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## ***Preparing a House For Sale***

Many articles have been written on the subject of preparing a home for sale. They include suggestions such as getting rid of the orange shag carpet, the avocado green appliances, painting the walls a neutral color white, and storing some of your belongings elsewhere to create the impression of more space. While all cosmetic improvements can have a great affect on generating an offer to purchase, this article is not about the cosmetics that can impress a buyer; it is about getting a home ready for a professional inspection. As a seller, it is important to realize that your home must not only be visually appealing to gain the initial interest of a potential buyer, but afterwards your home will be gone through by someone with much more scrutiny...the buyer's home inspector.

Each of the following tips are suggested, but suffice to say, if not corrected, they will likely be reported as defects and brought to the attention of the person buying your home. The list below may not be all inclusive, but it contains 40 suggestions to help your home sell fast, and without having to lower your asking price or contend with selling complications.

- 1. If the shingles on your roof are showing signs of age, such as cracking, cupping, curling, or loss of granules, have them replaced or recovered. A new roof says a lot to a prospective buyer.**
- 2. Clean out dirty gutters and clogged downspouts while making sure the gutter system is in tact and secured to the structure.**
- 3. If needed, seal cracks in the chimney's cap, siding, bricks, and flashing with caulking. If the chimney does not have a metal flue cover, install one.**
- 4. Trim trees away from the house's siding, roof and chimney. Branches in contact with or in close proximity to the house can cause damage and will likely be reported as a defect. If necessary, clean any accumulated tree debris from the roof.**
- 5. If the power and communication lines are overhead and are in contact with or passing closely through tree branches, have the branches pruned. Utility companies will typically do this service free of charge.**
- 6. Prune shrubs away from the siding. A distance of ten to twelve inches is a preferred minimum. This will allow the inspector to have a better view of electrical outlets and water faucets. Further, all landscape plantings should be pruned away from the air conditioner the same distance.**

- 7. Remove any rotting wood and/or firewood from direct contact with your home. There should be an air space of at least six inches between firewood and siding.**
- 8. Make sure downspout extensions emit roof water in a way that it will not collect near the foundation. Normally they should not discharge inside of landscape edgings or closer than six feet from the foundation, especially if the grade is questionable.**
- 9. Remove soil or mulch from direct contact with siding. Approximately six inches of clearance below the bottom edge of the siding is ideal.**
- 10. If any windows are at or below grade, install window wells. The soil level within the window well should be approximately eight inches below the window sill.**
- 11. Ensure that proper grading for surface water drainage is present around the home, including under a deck or porch. A general rule is to have the soil slope away from the house, dropping approximately one inch per foot for a distance of six feet away from the foundation.**
- 12. Check all exterior wall vents to make sure they are not obstructed with dirt, lint, or insect nests.**
- 13. Caulk and paint all weathered exterior wood trim as needed. Deck and siding boards should be in tact with no loose nails.**
- 14. Make sure any wood siding is painted or stained as needed. Sometimes only one side of a house needs to be painted, but it should be done. If you have brick siding, check the mortar joints and refill them if needed with mortar or caulk.**
- 15. Caulk all exterior wall penetrations where pipes and wires pass through the siding.**
- 16. If your driveway has cracks in it, seal them with the appropriate cement or asphalt crack filler.**
- 17. If your driveway, patio or sidewalks are allowing water to run towards the house instead of away, have them raised back to their original position. This typically costs only a third of what it would cost to replace.**
- 18. Ensure that bathroom exhaust fans, kitchen exhaust fans and clothes dryers are properly vented directly to the exterior. If blowing indoors or into attic compartments, they will be reported as defects which could cause health and safety concerns, as well as, structural problems.**

- 19.** If you have less than six inches of insulation in your attic, add more. Twelve inches or more is considered efficient by current standards, but six inches is the minimum satisfactory amount.
- 20.** Update the roof and soffit ventilators if they are absent or marginal. Lack of proper ventilation will be reported as a structural deficiency.
- 21.** Remove personal property and other obstructions from access areas to attics, crawl spaces, heating systems, and electrical panels.
- 22.** Ensure that all doors and windows are in proper operating condition, including replacing any broken glass or fogged window panes. If your windows fall down and you use sticks to hold them up, repair the control mechanisms or install new ones. If your doors do not latch properly, repair them. Usually a simple adjustment is all that is needed.
- 23.** Eliminate offensive odors. Many people are sensitive to odors and allergens. If your home smells like cigarettes, pet urine or musty mold, you will immediately rule out a significant number of potential buyers. You may not even realize your house has an odor if you have become accustomed to it. Ask several non-smoking people if they sense any odors in your home. If so, find the sources and eliminate them; do not attempt to cover them up. Masking odors is rarely successful and may cause problems for you later. Odors from mold, sewer gasses or pet urine will likely be reported as potential health and safety defects.
- 24.** Give your home a maintained appearance. If your mechanical appliances have not been regularly maintained or other items are left dirty or in disrepair, it can make an inspector leery about your entire home. Conversely, if you have maintenance receipts for any appliances or other repairs, supply them.
- 25.** If you have non-grounded (two prong) electrical outlets in the garage, outdoors, or next to plumbing fixtures indoors, replace them with GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) receptacles. Be sure to test all existing GFCI receptacles (the ones with test/reset buttons on them) for proper operation.
- 26.** Replace any burned out light bulbs making sure the right wattage bulbs are used.
- 27.** Check ceiling fans for proper operation or loose blades.
- 28.** Test all smoke detectors to ensure they are in safe working condition.
- 29.** All circuit breakers should be in the “on” position. If not, leave a note at the panel box explaining why any of them are turned off.
- 30.** Ensure that all plumbing fixtures (toilets, tubs, showers, sinks, and outdoor faucets) are in proper working condition. Check for and fix any leaks. Have any loose ceramic tiles re-bonded and grouted, and caulk around fixtures where

necessary.

- 31.** If you have a sump pump, check it for proper operation. If it doesn't work, replace it. Sump pumps should also discharge outdoors, away from the foundation, not into sinks or floor drains.
- 32.** If you have a water softener, make sure it is in use and full of salt.
- 33.** Check your basement floor drain to make sure it is clean of debris and that water freely flows down the drain. Inspectors find many basement floor drains clogged with dirt.
- 34.** If you have had water in the basement area, be sure to disclose that fact. If you have had the cause corrected, supply a written explanation of the repair or a receipt for verification.
- 35.** If you have a dirt floor crawl space, install a plastic sheeting vapor retarder on the floor of the crawl if one is not currently present. Remove junk or other unneeded items from the crawl and store remaining items in an orderly manor, on top of the vapor retarder.
- 36.** If you have an addition or finished basement rooms that were constructed without permits, be sure to disclose this fact. If some of the remodeling work is clearly inappropriate, such as lack of heating or poor wiring, it would be best to make the corrections before the home is inspected.
- 37.** Clean or replace any furnace and air conditioning filters. If you have had your furnace recently inspected and serviced, tape the receipt to the furnace for the inspector to see. If you have not had it serviced within the last year, have it professionally cleaned and inspected. If your air ducts have a significant amount of dirt or debris in them, have them cleaned.
- 38.** If you have a water filter system, have the filters replaced or submit a receipt showing when they were last replaced.
- 39.** If you have not done so recently, have the fireplace or wood stove professionally cleaned and inspected, and post a copy of the receipt.
- 40.** If the house is vacant, make sure all utilities are turned on for the inspection. This includes water, electric, water heater, furnace, air conditioner, and gas fireplaces.

### **Summary:**

**Do not do shoddy repairs, such as trying to paint or caulk over rotted wood, etc.;** you will likely raise questions that will cause concern to a home inspector.

**\*\*If you have lived in your home for a long time or purchased your home without the benefit of a professional inspection, it may be in your best interest to have**

**your home inspected before you start showing it. Many home sellers are surprised to learn that the home they live in has problems they were completely unaware of. \*\***

**If you would like to have a specific list of correctable items that could help you sell your home fast, and for top dollar, consider a pre-sale home inspection. This will allow you to discover defects before they show up on your potential buyer's home inspection report. A pre-sale inspection also allows you the opportunity to either disclose the defects up front or to repair them before they present a problem. The cost of correcting most defects is inconsequential in comparison to having problems during a real-estate transaction, or the possibility of losing a buyer altogether. A professional inspector can also coach you as to which items are good do-it-yourself projects, or when to hire a handyman or contractor. The small fee for a pre-sale inspection will likely prove to be invaluable in the big picture.**

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