

SELLING YOUR HOME IN THE WINTER



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In many parts of the country, selling a home during the winter months can be a challenge. Dreary, cold weather and the end-of-the-year holidays can keep buyers away and heighten fears of your home staying on the market longer than expected.

However, there are a few things you can do to enhance “curb appeal.” And when that happens, buyers will take notice.

For example, if your home has been on the market for more than six months, it’s probably time to change the sales approach. There are several factors that could be reviewed with your real estate agent to determine improvements that can be made. Ask for a reassessment of the sales price; it may be too high for the current market. Also, ask the agent for a new or updated marketing plan and ask for a specific explanation of each activity. Marketing your home goes beyond a few ads in the newspaper and a listing on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS); a good agent will do more to get your home sold.

If your current agent doesn’t respond to your satisfaction, you should contact the real estate broker (the owner of the office) and ask for a different sales agent – or, if you’re no longer under any contractual obligation to the firm, it might be time to change real estate offices entirely.

When setting the asking price through a comparative marketing analysis, compare similar homes sold in the winter months. Many owners set their asking price too high because of comparisons with sales prices during peak seasons. Always try to compare like properties sold at the same time of year.

Once you’ve settled on an asking price, its time to spruce up the interior and exterior of your home. Many real estate agents recommend opening as many curtains as possible to add light and color to rooms. Also, it’s suggested that you keep spring and summer pictures of your home out on tables and in clear view. Photos of your front yard flowers or the backyard shade tree in full summer bloom can help swing many buyers in favor of a purchase.

Staying on top of winter maintenance and chores is another sure-fire way of adding value to your home. A neatly shoveled driveway and cleared walkway can add a nice touch. Make sure the furnace is in good working condition and that the room temperature is kept at a comfortable level. Also, check to see that the basement is dry and sealed from any drafts.

Take yourself on a tour of your home. Start in the basement and work your way through the house. More than likely you’ll see many previously undiscovered cluttered spaces and needed repairs that can turn off potential buyers.

Don’t overload your home with holiday decorations, either. The buyer should have a chance to see your home in its everyday condition.