

# Guide to Preparing Your Home for Sale

## Free eBook from the CapX Real Estate Team

### Introduction

There are many resources available on how to prepare your home for sale. However, that information typically comes at a cost, as one wrong move on the internet can lead you into a never-ending spam campaign that overloads your inbox. Like you, we hate those email campaigns. We understand how annoying this can be and refuse to be a company that does business that way. As such, we have made this eBook free to anyone wanting to learn the tips on how to properly prepare a home for sale. When we say free, we mean free with no strings attached! All we ask is that you keep us in mind when you are ready to meet with, and hire, a caring and knowledgeable Realtor.

When it comes to the housing market, it is extremely important to properly prepare and market your home regardless of the time of year you are attempting to sell. There are certainly busier seasons for home sales, however, homes are sold and purchased throughout the year. The right time to sell is always going to be when it is best for you! With the helpful tips provided in this eBook, you will be in a great position to sell your home for top dollar regardless of the season.

Properly preparing your home for sale is not an overnight process, it will require sufficient time and effort to do it the right way. We highly recommend that you establish a plan with realistic time frames for each step outlined in this eBook. Depending on how much work needs to be done, it may take anywhere from three to five months to have your home ready to market and sell. You may be saying to yourself, are you kidding me – three to five months! The actual length of time will be determined by you and how devoted you are to properly preparing your home to sell for top dollar, to as many interested buyers as possible! We truly believe that following the steps outlined in this eBook will be well worth your time and effort. Whether you chose CapX Real Estate or another real estate company, a caring and knowledgeable Realtor should be assisting you throughout this process.

If you are now wanting to learn how to properly prepare your home to sell for top dollar, this eBook is for you!

We suggest following the steps as outlined below, and as thoroughly explained throughout this eBook.

Step 1 – Hire the Right Realtor

**Preparing Your Home with Guidance from the Right Realtor:**

Step 2 – Declutter Your Home

Step 3 – Provide Interior Appeal

Step 4 – Provide Curb Appeal

Step 5 – Redesign / Stage Your Home

**Listing Your Home for Sale through the Right Realtor:**

Step 6 – Show Your Home

Step 7 – Sell Your Home for Top Dollar!

# Step 1

## Hire the Right Realtor

Hiring the right Realtor is the start of selling your home for top dollar with as many potential buyers as possible. It is imperative that you take time to find the right Realtor who you trust and will properly assist you through the entire process of selling your home. When it comes to hiring the right Realtor, the following are questions you should be asking yourself and the Realtor.

First, do they know the area? They do not necessarily need to live in your exact neighborhood or zip code, but they must know what the area has to offer. The right Realtor will know which schools are zoned for your specific area, what shopping and entertainment is nearby, and other pertinent information that may be important for potential home buyers.

Second, do they fully utilize the latest technology? The right Realtor does not have to be the most tech savvy person to sell a home. However, they must have a sufficient level of knowledge to properly input and distribute information on the internet to make your home appealing to potential home buyers. Today, the home search begins online. How your home is marketed to the public is more important than ever before! When prospective buyers come to see your home, it is rarely their first walkthrough. They have probably walked through your home multiple times online, either through photos or virtual tours. Now, you must ask yourself, does the real estate professional you want to hire take professional photos? Do they put together a 3-D self-guided virtual tour? This is so important and we cannot emphasize it enough, if the person you are interviewing pulls out a point and shoot camera, or their cell phone, to take photos of your home, politely ask them to leave because they are stealing your money and not investing the time and effort needed to sell your home for top dollar.

Third, do they have the right level of experience? We are not suggesting that you should only consider veteran Realtors. Everyone is new at one point or another and newer Realtors that have been well trained by the Broker should be able to provide the same level of service as a veteran Realtor. As the broker of CapX Real Estate, I still remember selling my first home and can tell you that I went above and beyond for the seller and was able to sell their home for top dollar. When we say experience, we are referring to the knowledge they have about how the sales process works. If they are new, did they receive proper training? These are all things you want to consider when selecting the right Realtor for you.

Last, and most important, after you feel confident about the Realtor's ability, do you trust them? You are trusting this individual with selling what is often your most valued asset. This is a huge responsibility, and you should feel 100% confident that whoever you choose as your Realtor will go above and beyond to provide an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

## **Step 2**

### **Declutter Your Home**

The second step is to declutter. Depending on how long you have been in the home, and how much you have accumulated throughout the years, this process may take up to 3 weeks. It is extremely important that you put sufficient time and effort into this step, as your home will be much more appealing to potential buyers without clutter.

This process involves going through and packing everything you do not need. Once completed, the boxed items should be placed in a storage unit or your garage. If you do not want to incur the cost of a storage unit, keep boxes in the garage until you are ready to start marketing your home. At this point you will want to get a storage unit or move everything to another location so the garage can be cleared out and viewable during showings.

The following are helpful tips for storing or removing:

- Ask yourself, have I used/worn this in the last six months? If not, you may want to consider removing or storing the item.
- Pack away all small knick-knacks and décor. If it is smaller than a basketball, pack it up.
- Pack away all personal items and photos.
- Clear counters and surfaces to show potential buyers the amount of ample space available in your home.
- Leave closets at 75% capacity to give the appearance of extra space.
- Once you have gone through your home, schedule a yard sale or donation pick up/drop off.

## **Step 3**

### **Provide Interior Appeal**

The third step consists of cleaning and possibly repainting the interior of your home. When preparing for a sale it is important to walk through your home as though you are a potential buyer. Besides cleaning and tidying up your home, it is important to look for anything in need of repair. This could include stains or marks on ceilings from previous water damage; marks or damages to walls; cracked or broken floor tiles; or large stains or damages to carpeting. Take a close look at bathroom and kitchen fixtures to determine if they need to be updated or replaced.

This is a deep cleaning. You will want to go through and clean/wipe down everything. You will want to clean out the inside of all cabinets and drawers. All electrical outlets and switches will need to be wiped down as well. If you have old switches that have years of grime built up, it might take a little degreaser to do the trick. Sometimes having the switches and covers replaced is a better option. Check to make sure these items are clean and match throughout the home. Pay special attention to odors and smells throughout the home. If you have pets, remove pet bedding and items. Air your home out by opening the windows for 20-30 minutes daily. Avoid air fresheners, sprays, and scented candle. These can have an adverse effect to buyers and may appear that you are attempting to hide an odor.

Paint can have a huge impact on the look and feel of your home. We recommend that the interior of your home is painted with one consistent, on trend, and neutral color throughout. All baseboards and trim will need to be wiped down and repainted white. Fresh baseboards and trim really pop and give a wow factor to potential home buyers. Many Florida homes feature open floor plans, and having a consistent color gives the home a larger feel. Choosing paint colors is not easy. Hiring a design consultant with training in choosing paint colors may be a good idea and huge time saver. Many potential buyers will see bold or unique colors as nothing more than extra work. Buyers will remember the colors and it will play a vital role in their final decision.

While painting can be an investment in time and money, it does produce results, potentially limiting time on the market and a slightly higher sales price.

This process may take up to 4 weeks depending on the amount of work needing to be completed.

**A buyer's first impression of your home is more of a gut feeling than a thought process. A buyer will typically decide whether or not they like your home within seconds of walking through the front door. It is vital that you take every step possible to create a favorable first impression. If you lose the buyer at the door, you will not win them back!**

## **Step 4**

### **Provide Curb Appeal**

The fourth step is to provide your home with curb appeal which is extremely important. This is the first impression that a potential buyer will have of your home, and you do not want to lose them before they even open the front door. How do you make the exterior of the home look appealing to as many people as possible?

Depending on the age of the exterior, it may be time to repaint. If you live in a community with an HOA, make sure you get approval before making any changes to the exterior color. Typically, you will be required to choose from colors that have been preapproved by the HOA. When choosing the color for the exterior your decision should be based on the colors of neighboring homes. You do not want to choose a color that is similar to the house next door even though you might love that particular color.

If the paint on the home is still fresh with no signs of wear, you will most likely just need to pressure wash the home. Pressure wash the entire home including the patio, pool cage, driveway, and sidewalks. For the home and pool cage, be sure to start at the highest point and work down. If you are going to do everything on your own, we highly recommend that you rent a high-powered pressure washer along with the attachment that floats above ground to clean the pavement areas. This is a HUGE time saver and well worth the money to rent.

After the home has been pressure washed or painted you will need to address the landscaping. This could involve replacing only a few dead plants with some colorful ones or clearing out an overgrown area in the yard to give the appearance of more space. Just as every house is unique, the same can be said for landscaping. Adding some colorful flowers along a walkway is sure to impress prospective buyers and will be sure to leave a favorable impression. We have a partnership with LawnGuru for landscaping services. If you are in need of sprucing up your landscape or just need some direction on what can be done to enhance your curb appeal please reach out to them for a FREE estimate.

This process may take up to 4 weeks depending on the amount of work needing to be completed.

## **Step 5**

### **Redesign / Stage Your Home**

The fifth step is redesigning or possibly staging your home for showing. This could be as simple as moving a few pieces of furniture or become a major project to move everything out if the home is being sold as vacant. Depending on the amount of work to be done, this process may take up to 2 weeks.

Staging has become a huge business, especially when it comes to selling a vacant home. Staging a home is effective because home buyers have a difficult time visualizing what can actually fit in empty rooms. By staging a vacant home, the buyer has a better sense of how much available space is in each room. Often times, the cost of staging is less than the first price drop a seller will experience as a result of uninterested buyers.

As broker of the CapX Real Estate team, I am going to tell you a true story that will give you a better understanding as to why I consider staging a must when selling a vacant home. A few years ago I was representing one of my best friend's with the sale of his townhouse. It was a standard 2 bedroom / 2 bath townhouse in a nice gated community and I was certain that it would be sold at the asking price within 30 days. From the very beginning, my wife informed me that I would need to stage the townhouse if I wanted to get it sold. Being a very confident Realtor, perhaps a bit too overconfident, I proceeded to let her know that I would have no problem in selling this vacant townhouse without any staging. Well, 150 days later with 30 showings and consistent feedback that the space was not laid out very well, I determined that my wife was probably right. With only 30 days left on the contract, and a very patient and understanding friend, my wife and I spent two days properly staging the townhouse for sale. We then had new professional photographs prepared and scheduled an open house for the upcoming Saturday. Prior to the open house, I placed 20+ signs on roadways leading to the home (standard operating procedure for CapX Real Estate team) in an effort to maximize the number of potential buyers for the open house. The first two potential buyers at the open house comment on how the townhouse is laid out so well and is so inviting. The third potential buyer and her realtor informed me that they were in the area and just decided to stop by to see the open house but were looking for a 3 bedroom townhouse and would not be interested in a 2 bedroom townhouse. About five minutes later, this potential buyer was still looking around and began looking inside the cabinets. I looked at the realtor and said "I think she might be interested in a 2 bedroom townhouse after all! Thirty days later my friend's townhouse was sold to the third potential buyer that visited the staged townhouse. Since that day, I have been a firm believer that properly staging a vacant home is extremely effective in leaving a favorable impression for potential buyers and obtaining the maximum sales price for the seller.

## **Step 6**

### **Show Your Home**

The sixth step is showing your home to potential buyers. After putting in the time and effort to properly prepare your home, this should be a much easier and gratifying experience for you. You will want to have everything put away, and all valuables and firearms locked up.

First, when you receive a request from your Realtor for a showing, reply immediately to establish the best time for the potential buyer to view your home. Be prepared to show the home within 2 to 4 hours of the request. In addition, the right Realtor should have you set up to receive text notifications for showing requests, allowing you to reply by text. Your Realtor should also block out the times in which the home is not available and require specific lead times for showing requests.

Second, leave the home ready to show and leave all lights on. You will want the blinds fully opened letting in as much natural light as possible. Soft music in the background is a great touch as well.

Third, make sure your home is secure when you return home after a showing. Check your windows and doors to make sure they are locked. Chances are that no one unlocked your windows, but you never know. A door being left unlocked is more likely to occur but is not a call for concern and may happen from time to time. The Realtor who is showing the home is often going behind people turning off lights, shutting doors and keeping an eye on the buyer's kids. Missing a lock on a sliding glass door is just inevitable and will happen. When you return home just do a quick check to make sure your home is secure for you and your family.

## **Step 7**

### **Sell Your Home for Top Dollar!**

The seventh and final step is getting your home sold for top dollar. This is the moment you have been preparing for and it has finally arrived! You received the right offer on your home, and it is now time to sign the actual contract. The following are important items that should always be reviewed by you, and the right Realtor, before signing the actual contract.

- Make sure the buyer is prequalified for the proposed purchase price or has proof of available cash if the buyer is a cash buyer.
- Make sure all information detailed in the contract is correct including, but not limited to:
  - The sales/purchase price
  - All items (personal property) that are included/excluded with the sale/purchase
  - Amount of deposit from the buyer
  - Number of days for the inspection period
  - Date of closing
  - Type of financing the buyer is obtaining (Conventional, FHA, VA, USDA, etc.)
- Be aware of any conditions from the buyer, such as having to sell another property before purchasing your home.

These are some of the important items the right Realtor will assist you in the final step of selling your home.

You and the buyer have agreed to all terms and have signed a contract for the sale of your home. What's next? The buyer will often have around 10 days for the inspection period. During the inspection period, the buyer will have a home inspector check the home for items that need to be repaired. In addition, the buyer will most likely get a termite inspection and, if you have a well and septic system, the buyer will get a septic and well inspection as well. A well inspection provides verification as to whether or not the well functions properly and the water quality meets required standards. The septic inspection involves a septic company pumping out the septic tank to ensure the water flows through the system properly and there are no cracks or breaks in the tank that could cause environmental concerns.

Following the inspection period is the appraisal process. The right Realtor should be directly involved in this process and should be the point of contact for the appraiser. The right Realtor should meet with the appraiser at your home during the appraisal process, and bring comparable property sales for the appraiser to consider in determining the appraised value of your home. If you have made any upgrades or repairs to enhance the value of your home, the right Realtor will assist you in preparing a list, with supporting receipts, of all upgrade/repairs for the appraiser to utilize in determining the appraised value of your home. The goal is to obtain the maximum appraised value for your home. The right Realtor should be a solid advocate for you with the appraiser and should be instrumental in making sure everything is provided to the appraiser that will result in obtaining the highest possible appraised value for your home.

After the buyer's lender receives the appraisal and the buyer has satisfied certain conditions required by the lender, the buyer will receive a commitment letter from the lender that will also be provided to you as the seller. Basically, the commitment letter states that the lender has committed to fund a specified dollar amount (loan amount) towards the buyer's purchase of your home, subject to any conditions, if any, that are outlined in the commitment letter. By this time, you should have the majority of your belongings packed up. We suggest that you wait until the buyer, and you, obtain the actual signed commitment letter before moving furniture out

of your home. If the contract is going to fall apart, and your home must go back on the market for sale, it will typically happen at this point. Selling a vacant home is not ideal, so please keep furniture in the home until the signed commitment letter is obtained.

The buyer completes the final walk through right before closing, often the evening before. You should have everything removed from your home at this point. Maybe there is one remaining piece of furniture like a bed that has not yet been removed; however, it is preferable to have everything out of your home at this point so the buyer is assured that the home is completely ready to move into. The home will need to be clean so remember to sweep, mop, and wipe down counters. Be courteous to the new buyer, they are very excited and are looking forward to moving into their new home. Be sure to make it as welcoming as possible to the new homeowner!

## **Conclusion**

### **Thank You for Reading!**

The CapX Real Estate team is happy to provide you with these important and vital steps to selling your home for top dollar. Our goal is to assist you in obtaining top dollar from the sale of your home, with offers from as many potential buyers as possible, in the shortest amount of time on the market. If you put forth the time and effort to properly prepare your home for sale, as outlined in this eBook, we firmly believe it will result in a huge pay off for you! Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. If you found this information to be helpful or feel there are certain additions/revisions that should be made, please let us know. We would love to hear your feedback and look forward to having the opportunity to be the right Realtor for you!