

Selling Your Home:

Setting the Stage for Real Estate Success



If you're contemplating placing a "for sale" sign in your yard, the current real estate scene may seem daunting. It is definitely a buyer's market in every sense, and buyers have a host of options to consider. Your home has always been your castle, and now you've got to get someone else to see it as their castle. What can you do to elevate your property, especially when other castles are plentiful?

written by Kondria Woods
photographed by Josh Norris and Oliver Yu

"In today's competitive real estate market, home staging is becoming a necessity," said **Tanya Venable** of Fresh Eye Designs. "The increased inventory in every location affords home buyers the opportunity to be very discerning, and they often view dozens of homes before they make a purchase. It is critical that sellers make their homes stand out from the competition, and professional home staging will give them that advantage."

According to **Susan Douglas**, CSP, and owner of Susan Douglas Home Staging, the home staging trend has been popular in Canada, Europe and on the West Coast for some time. She said the trend is definitely catching on in Greenville.



ABOVE: Marci Tolliver, left, and Tanya Venable of Fresh Eye Designs blend an understanding of the real estate market with an interior design sensibility for home staging success.

PHOTO BY JOSH NORRIS

"The awareness comes from a more savvy population and the younger market," Douglas said. "They're a little more discerning, and they want a



move-in condition house. The people selling the homes are older, so there's a real disconnect. Staging is a bridge for overcoming that disconnection."

Kimberly Dunn, ASP, IAHS, and owner of Staged 4 You, added, "There are several factors that have led to the popularity of staging. The overall slowdown in the housing market has resulted in properties staying on the market much longer and has rapidly increased the inventory of homes for sale. The balance of power has shifted to the buyer in today's market. Many homeowners who are eager to sell their property have turned to staging as a way to differentiate themselves from the other homes they are competing with for prospective buyers.



TOP LEFT: *Sweetest scene: Like a blank canvas, this empty room offers Kimberly Dunn, ASP, IAHS and owner of Staged 4 You the inspiration to "set the stage."*



MIDDLE LEFT: *A tasteful grouping of furniture and accessories are brought in and arranged...*



BOTTOM LEFT: *...add an area rug for complementary dimension, and viola! Dunn's creative eye has led to a warm, inviting area that could lead potential buyers to make themselves right at home... literally!*

PHOTOS BY OLIVER YU

eye for staging. She offered several recommendations for sellers who are considering engaging a home staging professional.

"Check their qualifications and ask for referrals," she said. "There is nothing like having a history of satisfied customers. Make sure the staging professional is trained in the philosophies of home staging. One of the biggest misconceptions is that interior decorating and home staging is essentially the same thing. Interior decorating is focused on personalizing a home to an individual or family's tastes. Home staging is focused on de-personalizing a home and appealing to the broadest range of

» page 78

"Also, home staging has received a good deal of exposure in the media, such as HGTV's home staging programs, which has helped to educate consumers and real-estate professionals about exactly what home staging is and the role it can play in the overall marketing plan for a property.

"Until recently, home staging was largely a West Coast phenomenon founded by Barb Schwarz. It ultimately became a standard piece of the home-selling process in that part of the country, very much like the home inspection and home appraisal. More home owners and real-estate professionals in other parts of the country have taken note of the success of home staging and have embraced staging as a valuable tool."

Dunn's degree in Interior Design and 13 years in the home furnishing industry with both Drexel Heritage and Stanley Furniture Company have given her a strong foundation and a discerning

BELOW: *Susan Douglas, CSP and owner of Susan Douglas Home Staging, has seen the home staging trend pick up steam in the Greenville area.*

PHOTO BY JOSH NORRIS



buyer tastes possible. It is important to remember that the way we live in our home is very different from the way we sell our house.”

Douglas, who is a member of the Real Estate Staging Association, agreed, adding, “Staging is not decorating. That’s one of the

first things people think, but that’s a misnomer. The priority of home staging is to enhance a home’s universal appeal and remove the distractions that can make a buyer see the seller’s personality versus the features of the house.”

Venable and **Marci Tolliver**, owner of Fresh Eye Designs, bring a blend of floral design, decorating and real-estate experience to their clients, and have noted the distinctive attributes of Greenville’s prospective home buyers.

“The majority of home buyers in our area are under 35 years old,” she said. “We design spaces that will appeal to this target demographic. By using our knowledge of real estate and home staging trends, we highlight the positive features of a home, creating balance, warmth and sophistication.”

Home staging is more than just moving the furniture around and hanging a few pictures. It can actually be just the opposite, and the results can snag a sold

sign for the lucky seller. Just ask someone who knows.

“I have seen the energy in a house change like night

and day. The sellers get excited,” said Valerie Miller of the Marchant Company.

Miller’s four years in real estate have been enhanced by her previous ownership experience with Budget Rental Car.

“When I work with sellers, I tell them ‘this is a product for sale, not your home.’ It’s a product to be marketed. If the home doesn’t have colors that are inviting and way too many accessories, it doesn’t have the same draw as a staged home. I always recommend staging, and it’s a part of what I do when I go on a listing appointment. I like to bring another person for an objective perspective.”

That’s when a home stager like Dunn will cross the seller’s threshold. She said many times she receives calls to stage a property after it has been on the market for an extended period of time.

Home staging is focused on de-personalizing a home and appealing to the broadest range of buyer tastes possible.



ABOVE: “Many homeowners who are eager to sell their property have turned to staging as a way to differentiate themselves,” Dunn said.

LOWER LEFT: Dunn’s attention to depersonalizing a house allows perspective buyers to see an uncluttered view of what could be their future home.

PHOTOS BY OLIVER YU

“The challenge is that once a potential buyer has been through a property, the odds are slim that they will revisit if they had a negative first impression,” Dunn said. “Rather than viewing home staging as a tool of last resort, it is much more advantageous to invest in home staging before the first prospect visits the property. Ideally, you want every potential buyer to experience the property when it is staged and placed in showcase condition.

“People have a lot invested emotionally in their homes, and our homes are an extension of ourselves, our family, and are very personal. This makes it very difficult for most people to be objective and realistic about what changes they may need to make in order to prepare their home for sale.

“If you take the ‘do it yourself’ approach, you really have to force yourself to lose the emotional attachment so you aren’t tempted to leave on display those personal items that mark the home as ‘yours.’ At a minimum, it’s worthwhile to get a staging consultation from a certified home stager who can provide you with a detailed action plan.” ■

