

Lights, Camera, Action, Sell: Secrets to Successful Home Staging

Did you know that staged homes usually sell in half the normal time and closer to full price? (USA Today - October 2006) And that according to home industry experts, within a few seconds after entering a house, potential homebuyers make an emotional decision whether or not to buy?

As a designer, that makes sense to me especially since you only get one chance to make a great first impression. So where do you start? Besides a thorough cleaning, basic repairs and removing clutter (usually 50%) I recommend focusing on five target areas to make a home more appealing to buyers.

1. Curb Appeal/Front Entrance – The majority of buyers won't leave their car if the house lacks curb appeal. Stand outside and take an objective look at the home. Is the yard well manicured and the entrance inviting? If not, why not add a colorful pot of flowers by the front door, a welcoming doormat and an appealing door decoration making sure the view of the door isn't blocked by trees or shrubs.

2. Inside Foyer – Create a welcoming ambiance similar to what you would experience in a top restaurant. Begin by adding an attractive entry rug and the best furnishings possible to decorate this area, making sure the light fixture, walls and floors are updated and neutral.

3. Living/Dining Room – Arrange the rooms to emphasize the focal point(s), adding consistent pops of color with accessories such as pillows or throws to draw your eye through the rooms and create interest, while removing personal items that keep buyers from visualizing living here.

4. Kitchen – Clear the countertops to create maximum work space (except for a couple of large accessories) and clean your appliances to give the kitchen a bright sparkling appearance. Then as a final touch, place a little vanilla extract on your light bulbs to give the sense that something just came out of the oven.

5. Master – Set the stage for an inviting retreat that includes a seating area, organized closets and clutter free floors. Create a bed fit that's for a king, overflowing with decorative pillows and quality bedding. Then for the bath, think spa, adding thick thirsty towels and other items that create the mood.

And remember, even if you're not selling a home and just want to make your home more appealing, staging is a great look. Its lights, camera, action, Hollywood style.

Article written by K.C.s top home stager Karen Mills for *Must Read KC* magazine. Besides staging, Mills is also an interior designer, the host of *Living Large* design show on News Radio 980 KMBZ, a nationally published writer and speaker whose design firm was nominated for Small Business of the Year in 2009, 2008 and 2007.