

Dan's Papers

Issue #34, November 16, 2007

Dan's Hampton & Florida Real Estate

Set The Stage

A realtor walked into my friend's home with a client who was looking to rent in the Hamptons for the summer. The realtor quickly said to the client, "Don't worry. It won't be this cluttered when you move in on Memorial Day weekend." The client never rented my friend's house.

Did you know that it only takes 10 seconds for you to make a first impression with a potential renter? Most renters cannot look past a cluttered and/or unappealing room. And did you know that about 80% of renters use the Internet when searching for a home? So, you want that first impression to be a great one.

There are several things you can do to get your home in "view-ready" mode for a summer rental, whether you are listing it with a realtor or listing it on your own on the many rental-by-owner websites. After all, your goal is to rent your home quickly, for the most money and for the full time period you desire.

So, while this may be difficult to do, start by walking through your home with "renter's eyes." Be as objective as you can. Sometimes this is hard because you are so used to looking at your home's flaws and idiosyncrasies that they've become part of the family. Ask yourself, "If I was looking to rent a home and live in it for an entire month, or summer season, would I want to live here? What would I think of it?"

The following are some steps to get your home in "show-ready" mode. Remember, you need to make your home not only attractive for in-home visits, but also for photos to be placed on realtor and rental-by-owner websites.

1. Enhance your curb appeal. Keep the front steps, decks, yard, driveway and walkways free of leaves and debris. Now that it's fall, put some brightly colored mums in pots on the front steps. Add a large pumpkin and some gourds. Paint the front door a bright and glossy contrasting color to the house. Nothing says a warm welcome like flowers and color.

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2. Get rid of the clutter and personal items. Renters do not want to feel as if they're going to be living in someone else's mess or encroaching on their private space.

Whether it's stacks of magazines, piles of papers on your desk or kitchen counters chock full of cooking gadgets, you're going to have to pack away your personal things anyway when it's time for the renters to move in, so use this opportunity to get an early start. Divide items into discard, donate, sell and keep. Hire a professional organizer if these tasks seem overwhelming. Keep in mind that clutter needs to be removed from the yard and driveway as well. Also, before your renters move in for the summer, remove personal photos from the walls and furniture.

3. Clean, clean, clean. Nothing will turn off a renter more than a house that isn't sparkling clean and smelling fresh.

5. Add a fresh coat of paint to the walls. A house can look new and clean with just a fresh coat of paint.

6. Add some inexpensive updates. New throw pillows in bright colors, updated kitchen and bathroom cabinet hardware and lighting fixtures can go a long way in making a home seem updated without spending lots of money.

7. Lighten and brighten. At this time of year, the days are shorter and the sun is lower in the sky, so your home will look darker than it does in the summer. It will look even darker if there are things blocking natural light from coming through the windows. First, begin outside by trimming bushes and trees that are blocking windows. Inside, take off old, heavy drapery and put up some sheers or Roman, bamboo or parchment shades, all of which let light come in during the day, but provide privacy at night.

7. Spruce up your outdoor deck. A nice outdoor deck can be a big selling feature. To give your outdoor deck new life, first sand the wood. Cover it with a light-colored stain or just clear wood preservative instead of paint to give it a clean look. And make sure there's adequate furniture for the number of renters who will be staying there.

So, now that the warm weather has ended, it's time to roll up your sleeves and get your home ready for rent. Remember, you only have one chance to make a great first impression.

Donna M. Dazzo, President, Designed to Appeal, LLC. A Home Staging Company Serving New York City and the Hamptons. Visit www.designedtoappeal.com for more information.