

TIPS & TRICKS

To sell your home



A large percentage of **home buyers** decide whether or not to look inside a house or take it seriously based on its street appeal—the view they see when they drive by or arrive for a showing. You can help ensure they want to come inside your house by spending some time working on its exterior appearance.

It's difficult to look at our own house in the same way that potential home buyers do, because when we become accustomed to the way something looks and functions, we can't see its faults. Decide **now** to stop thinking of the property as a home. It's a house—a commodity you want to sell for the highest price possible.

Street Appeal Exercise

The next time you come home, stop across the street or far enough down the driveway to get a good view of the house and its surroundings.

1. What is your first impression of the house and yard area?
2. What are the best exterior features of the house or lot? How can you enhance them?
3. What are the worst exterior features of the house or lot? How can you minimize or improve them?

Park where a potential buyer might park and walk towards the house, looking around you as if it were your first visit. Is the approach clean and tidy? What could you do to make it more attractive?

Take photos of the front of the house. If you have a digital camera, view the colour versions first, then remove the colour and look at it in black and white, because it's easier to see problems when colour isn't around to affect our senses.

Make a list of the problem areas you discovered. Tackle clean up and repairs first, then put some time into projects that make the grounds more attractive.

- Remove mould and mildew on the house, paths, roof or driveway.
- Stow away unnecessary garden implements and tools.
- Clean windows and gutters.
- Pressure wash dirty driveways, paths and dingy decks.
- Edge pathways and remove vegetation growing between concrete or pavers.
- Mow the lawn. Get rid of weeds.
- Rake and dispose of leaves.
- Trim tree limbs that are near or touching the home's roof.

Don't Forget the Rear View

Buyers doing a drive by will try their best to see your back yard. If it's visible from another street or from someone's driveway, include it in your street appeal efforts.

Evening Street Appeal

Do your street appeal exercise again at dusk, because it isn't unusual for potential buyers to drive by houses in the evening after work.

One quick way to improve evening street appeal is with lighting:

- String low voltage lighting along your driveway, pathways, and near important landscaping elements.
- Add a decorative street lamp or an attractive light fixture to a front porch.
- Make sure lighting that's visible through front doors and windows enhances the home's appearance.

Landscaping Decisions

There are times that adding elements to your landscaping can improve street appeal, but there are other times when *removing* something is even more effective.

Most buyers cannot visualize changes, and often won't take a second look at a house if the first look doesn't appeal to them. Home buyers who can visualize changes, and are prepared to make them, expect *you* to reduce the price of the house to compensate for the work they plan to do.

A Few Street Appeal Tips

- If you can budget it, a fresh paint job does wonders for a dingy house. Drive around to find colour schemes that are appealing.
- Install a more attractive front door, maybe something with lead light inserts.
- If you can't justify the cost of a new door, consider replacing plain doorknob hardware with something more attractive.
- If new hardware is beyond your budget, repaint or stain the door and polish the hardware.
- If you brainstorm, you'll find that there's a solution to most problems—one that lets you stay within your budget. The trick is to find the areas where improvements are needed, then work on them as best you can.

We're here to help

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