lights in the yard work including the flood lights on the house, front porch lights, deck lighting, etc.
- If your pets have torn up the yard, fill in with top soil and spread some grass seed.
- Clean the grill on the patio or deck. Even if it doesn't work, spruce it up or put a cover over it.
- If you have a swimming pool, keep in mind that many buyers do not want the responsibility of maintaining it. Therefore, it is imperative that the pool be cleared of debris every day. If it does not look inviting, it will be a huge negative.

The Driveway

- Do you have a gravel drive way? Over time, the gravel will be packed down or pushed aside which shows the earth underneath. If your driveway has exposed areas, spread some gravel. Also, spray for weeds in a gravel drive and walkway to eliminate any unsightly intrusions.
- If your asphalt or concrete driveway has cracks, repair them with a crack filling compound purchased from Lowes or Home Depot.
- If you have a basketball goal, make sure it is in good condition. It could be considered a nice detail by a new buyer IF it is in good condition. A new white net and a light coat of paint on the backboard can do wonders. If it is on a pole, touch up the pole too.
- Spruce up the flowerbeds that are bordering the driveway.
- If any tree branches scrape the car as you go in or out of the driveway, prune them.

The Fence

- Make any necessary repairs to fence posts or pickets.
- Fix sagging gates and apply WD-40 to squeaky gates and latches
- If it needs paint, touch it up. If it REALLY needs paint, get it painted.
- If your dog has dug holes near or underneath the fence, fill them in and apply grass seed.



Walkways

- Fill cracks in concrete or asphalt.
- Pull or spray weeds from between stones or bricks.
- Fill in missing mortar between stones or bricks.
- Trim shrubbery to clear the path.
- Attend to flower beds lining the walkway.
- Make sure any lighting is working. During winter months, it may already be dusk or dark when a buyer comes to see your house after work.

The Outside of Your Home

Remember that short of painting, simply making sure the exterior of the house is clean and looks maintained is important.

- Repair any ornamentation, such as shutters, ginger-breading, spindles, posts or columns.
- Paint if necessary.
- Remove rust from iron work.
- Even though it will cost some money, strongly consider shoring up or even replacing a visibly sagging porch on an old home. The idea is to avoid giving any indication of deterioration or instability.
- Paint peeling trim around doors and windows.
- Replace rusted or broken light fixtures on porches or beside doors.
- Replace cracked plastic bubbles over basement window wells. If there are none, remove any trash or debris that tends to collect in such spaces.
- Remove mud daubers and wasp nests.
- See that any swing is still securely fastened to the porch ceiling. Paint it if necessary. If it has cushions that have seen better days, purchase bright new ones or slipcover the old ones.
- Make the front entry as inviting as possible. Polish brass door knocker and kick plate. Since both are available in inexpensive grades, consider adding one or both. Hang a colorful wreath on or near the door.
- Painting the front door a compatible but contrasting color from the body of the house or trim can effect a very pleasing visual impact. Make sure windows on the door sparkle.
- If you have lived with house numbers that aren't adequately readable from the street, consider updating them. You may even want to change the materials they're made of, such as from brass to wood, or vice versa.
- A metal or wooden plaque by the front door with the address or the date the house was built is always an attractive detail. If you have one, keep it looking good.



- Potted or hanging plants can do so much to make a porch or entry feel cheerful. If you aren't good with live plants, purchase some good quality silk plants (provided they will be out of the weather) and fake it! You can always take them with you and use indoors if you like.
- Nothing adds charm to the façade of a house like window boxes. They can be purchased inexpensively and are easy to install. If you already have them, keep the blooms coming. If the boxes need to be repainted or touched up, then do so. During the winter months, don't be afraid to decorate with some plastic holly or garland for a holiday mood.
- Remove any unsightly seed pods from the ground.
- Clean out the gutters and give them a good power washing so they shine.
- Is the doorbell cover rust free? Does the little bulb inside the button need to be replaced? Does the entire doorbell need to be replaced? If so, fix it!
- If you never replaced the screen on the storm door after the kids poked out the corner with a bat, do it now. Replacement screens can be purchased at lumber yards or hardware stores. Some places may even install it for you for a minimal cost.
- Even though it is one of the most dreaded household chores, wash the windows inside and out. The more light you can let into your home for a showing, the better.
- Does the lock on the door work easily? If not, fix it (a little WD 40 is great for this) or replace it. Imagine the moment of truth: a buyer is ready to go inside of your home to look at it, but the lock for some reason does not work. New owners don't want to deal with jiggling the key or lifting up the door every time they use it.

General Guidelines for Interior of the Home

Take a walk through your house and try to look at it as though YOU are the potential buyer. If you find this impossible, ask a friend, relative or your agent to go with you to help you see things in a more objective light. The suggestions apply to every room.

- Carpet- Is it worn, matted or dirty? Is it reasonably up to date? A calico cat colored shag carpet from the 1970's will turn a buyer off quickly. If your carpet unusually colored? If it needs cleaning, then get a professional to do it. I have had clients that try to rent the steamer by themselves and they are distraught when it still doesn't look any better and they have lost an entire day and STILL have to have it professionally cleaned. If you need to replace carpet, don't buy the best available. If you buy the basic level, you will get your money back on this one. Remember to buy neutral colors (builder beige is the most popular for a reason). The best part about new carpet is that it is usually where buyers begin their negotiations; "We will have to replace the carpet and that will be at least \$3,000 - \$4,000!" Eliminate that by making the carpet look great!
- Clean every room thoroughly. For most buyers, the house must have that "ready to move into" look. Our professional cleaning company can do your entire house in about three



hours for a very reasonable price. We highly recommend them and will be happy to share their contact information with you.

- Dirty, scuffed, finger-printed walls are a major turn off to a buyer. The quickest and easiest way to fix that is to paint.
- You may like the purple walls in your bedroom, but the buyer will more than likely NOT like it. Don't pass it off by saying, "A buyer has to be ready to do some work themselves." If that is your mindset, the house will be on the market for a long time. I have seen one unusual paint color in one room cause a house to sit on the market for months. When the buyer finally painted it neutral, the house sold in 6 days with multiple offers. If the color is very dark, then a coat of primer might also be required.
- Clean the light fixtures in every room and make sure the bulbs are not burned out. Take special care of fixtures with glass globes and clean them.
- Remove large furniture that is not an everyday necessity. Are there any tables or armchairs that you can do without? Can you live without footstools that impede the flow of traffic through the room?
- Straighten closets and other storage areas. The idea here is to make them seem as spacious as possible. Remove clothes that are out of season and store them somewhere else (this may be a good time to rent a 10X10 storage unit at your local storage company). Stack items neatly on shelves. Line up shoes and stack boxes in an orderly fashion.
- If you have pets, it is essential that your house does not smell like you have them. Smells trigger instant and strong responses that are difficult to change. You want a buyer's first response to your home to be one of pleasure, not repulsion.
- Be vigilant about changing cat litter and keeping pet areas squeaky clean. You would be wise to limit the area in which your pet inhabits during the sale period.
- It wouldn't hurt to set around unobtrusive dishes of potpourri. You may want to do this anyway just to evoke a pleasant sensation when people step in the door. Just be careful not to over do it. Again, a strong odor emits bad feeling from a buyer.
- If you or your housemates are smokers, discontinue smoking inside and around the house. Do what is necessary to get rid of the smoke smell. Remove and replace rugs that have the smell in them along with blankets, throw pillows, etc. A smoke smell is the number one turn off of a buyer and in general, gets the home eliminated as a possible choice.
- If you have removed pictures from the walls, remember to repair the holes and touch up the paint around them. You can do this yourself with minimal effort. Use a putty knife to spread the filling compound and let it dry. Then sand it until the surface is smooth. Now a light coat of touch up paint feathered away from the hole allows it to blend nicely.



Suggestions For Each Room

The Foyer, Front Hall or Entry Way

The front door swings open. You want to ensure that the prospect's attention is immediately arrested by the entry's most outstanding features.

- If your entry is made remarkable by a unique floor, make it the center of attention. Roll up rugs. Keep furniture to a minimum. If the floor requires a shine or a luster, maintain it scrupulously.
- Staircases are often the most interesting feature of an entry. Clean the carpet, paint worn spots, polish or wax woods and metals, paint dirty walls, and glue back the corner of wallpaper that peeled last year. If it's near Christmas, take a little extra time to drape the bannister with garland or ribbons. Make sure that the bannister is sturdy.
- If there are any squeaks when you walk on the stairs, repair them.
- Windows above a staircase (including stained glass) can be breathtaking. Make sure it is wiped clean so it sparkles in the sunlight.

The Living Room

As with the house in general, you want to impress upon the buyers the comfort, beauty and livability of the living room.

- Clean the fireplace of ashes and soot. Polish screens, andirons and fireplace tools.
- Is your magazine rack overflowing? Trash or recycle what you don't need.
- When showing your home, turn on lights, open drapes, light a fire (if practical), or play music softly in the background.

The Dining Room

- As you did with the living room, look around and take note of the peeling wall paper, the condition of the carpet, and all painted surfaces. Make repairs and improvements as best you can.
- When showing, turn on all lighting fixtures. If the switch is adjustable, mute the lighting at night to create a pleasant ambiance, such as the buyers might use when entertaining.
- When showing the house, ask your agent to point out the convenience of any built in cabinetry in the dining room. Direct attention to anything special about the room, such as ornamentation on the ceiling, crown moldings, a chandelier, wall sconces or a beautifully carved or tiled fireplace.



The Library or Study

Make this space seem like the ideal spot for home office work, playing computer games or relaxing with a book or jigsaw puzzle.

- Leave a lamp on by a comfortable chair with an open book, upside down on the cushion. If it is daylight, a window seat, comfortably padded with pillows can be given the same treatment.
- Clear your desk or work area of all clutter. Make the space seem as efficient as possible as though new owners will have all they need in this room to get down to business. Turn on relevant lighting.
- If the room has been specially insulated to block noise, tell your agent so he can demonstrate to the buyers.
- Point out anything in the room that will facilitate a business purpose such as separate wiring for a laser printer, multiple phone jacks or extra electrical outlets.
- If the room has cable television access, mention it.

The Kitchen

- The kitchen absolutely must be spotless. After you have thoroughly cleaned, you may want to replace your trash container in the garage, laundry room or basement while showing the house. You don't want an unpleasant smell to cancel out all your hard work. Since garbage disposals can often stubbornly retain smells, run a lemon through it daily to eliminate odors.
- How does the floor look? Since new linoleum is expensive, most sellers don't want to spend money to replace it. About all you can do is see that it looks clean. A new coat of wax will bolster its image quickly and cheaply. The same goes for the hardwood floor.
- If your kitchen is carpeted, it can be replaced easily. Only do so though if it is badly stained or worn.
- When showing the kitchen, open all blinds and curtains, and turn on all lights. Most people want a bright kitchen.
- Be sure to point out any extra conveniences the kitchen may be equipped with such as sliding shelves, turntables, convection oven or trash compactor.
- Remove clutter from counter tops. The idea is to make the kitchen look like it has ample counter space and cabinets for anyone's needs.
- Fix dripping faucets or any leaks under the sink or behind the dishwasher.
- Agents say buyers judge overall housekeeping by how clean the oven and range are.
- Clean the inside of the dishwasher door.



The Laundry Room

- Remove all the clutter from the floor or from the top of the dryer.
- Wipe dust and lint from appliances.
- If your laundry room doubles as a storage space, make sure it looks neat.

The Bathroom

- This room must be kept spotless and odor free.
- Fix or replace leaking faucets or drain plugs that won't function properly.
- If chrome finish is peeled off in spots, replace all the components to give it a clean "all is in working order" feeling.
- If the toilet needs any repairs, do them now.
- Clean the bowl of the toilet thoroughly and set up a system of at least two times a week for cleaning. Be sure to lift the lid and clean any spots. Another good idea is to clean the tank. This can be done with an additive and will help any lingering odors coming from the tank.
- Make sure towel racks and toilet paper dispensers are fastened securely to walls. If the finish is shabby, they can be inexpensively replaced.
- Make sure there is toilet paper just in case a prospective buyer might need to use your facilities. It happens on long days when the buyer is seeing many houses. A little help might go a long way!
- Neaten the items stored in vanities and linen closets. Buyers WILL open them! Throw out old prescriptions or toiletries that you are no longer using or are empty.
- It is a nasty, time consuming job, but it is important to remove every bit of soap scum from glass shower doors and tubs. Buyers are automatically turned off by the sight of it.
- Re-apply caulk that is peeling or won't come clean of mildew.
- Look at the wall in front of the sink from an angle. Maybe even the wall behind where you stand. See thousands of spots? Hair spray, especially spritz kind, accumulates on the wall. You can't smell it but the fragrance lingers. Make sure to clean this regularly while your house is on the market.
- Pretty towels hanging from racks will distract attention from your bathroom's less attractive features. They can also be used to splash some color in an otherwise boring room.
- Finally, clean the countertops and sinks every day. Get that old toothpaste cleaned off and dry the counters when you are finished getting ready in the mornings. Taking two minutes to clean this space every day will pay off when that surprise showing happens when you are least expecting it.



The Bedrooms

- Eliminate any extra furniture that appears to make the room seem smaller.
- A colorful throw rug will disguise flooring that may not be in the best of shape.
- Make the beds every day and pick up dirty clothes.

The Garage

- Here and in the basement is where clutter seems to multiply. This is a good time to eliminate all of the “stuff” you have been meaning to get rid of. As for the rest, make sure it is neatly stacked or hung. Make it seem as though there is enough room for a new owner to park any size car or truck in your garage.
- Try to clean off the oil drips from the floor. Oil can be easily absorbed by spreading kitty litter over it. Leave on 24 hours, then sweep away. Most of the stain can be scrubbed off with any degreaser.

The Basement

- Clean the basement as best as the surfaces allow. Stack, hang or stand items as neatly as possible. Mostly, people don't expect too much from the basement, only that it is dry. Don't bother finishing your basement. The cost will not be recouped in the selling price.
- If the hot water heater or furnace works great but shows its age, a coat of spray paint can provide a quick face lift.

A note about basements: If your house falls into the price range most attractive to first time home buyers, it is very likely that the buyers will want to get financing from a government agency like the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). These loans require less percentage down and are therefore more desirable for first timers. In this case, your home will be more closely scrutinized by FHA or VA inspectors during the structural and mechanical inspection. In particular, the foundation and roof are most vulnerable to criticism. If the condition of either of these is questionable, the inspector more than likely won't approve the loan to the buyers until you have fixed the problem.



Extras Will Help Sell Your Home

To help us sell your home as quickly as possible and for the best price, take a few minutes to tour your home and make a list of the extras that may not be immediately obvious. When showing the house, we can use this list to point these out to buyers.

Let us know if your house has:

1. Central/Dual Zone HVAC
2. Central vacuum system
3. In ground sprinkler systems
4. Built in anything in the kitchen
5. Pull out shelves or turntables in kitchen cabinets
6. Convection oven
7. Industrial or upgraded refrigerator
8. Security system
9. Intercom
10. Central stereo with speakers throughout the house
11. Gas log or wood burning fireplace
12. Pull down stairs to storage area
13. Pull down ironing board
14. Garage door openers/ belt drive garage doors instead of chain drive
15. New appliances, furnace, HVAC or water heater
16. Sump pump in the basement
17. 4X6 studs instead of 4X4 studs
18. Extra insulation provided during construction
19. Attic fan
20. Location of outdoor faucets and outdoor electric outlets
21. Quality materials used in the house, such as superior woods, metals or stones
22. Windows with superior insulation or UV blocking abilities
23. A water softener
24. Humidifier on the furnace
25. Separate water heater for any part of the house
26. Recent improvements
27. Outside motion lights
28. Dead bolt locks
29. Low flow toilets or showers
30. Non-standard hardware such as decorative faucets or door handles
31. Non-standard interior doors or specialty milled designs
32. Custom made anything



More Extras

One more thing we like to do is have a letter from the seller about the house. Tell us about why you purchased the home, how you hate to leave it and if it is okay, why you are leaving it. Do not mention your family status (getting a divorce) or the timing of the move as it could affect your negotiating ability.

In addition, you should not discuss your neighbors as that is generally a violation of fair housing laws and could get you and your agent into trouble.

If there is a historic aspect to your home (in the family for generations), make sure to mention it! People love to know the history of the home they are about to purchase.

Tips For When Your Home Is Shown

- Vacate the house for showings. The seller being present is a HUGE turn off and makes buyers and agents uncomfortable.
- Pets should be removed from the property during showings. Even if your pets are friendly, they can be a huge distraction as buyers will pay more attention to them instead of looking at the house. If your dogs bark at the sight of strangers, then they must be removed as that is a huge turn off for prospective purchasers.
- Turn on every light in the house.
- Open all blinds.
- Turn ceiling fans on to “low.”
- Soft music in the background is very settling sound. Don’t turn on the radio to full blast. If it is too loud, it will be more of a distraction than a help.



To our sellers,

Thank you for letting us help you prepare your home for sale. In the listing presentation, you will hear us talk about how we can get the best price in the shortest amount of time for your home with the least hassle to you while it is on the market. Completing all of these tasks is part of our proven system and we look forward to listing your house soon.

If at any time you have questions about the recommendations in this book or you would like our opinion on a particular item (for example to replace carpet or just have it cleaned), please don't hesitate to contact us. We are here to help.

In addition, if you wish to hire someone to clean, do repairs or replace items for you, we can provide you with contact information for our trusted vendors.

During the time your house is on the market with us, we will communicate with you once a week regarding the status, number of showings, effectiveness of our advertising and marketing, as well as things we can do to make your house more saleable.

We will also provide monthly market updates in your hyper local market, as well as monthly updates on web site activity so you can see how our plan is working for you.

Thank you for choosing us to market your home and we look forward to answering any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Brian Pate, GRI, SPS

