

As Seen in  
Condo Living  
Magazinecondo  
LIVING

# curtain call

Selling your home nowadays isn't as easy as it was just months ago. *With Calgary's real estate shifting back to a buyer's market*, your home may sit longer than you would like. However, with home staging tools available, the opportunity is in your hands.



Symmetry helps show a room's potential and allows the eye to take in a scene.

LESLEY JONES, AN INTERIOR DECORATOR and home staging professional, says the first thing to remember is when you list your home, it becomes a product of the market. You are no longer adding personal touches for yourself but instead for the buyers. You can take it a step further by neutralizing your colour scheme to appeal to a wider demographic.

According to Barb Kelly, director of interior design for Albi Homes, and Chris Lu, senior marketing manager for

STAGING A HOME HELPS  
BUYERS ENVISION A LIFESTYLE



Clear countertops and fresh cut flowers help showcase the kitchen.

and accessories accumulated over time, but to a buyer, it just seems messy and takes away from the structure of the house. Keep a "less is more" mentality while you prepare your home for showings. Beginning with curb appeal, Jones warns the exterior of the home should not be neglected as "people are easily put off and their first impression is made within the first 90 seconds." Keeping grass short and flower beds neat if not in a condo where maintenance is included and cleaning exterior lights and windows make a lasting impression. Furthermore, it forecasts what the buyer can expect for the interior of the home.

In the heart of every home lies the kitchen, and to that end Jones says clean worktops are a must. "Clear out the greasy toaster oven and hide the knives because it's bad feng shui. Instead, display a really nice coffee pot if you have one or fill a bowl with green apples or lemons to add some fresh colours."

Next is the family room. As each room must have a key focal point, Kelly pictures what a family would do with the space and works from there. "Can you see families socializing in the area? Maybe the focus is on the entertainment unit," she says. So pick one focal point and accessorize around it. Edit out the excess magazines, DVDs and the large television to open up the space.

Also "allow the seasons to dictate some of the furnishings," suggests Jones, adding heavy

Sabal Homes, staging a home, be it a show home or personal address, offers buyers an opportunity to envision themselves in the space. "There is an emotional appeal," says Lu, "that allow homebuyers to visualize the whole package." Nonetheless, it is still the design of the home you are trying

to sell, so showcase the wall space, floor space and countertops.

To start, Jones advises sellers to declutter and de-personalize by removing collections and family photographs in order to set a clean backdrop for the prospective buyer. She says you are accustomed to your own furnishings

## Bathrooms may be the smallest rooms, but they can also be THE MOST IMPRESSIONABLE.

rugs, drapes and blankets should be packed up in the summer as they weigh down the room.

The experts also advise scaling the furniture to the room size, as too-large pieces could weigh down a room. “Don’t compete with the bones of the house,” says Kelly. “You don’t want to take away from the plan by over-furnishing a space.”

For the master bedroom, always remove valuables, but do invest in nice hotel quality linens. Bedding should be crisp, simple and clean with no heavy patterns and dirty laundry should never be out in the open, according to Jones.

If you plan on getting rid of your old furniture, you may consider renting. Jones rents out neutral pieces including accessories that can help market the home. But if renting isn’t for you, you may want to buy new furniture for the showings. You will

be inconvenienced with moving the furniture twice, but your house could sell that much quicker.

Bathrooms may be the smallest rooms, but they can also be the most impressionable. Be sure to hide toilet brushes, cleaning supplies and even toothbrushes. Everyone knows they’re around, but nobody wants to see them. Last but not least in the loo, Jones suggests white towels for an appealing spa look.

For condo owners lucky enough to have one, a top-selling point these days is the garage, which should be de-cluttered to show off size and potential, but if you need to pack boxes neatly in a corner buyers will understand.

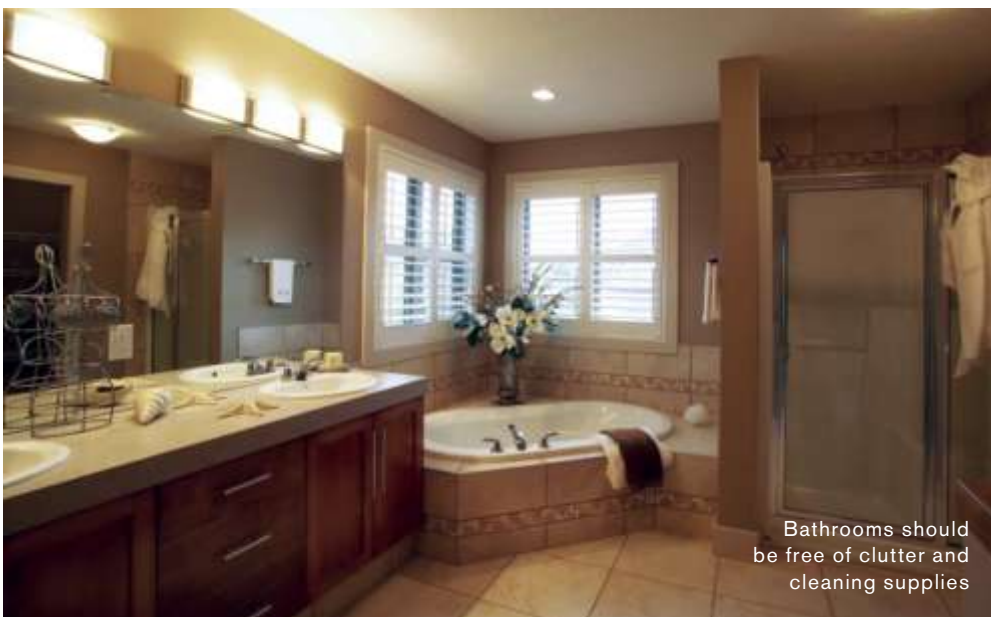
Most will also understand if you have pets, but be sure to clear the home of excess chew toys, large dog food bags and litter boxes. Any pet odours should be eliminated and cat and dog hair swept up.



Along with these tips are some general guidelines. Lu recommends replacing silk plants with real plants. Alternatively, if you must go with fake, use cacti or bonsai varieties. “Branches, curly willows and sticks are a good substitute,” he says. “And it’s a more updated look.” In addition Lu aims for symmetry when staging his show homes as it is visually appealing and helps the eye take in the scene.

Kelly stages her show homes to appeal to families rather than having one dominating feel. Albi show homes are not overly feminine so that a man can walk through the home and still have an emotional connection, says Kelly.

Meanwhile, children’s bedrooms are fully furnished and allow buyers to picture where furniture and desks can go. Once buyers can picture themselves in your home, you’re job is done. It’s a worthwhile effort that will take rearranging and decluttering each room to its highest potential. “But people will remember your house if you stage it,” says Jones. And who doesn’t want their house to be remembered out of the hundreds listed these days? **CL**



Bathrooms should be free of clutter and cleaning supplies