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Tips for Selling or Maintaining the Value of Your Home

by IRENE WILSON, WENDAKE BEACH



Photo source: Pixabay

First impressions are lasting impressions. This is especially true when selling your home or cottage. Good curb appeal draws buyers into your home, and the most important factor is cleanliness. Don't worry about having the latest stainless steel appliances or granite countertops. Potential buyers who walk in and see a spotless home assume it has been lovingly maintained. Most buyers will make their own updates or changes to suit their needs.

Starting with the exterior, declutter the front and back yards. Get rid of those scraps of lumber, old pails and odds and sods that you have been saving because they may come in handy. Trim back shrubs, remove dead branches, and clean up garden debris. An attractive storage shed is a great place to store garbage cans, bins, etc. Your walkway should be level with no broken slabs or deteriorating concrete. A freshly stained or painted set of stairs and deck are welcoming. Cleaning all leaves off in the fall can extend the life of the deck boards and prevent staining. Dead leaves trap moisture and encourage mould growth. Ensure all screen doors and window screens are in good condition. Clean windows make a home sparkle, and there are easy fixes such as window washing sprays that attach to a garden hose or power washer.

Ensure that soil around the foundation slopes away from the house so that melting snow and rain are directed away from the basement. Check downspouts and install extensions to divert water from the foundation. Our extreme weather patterns of torrential storms and wind can put you at risk for seepage and damage. Efflorescence, a white, powdery residue that may be found on concrete blocks, indicates moisture is affecting the foundation. If not addressed, moisture can cause permanent structural damage over time. An unfinished basement attracts warm, moist air to condense on concrete walls in summer, which can also lead to mould growth and that musty smell. Increasing air circulation by running the furnace fan or an oscillating fan may reduce this problem.

Check for loose shingles, flashings around chimneys, and caulking or seals around vents and skylights. Replace or reseal any that are missing or cracked. Check soffits and fascia for holes or space where a critter might squeeze in to build a nest. Raccoons, squirrels and chipmunks would love to raise a family in your home, especially to avoid our cold winters. Potential damage can be wide ranging as animals can chew through wires, boards and insulation, and scatter feces throughout an attic or inside walls.

Inside the home, the electrical panel is one of the most important selling features. Some insurance companies will not insure a home with a fuse panel or a panel with less than 100 amps or aluminum wiring. If you are considering some upgrades, a new breaker panel is a good investment and may get you a break on your insurance rates.

Basements and garages are like dungeons where stuff is stored away, never to see the light of day until it's time to move. Clutter can cause the basement to smell stale, musty or just strange. Old paint cans, various chemicals, motor oils and other toxic products can be dropped off at the Simcoe County Transfer Station on Golfink Rd., free of charge. Any type of metal, like broken tools, scrap pipe, old lawn furniture, etc. can be dropped off at Saulnier's Scrap Metal at 1750 Golf Link Rd. They have a large dumpster just inside their driveway for your scrap, but no electronics, please. Those old printers, TVs and computer screens can be delivered to the transfer station.

Speaking of smells, nothing turns a buyer off more than stale cat litter, cigarette smoke, garbage, or compost bins that have not been emptied or washed out. Trying to mask them with various household deodorizers can often backfire as many people are sensitive to perfumes and scents and will wonder what you are trying to cover up. If you have extensive carpeting, eliminate odours by shampooing it or having it cleaned. Ditto for drapes or curtains. I have heard that a bowl of lemons or limes will absorb household smells, and are attractive in a white bowl. Leaving a bag of charcoal briquets open will absorb some odours like cigarette smoke. Washing walls down with dish detergent and a cup of vinegar will also reduce stubborn odours.

Throughout the interior of the home, take care of all those little fix-it projects that you have been meaning to get to: the broken towel bar, missing handle, cracked window, and leaky faucet. Reduce as much clutter as you can. We all tend to have too much stuff, and homes look smaller when there are objects on every surface or in every corner.

In summary, look at your home through the eyes of a buyer. Would you buy it in its current condition? Staying on top of maintenance issues is a priority before a small problem becomes a costly repair. Creating a checklist for both spring and fall of routine chores such as checking the water heater for rust or leaks, looking under the sinks and around toilets and inspecting your roof for potential issues is a good preventive measure. In the long run, it can increase the value of your home and help it sell in a shorter period of time.

Irene Wilson, a Director of the Southern Georgian Bay Association of Realtors and Chair of Education Committee, is also a Sales Representative for Georgian Bay Dream Team, Remax Georgian Bay Realty Ltd.

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