

Simply Real Estate

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Set the Stage for Home Selling Success—Even Now!

by M.L. Archibald

The holidays are coming—and that usually means a slow real-estate market. If all the world's a stage and your little corner of the world has a "For Sale" sign on the front lawn, maybe it's time to take a look around and decide which areas of your house lend themselves best to the fine art of staging.

A trip to the supermarket is all that is necessary for confident do-it-yourselfers, you say? After all, you're one of those enviable people who know how to look at a photograph of a gorgeous home decorated for the holidays and take off from there, right?

Wrong. The problem is that in doing so you may be missing the whole point, because that's not really what staging is all about. It's not about expressing your personality. When you stage a home, you need to minimize those personal touches. Here is how it works, in the words of accredited staging professionals (ASP's): "Home staging is a red-hot trend in real estate sales. Sonoma County homeowners and Realtors® are increasingly embracing home staging as an effective tool to showcase their listings," says Jenny Lauck of Amazing Staging.

"Even in a seller's market, there are certain properties that lack interest. Dirty or cluttered homes quickly gain a reputation among Realtors®. Buyers remember a home for the current owner's belongings, rather than the fabulous view or unique floor plan."

Staging in Winter

The most obvious tip is, of course, if you have a fireplace, use it. There's nothing that creates psychological warmth in the home more than a fire. And of course, it's the best place to use as a focal point of a room. Take down the family photos, and dress your mantel with holly, winterberries and pine boughs.

"Staging a home for sale creates a neutral and yet dynamic environment," says Mona Reeder ASP, IAHP, a Sonoma County based accredited staging professional. "Removing distractions allows buyers to envision the possibilities of the property."

"Before we worked with Mona, we had lots of people tour our home. After 15 months on the market with no interest, we knew we needed help," said Sandy Steele, whose Willits property entered escrow a month after following staging instructions provided by Amazing Staging.

"Staging works!"

"When you have a vacant home, staging is critical," said Bob Marks, a Realtor® with Frank Howard Allen Realty in Marin County. After consulting with the homeowners, Amazing Staging

staged his vacant listing. Four days after entering the market, the home received multiple offers, at up to \$30,000 over the asking price. Marks explained, "Staging brought the house to life. Adding minimal furniture and classy accents made all the difference. My clients were thrilled."

Let Them Imagine It's Theirs

Engage as many of the senses as possible: Glittering lights and a glowing fire invite the eyes; the softness of chenille or velvet throws invite touch; carols or soft music on the stereo please the ear; while cinnamon buns in the oven and potpourri or spiced cider simmering on the stove subliminally seduce the nose. And don't forget the pine boughs.