



Is Home Staging Worth The Cost?

Twenty years ago, nobody worried about "staging" their home before putting it on the market. Giving it a good scrubbing and hiding the kitty litter box was considered sufficient preparation for putting out the "For Sale" sign. But all that has changed. As with many trends, once the standards have been raised, it's hard to go back. So, this article will explain what a good home stager does, and why -- despite the added expense -- you might want to hire one to help you sell your home.

What Home Stagers Do

A home stager is similar to an interior decorator -- with expertise in planning and choosing colors, fabrics, and furniture, and arranging them all in a way that makes your home look its best.

But a good home stager brings a few extra things to the mix. The stager is not focused on creating a home that suits your personal taste and need for everyday comforts, but instead on making your home appeal to a broad range of tastes. Livable or not -- probably not, after you've hidden the toaster, toothpaste, and laundry hamper -- the idea is for the stager's work to help people fall in love with your place and want to buy it.

More specifically, here's what a stager might do to get your house ready for sale:

- Examine your home from top to bottom, and explain -- ideally in a written report -- what should be done to get it ready. Together, you and the stager can review the recommendations and costs, and develop a plan of action.
- Identify specific ways to highlight your home's best features and compensate for its shortcomings. For example, the stager might recommend removing curtains from a window that has a great view; or, in a small bedroom, replacing the double bed with a twin or even a baby's crib, in order to make the space look larger.
- Recommend which items of your furniture and household possessions should stay in the house and which should be removed before an open house or showing. Be prepared to have to either move or place into storage the majority of your possessions, so as to de-clutter and depersonalize your house. This will, of course, be much easier if you've already moved into your next abode.
- Help you arrange for recommended repairs or other major work on your home -- by lining up contractors, carpenters, painters, and landscapers, and overseeing their work. (You'll normally pay their bills separately, however.)
- Bring in furniture, art work, curtains, carpets, pillows, and even artful-yet-homey objects like a bowl of oranges (either real or high-quality fakes!), potted orchids, and a welcoming doormat. Many stagers keep warehouses of this stuff, all carefully matched and chosen to make your house feel like a place where people can live their dream life.
- Add finishing touches before an open house or major showing. For example, the stager might add fresh flowers, or put a pie in the oven on low heat in order to waft delicious aromas through the house.

If all of this is making you feel uncomfortable -- like you're employing someone to work a little trickery -- keep in mind that they're only manipulating aesthetic perceptions. You'll still need to be open and honest about the house's physical condition, in your disclosure statements and elsewhere. Meanwhile, however, you have a house to sell, and there's no harm in making it look its best -- perhaps even giving the new owners some ideas about how they'll want to decorate.

Staging Ultimately Benefits the Seller

A well-dressed, sparkling house can garner lots of attention, and potentially sell very quickly. This is true regardless of whether the market is cold or hot. In a cold market, buyers don't have to settle for anything less than the best. Why should they spend time and money fixing up a distressed home when a staged house looks great and is move-in ready? In a hot market, buyers can go into feeding-frenzy mode, focusing on the hot property of the week and ignoring the others. So you want your property to be the hot one, with buyers going crazy in their efforts to outbid each other.

And get this: The National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents (NAEBA), which surveyed brokers and agents, found that 82% of home buyers are likely to be distracted from important issues when they go through a staged home. These buyers not only fall for the house, but potentially overpay. If staging is already the trend in your area, remember too that an unstaged house will pale by comparison to the rest. And if it's not yet something buyers in your area are accustomed to seeing, they'll be even more impressed by the results.



Mobile 705.717.1590 Office 877.728.4067 Email krista@alkerton.com

ROYAL LEPAGE FIRST CONTACT REALTY BROKERAGE

Independently owned & operated Suite 100-299 Lakeshore Drive, Barrie ON L4N 7Y9