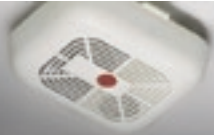


YOUR HOME



TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

MAY 2006



SAFETY FIRST

More than 4,000 Americans die and approximately 25,000 are injured each year in fires. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, an overwhelming number of fires occur in the home. Yours doesn't have to be one of them. Make sure your home—and your family—are safe with these simple tips:

- ★ **Have at least one working smoke alarm.** Test it monthly, keep it free of dust, and replace the battery at least once a year.
- ★ **Prevent electrical fires.** Never overload circuits or extension cords, and don't place cords and wires under rugs, over nails or in high-traffic areas.
- ★ **Use appliances wisely.** Overheating, unusual smells, shorts and sparks are all warning signs that an appliance isn't safe to use.
- ★ **Use portable heaters with care.** Keep anything combustible at least three feet away. Kerosene heaters should be used only where approved by authorities and never use gasoline or camp-stove fuel.
- ★ **Keep fire in the fireplace.** Use fire screens and have your chimney cleaned annually. The creosote buildup can ignite a chimney fire that could easily spread.
- ★ **Consider installing safety sprinklers.** When home fire sprinklers are used with working smoke alarms, your chances of surviving a fire are greatly increased. Plus, sprinklers are affordable and can increase property value and lower insurance rates.
- ★ **Plan your escape from every room in the house.** Stay low to the floor, and never open doors that are hot. Remember to get out before calling for help.

Source: www.usfa.fema.gov

IF YOU'VE GOT IT, FLAUNT IT!

Homeowners often launch a round of home improvements in anticipation of putting their houses on the market. If you are getting ready to tackle a few home upgrades, you'll want to make sure you get the most bang for your buck as you add to the overall appearance of your home. Updated lighting fixtures, fresh paint and new flooring are among the most common face-lifts.

But before you decide to purchase equipment or materials, be sure you know what you may already have. For example, many homeowners don't realize they have hardwood floors underneath a worn and outdated carpet. Take a peek under the carpeting, and you might just reveal something spectacular. Refurbishing the original hardwood floors could add real value to your home.

Those heavy draperies may have been custom-made to your grandma's specifications back in 1975, but there's no reason to keep them if they don't appeal to the tastes of current home buyers. Consider taking down heavy or dated draperies to let in more light. Simple sheers tend to give prospective buyers the impression of window treatments without taking away from the home's intrinsic beauty.

Spruce things up by polishing up any brass hardware in and around the home. Sparkling doorknobs, keyholes, knockers and kick plates give instant curb appeal.

Just remember: When you prepare your home for sale, try to disregard your own tastes and style and look at the home as objectively as possible. Doing so may reveal valuable opportunities you never anticipated.





Paul Smoock/Getty Images

VALUE SYSTEM

For many home buyers, understanding what makes one home more valuable than another seems a bit arbitrary. But the reality is that various features can add thousands of dollars to the value of a home. Some of these include:

- Square footage: How big is the house?
- Design: Is it a colonial or ranch?
- Floor plan: How well do the rooms “flow”?
- Quality of the neighborhood: Is it a highly desirable locale?
- Quality of the public school system: Whether or not you have children who will attend the schools is irrelevant.
- Proximity to public transportation, religious centers, shopping and schools.
- Quality of construction: Was it built by a reputable builder?
- Lot size, view and quality of landscaping.
- How busy the street is. Houses located on “double-yellow line” streets are less valuable than those on streets less traveled.

Your CRS agent can help you understand why these factors are important and how best to gauge your home’s true value. Your agent can also perform a comparative market analysis — an informal analysis of comparable homes in the neighborhood — and recommend a certified appraiser, who can calculate the value of a home at any given time.

Say Yes to CRS

Buying or selling a home can seem like an overwhelming task. But the right REALTOR® can make the process easier—and more profitable.

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