

Checklist for Selling Your Home

Making the right first impression is critical. It drives more traffic to the house and helps potential buyers focus on the overall home and improve your chances of selling – at your price. In many instances the potential buyer will know within minutes whether the house meets their needs or not. This checklist, along with the advice of your Realtor, will help focus on the maintenance issues that can help your home sell quicker and for a better price.

Check the major systems

After location and style of the home, the needs of a homebuyer move to the condition of the basic structure and major mechanical systems. Most buyers are not prepared to spend money correcting problems in such critical areas. Your own thorough investigation of the following major items can help determine if any issues exist. The most critical areas to check include:

- Roof structure and covering – look for damage, worn areas and water leaks.
- Foundation, basement, and/or crawl space – any foundation cracks or water leaks should be repaired.
- Central heating and air conditioning systems – these units can be professionally cleaned and serviced to ensure proper working condition. You can check for signs of rust or black stains that may indicate a more serious concern.
- Electrical systems and plumbing systems are not for the layman, but if you have any recurring issues, have a professional determine and repair those concerns.

Make maintenance improvements

The maintenance improvements listed below are relatively easy and inexpensive to make, yet they can substantially improve a home's appearance, efficiency and comfort:

- Apply new caulking and weather-stripping as needed around windows and doors.
- Clean gutters and extensions of debris and leaves to ensure proper drainage.
- Re-grade soil around the house to prevent water pooling at the foundation.
- Replace or re-grout tiles and caulking in the bathrooms to help improve appearance and reduce the risk of moisture getting behind tiles.
- Ventilate closed basements, cold rooms and crawl spaces, or install a dehumidifier to prevent musty smells, humidity build-up, and moisture.
- Wash or replace dirty filters in the heating and ventilating systems, including furnace, HRV, humidifier, etc.

Pay attention to details

Fixing even minor items can go a long way toward improving the first impression of your home. Here are some improvements, which you might consider:

- Repair any leaking faucets/drains and seal around sinks with caulking.
- Tighten loose doorknobs – ensure doors close easily and smoothly.
- Replace damaged screens or broken panes of glass.
- Replace burned-out light bulbs, and replace broken light fixtures.
- Secure loose railings.

- Patch small holes in walls and ceilings and repaint/remove or repair wallpaper.
- Repair and coat the driveway.

Take safety precautions

Pay attention to items relating to protecting the home and its occupants from danger. The following are important safety precautions which homebuyers will appreciate, are relatively easy to implement and shouldn't cost a lot. Moreover, they will keep you safe while selling:

- Install good quality smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Ensure adequate outdoor lighting, especially in suburban and rural locales.
- Install 'GFCI' outlets outdoors and in wet locations such as kitchen, bath & laundry areas.
- Keep the stairwells tidy and free of debris and obstructions, and leave plenty of clearance around the garage door, electrical panel and furnace.
- Keep flammables and combustibles away from the furnace and other utility areas.
- If you have direct entry from the garage to the interior of the home, consider installing a self-closing device on the door.

Prepare for the buyer's inspection

More and more purchasers are requesting pre-purchase inspections. It is a good idea to assemble in advance the various house records that can be used to answer questions from the purchaser and their inspector:

- Appliance receipts, service records and warranties.
- Information on the age of major components such as the roof coverings, furnace, air-conditioner, etc.
- Major component warranties (e.g. roofing, siding, windows, carpeting, furnace and other appliances).
- Heating, water and electric bills from at least the past 12 months.

How did your house measure up?

Hopefully, this home seller's checklist has helped you gain a clearer knowledge of your home's overall condition - from a buyer's perspective. Now you can make repairs or improvements that will increase your home's marketability. It just makes good sense! Of course, even if your house is already in optimum condition, a professional home inspection can also be a good marketing tool. Just leave a copy of the report on the kitchen table for agents and purchasers to read.

Contact Elementary Property Inspections for more information about this article or to schedule a complete home inspection.

