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"Selling a Lifestyle"

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SETTINGS THAT SELL

by *Xiomara Martinez*

Concentrating on Vacant Homes

Even though as a 'Stager' we bring in furnishings, I don't believe it's necessary to fill your entire vacant home with furniture in order to sell it. Contrary to this statement, to compete in today's down market, where supply exceeds demand, staging the entire house is ideal. There are options offered as to whether to purchase or rent furniture and accessories when staging a vacant home. As a professional stager and private investor, I suggest to purchase-vs-renting as it is more cost effective and could be included in the purchase price as a package deal, making the listing more attractive. This option is extremely beneficial in areas where out of state buyers have a high interest in purchasing real estate. If you decide to stage the vacant home minimize the amount of furniture. If you are experiencing financial constraint and you have a limited budget, other alternatives can be employed.

As alternatives, stage only the areas where a little magic goes a long way. First, maximize the features of your home. Draw attention to a focal point. Pay special attention to the entry way, living area and kitchen. Your entryway is usually the first interior space a perspective buyer sees inside your home. Because they are seen up close and personal, the majority of people make their decisions as soon as they walk in the door. They may not know if they're interest in buying, but they know if they're not. Living rooms on the other hand, set the rest of the house. Create significant floor to ceiling-break between conversational groupings. Add perspective with visual depth as vacant rooms look more flat. Use accessories in strategic places and don't forget to use red to help buyers notice details. Provide a place for buyers to sit and discuss a purchase. A couple of stools in the kitchen, or a *nice table and two chairs* in a well-lit spot with a magazine and a coffee mug will feel inviting to a buyer. The more comfortable they are, the longer they stay. The longer they stay, the more likely they are to make an offer.



Before.



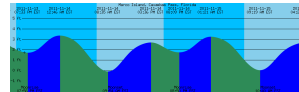
After proper staging. Submitted photos

However, if you decide not to make any changes, these suggestions alone will increase a potential buyers' physical and psychological comfort. Make sure all walls, floors, rugs, and ceilings are in good condition. And, even if the property is not getting the attention you expected, keep it up-to-date by checking it periodically. You never know when a potential buyer is in front of the house requesting a fast showing. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, make sure the batteries

in the air conditioning thermostat are working properly. Buyers don't like the feeling of being in an oven and for sure they will not stay in the house for too long.

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Last but not least, check and remove any dead insects from flooring!!!

Always remember this rule of thumb in staging. *With little to distract*, potential buyers see every speck of dirt, every smudged and streaky window, every flaw in the paint, the floors and the ceiling. In essence, there is much higher standard of cleanliness and maintenance expected of vacant properties if they are to compete with partially or fully staged counterparts.

BUYER'S PERCEPTION + EXPECTATION = COMFORT LEVEL. The buyer's perception of a vacant house is that it is used, dirty, needs work, and takes time. Their expectations are that it is in questionable condition. The comfort level is undesirable. Under these conditions, we obviously need to exempt those buyers that are searching for steals and as a result this equation is the perfect fit. With little money you can partially or fully stage a home that will meet expectations as a GOOD DEAL, versus a home that exceeds expectations as a STEAL!

Xiomara Martínez is the Owner of HomeX Décor.

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