

A dark teal silhouette of a town skyline. It includes several buildings of varying heights, a prominent church steeple with a white circle, and several trees of different shapes and sizes. The skyline is set against a white background.

# **Seller Handbook**

# Getting the home ready for market and close inspection

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In a perfect world, every home would be listed for sale with all systems and surfaces in tip-top shape, right? But we get it—not everyone has the means or energy for these tasks. Addressing potential “red flags” that Buyers notice and that home inspectors discover can benefit Sellers in the long run. We hope this checklist will be helpful as you begin the process of selling your property!

## Address deferred maintenance and known repairs

Buyers expect things to be in great working order. We want to be proactive so there are very few issues with the home inspection, so go ahead and take care of these problems we see over and over again! Our goal is to get you top dollar for the property by maximizing the home’s appeal while also disclosing any known issues that may hinder a successful home selling process.

- Roof** - Roofers will typically evaluate the roof at no cost. If hail damage is found, repair or file an insurance claim for new roof (Buyers love a newer roof!) Fixing leaks, loose or broken shingles, exposed nails, replacing worn flashing boots and missing diverter flashing are generally fairly inexpensive repairs. If the needed repairs are too expensive for you now, we should discuss the pros/cons of offering the repair cost as a credit to the Buyer at closing.
- Cracks in the foundation and/or paving** - Consider getting a structural evaluation for full disclosure to buyers. If major repairs are needed, obtain cost estimates to have the work completed or offer to credit Buyers at closing.
- Gutters and downspouts** - Clean out gutters and make sure all components are in good working order. Gutters should not leak. Downspouts should divert water away from the foundation.
- Exterior drainage** - Make sure all ground is sloped away from the home. Standing water or dampness in crawlspaces and basements need to be addressed and disclosed on the property disclosure.

- ❑ **Safety** - Address any safety concerns such as a notorious tripping, slipping, or falling hazard; code violations, etc. Make a plan to protect and secure any valuables, firearms, or weapons.
- ❑ **Paint** - Replace rotten exterior trim, railings, or deck boards. Power wash and repaint any worn or chipped exterior paint. Touchup paint as needed around the front door.
- ❑ **Algae and mildew** - Frequently seen on gutters, siding, and decks on the north sides of homes. Power wash or gently clean with something like a TSP solution to avoid unnecessary “mold” drama!
- ❑ **Pests** - Inspect the foundation for termite mud tunnels. Inspect wood boards for holes made by carpenter bees or wildlife and skillfully repair as needed. Treat for spiders, ants, cave crickets and any known critters.
- ❑ **Trees and brush** - Remove all dead limbs, trees, and shrubs for optimal Feng Shui in the home selling process. Trim vegetation to maintain 12” clearance to the foundation and siding. Remove overgrown vines and weeds.
- ❑ **Windows** - Make a plan for pre-empting window issues. Repair or replace any missing or damaged window screens. Discuss the pros and cons with your agent if you have broken panes, cloudy glazing, windows that don’t stay open or are painted shut.
- ❑ **Doors** - Replace damaged weather stripping and make sure all hardware latches properly. Address any doors, including garage doors, which may not function properly.
- ❑ **HVAC** - Have all HVAC systems cleaned & tuned up. Replace all air filters—bonus points if you write the replacement date on the air filters. Clean out dryer vents. Discuss the pros and cons of offering a home warranty with the listing.
- ❑ **Plumbing** - Address any leaking faucets, slow drains, running toilets, problems with the dishwasher or garbage disposer, water heater, etc.
- ❑ **Electrical** - Many sellers are unaware of life-safety issues such as ungrounded circuits or GFI outlets that are malfunctioning or missing within 6 feet of water. If you know of some electrical item that isn’t functioning properly, such as a dead outlet or flickering light, have it fixed.
- ❑ **Light bulbs** - Replace any burned out light bulbs. Make sure all fixtures in a single space have bulbs of matching brightness and color.
- ❑ **Home energy audits** - If you have the time, energy audits can find and correct a number of concerns – often at no charge when there are rebates available through the power or gas companies.
- ❑ **Nuisances** - Address minor repairs for the quirks that sellers typically ignore such as door latches that don’t catch, hinges that may need adjusting, wobbly ceiling fans that need balancing, stove burners that don’t work, etc.

# Making the best impression

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It is a Seller's best interest to present the home as neat and aesthetically pleasing as possible. Buyers will often choose whether or not to see a home based on what they see in the photos online.

## Declutter, clean and freshen

Less is more! We want spaces to feel open, inviting, clean. Clutter and odors distract buyers from focusing on falling in love with the home. Completing these items will not only improve the look & feel of the home, but will also give you a head start in the moving process by purging or packing items you may not need everyday.

- Depersonalize** - Remove personal photographs that may be on display. Remove items displayed on the refrigerator.
- House plants & flowers** - Remove any silk flower displays. Remove any struggling or spindly houseplants. Any remaining houseplants should be exceptionally healthy, free from dust, leaf shined, in coordinating neutral pots.
- Shelves** - A general rule of thumb is to remove at least half the content from display shelves. Books should be edited to only include hardcover bindings and may be edited to just one color of bindings. Think "magazine worthy" for shelves.
- Countertops** - Less is more. Should be absolutely clear of cluttering appliances, utensils, toiletries, etc. If it doesn't add to the aesthetic of the room, consider storing it out of sight.
- Bathrooms** - Keep just the bare necessities in the shower and cabinets. Wash shower curtains and install new shower curtain liners. Clean, remove, or replace anything dingy that does not contribute to a fresh & clean bathroom.
- Cabinets** - Buyers will look inside cabinets and test how drawers open and close. They don't need to be cleaned out for photos, but they do need to be purged, cleaned, and organized prior to showings. Update or fix hardware if needed.
- Floors** - Less is more. Make rooms feel larger by freeing floors from excess furniture, baskets, etc. We like to see the baseboards! Carpet and rugs should be clean and in good repair. Remove any unnecessary rugs that clutter and obscure buyers from appreciating the floors.

- ❑ **Walls** - Edit wall décor to be neutral, minimal, and strategic. Remove any mass-market décor that can give a cheap impression of the home. Edit children's art and amateur photography to support a decluttered and neutral environment. Wall hooks should be free of any items. Clean or touch up paint as needed.
- ❑ **Tabletops** - Free of all items except perhaps a lamp or book. Dining tables may be formally set with neutral linens, chargers, plates, cloth napkins, and a centerpiece that is consistent in style to the rest of the home.
- ❑ **Pets** - Remove pet beds, toys, and feeding equipment for photos; and minimize their presence during showings. Wash pets & their bedding to eliminate odors. Litter boxes must be kept fresh and clean at all times during the listing.
- ❑ **Kids** - Less is more. Pack up or purge any items not needed until after the move. Diaper containers must be kept fresh and clean at all times during the listing period. Clean handprints off windows, doors, walls, pulls, etc.
- ❑ **Furniture** - Edit furnishings to improve circulation in and around rooms. Remove excess furnishings that may make spaces feel crowded. Create conventional and social sitting arrangements. Avoid blocking windows.
- ❑ **Closets** - At a minimum, the closet should not appear "stuffed" and the floors should be cleared to reveal the baseboards inside. We want closets to have empty space to give the illusion of ample storage. Pack up out-of-season items and purge things you no longer need. If running out of time, save closets for after photos.
- ❑ **Garages and sheds** - Should give the impression that it is tidy, organized, and easy for sellers to move out. Buyers understand you are moving, so keep packed boxes as neat and orderly as possible. Garages are not typically photographed.
- ❑ **Deep clean** - Everything should sparkle: window glass, shades and blinds, baseboards and trim, light switches, tile grout, kitchen sinks and appliances, inside the refrigerator, ceiling fans and light fixtures, behind the washer/dryer, etc. Apply correct-colored Old English furniture polish on worn wood cabinet fronts.
- ❑ **Freshen** - Use appropriate ventilation and cleaning practices to eliminate cooking odors, pet odors, and damp smells from bathrooms. Running a dehumidifier does wonders to clear odors in basements. Consider using an ozone machine for hard to remove odors. Avoid air fresheners, as they can trigger sensitive buyers. Trapp brand candles and air fresheners are expensive but preferred over any others.
- ❑ **Landscape** - Focus on areas that the buyers will see first—around the driveway and front porch. Complete mowing, edging, weeding, mulching, leaf blowing, and power washing at least 12-24 hours before photos.

# Staging options

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For sellers who chose to put a little more effort towards preparing the home for the most lucrative sale, we can discuss specific strategies that are appropriate for your situation. The following are common staging improvements that can help make a home appear more appealing.

- ❑ **Curb appeal improvements** - Consider new house numbers that are large and add a welcoming style. Replace or repaint the front door. Change out cheap-looking front door hardware and porch lights. Update a sad mailbox. Install magazine-worthy front planters. Plant colorful annuals to brighten the front entry. Install an extra wide welcome mat. Add magnetic ornamental hardware to plain garage doors.
- ❑ **Outdoor living** - All outdoor porches or patio spaces should have appropriately scaled furnishings to inspire a social happy hour, family dinners, or intimate conversations. Neatly stack wood in outdoor fire pits.
- ❑ **Kitchen** - Consider adding inexpensive under-cabinet lighting to give a luxurious ambiance to the kitchen. Fresh linens and upscale soap dispensers should be neutral. Consider a strategic coffee or cookbook display to slow buyers down as they explore the kitchen.
- ❑ **Bathrooms** - As simple as fresh, neutral linens and appropriately scaled apothecary jars with white cotton balls, Q-tips, and cotton rounds.
- ❑ **Bedrooms** - Clean, solid, neutral bedding without wrinkles is best. Pillows should be plump. Having two matching bedside tables with matching bedside lamps makes the room feel balanced. Rearrange as needed so the headboard can be seen upon entering the room without the foot of the bed pointing directly through the doorway.
- ❑ **Closets and cabinets** - Some sellers choose to present these storage areas in a way that triggers buyers to feel the “aspiration” of being highly organized. Use consistently styled storage containers such as matching baskets or labeled clear containers to make storage areas orderly and beautiful. Hanging clothes can be color-arranged with darker colors to the left, lighter colors to the right. Neatly arrange shoe shelves with “toes” pointing outward. Empty space makes storage look larger.

- ❑ **Paint** - Paint consistent, neutral color throughout the house. Avoid yellowing colors. Lighter colors will make rooms feel larger. Consider painting all walls (eggshell finish) and trim (semi-gloss finish) the same color, such as Pure White SW7005, to give an elevated “designer” appearance.
- ❑ **Light fixtures** - Change out “dated” or “cheap-looking” fixtures to ones that are more timeless, consistent with the style of the home, or appealing to current style trends. Ideally LED bulbs should all be 3000 Kelvin—not too yellow and not too white—any higher Kelvin will appear blue and institutional. Only use 2700 Kelvin LED bulbs to give areas a moody ambiance and slight yellow glow.
- ❑ **Cords** - Remove unsightly cords from computer, TV, charging, and audio-visual accessories even if it makes certain features unusable for photographs and the listing period.
- ❑ **Books** - Consider displaying only hardback books with the jacket sleeves removed. These can then be color-arranged with darker colors to the left and lighter colors to the right, or display only one color-way of book bindings –such as only white book bindings—that adds a designer visual to the space.
- ❑ **Smart home features** - Replace outdated thermostats with a Nest. If updating door hardware, choose a smart lock.
- ❑ **Staging companies** - For an additional fee to the sellers, there are local staging companies who can design and install temporary furnishings within strategic spaces of the home. If interested, we can provide you with contact information.
- ❑ **Digital staging** - For spaces with little or no furniture, the listing agent may have certain photos virtually staged. It takes additional time for the professional photos to be digitally staged. Discuss with your listing agent if this is an option to be considered.

# Marketing plan

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Sellers and listing agents should carefully coordinate realistic expectations when it comes to the timeline required to get the home ready for photos and showings with respect to any other dates that are important to the Seller—such as best days to be away from the home, moving, closing dates, etc.

## Marketing dates

- ❑ **Setting the price:** The listing agent will advise what price point makes most sense given how the home compares within the current market. The listing agent will provide an estimate of seller proceeds based on a likely sale price, closing costs, and payoff amounts.
- ❑ **Signing the listing agreement:** Establish the offering price, dates, and professional fee to work with Flyer Homes as your listing brokerage.
- ❑ **Scheduling photos:** It may take 1-2 weeks before the photographer's first availability, so getting on the schedule is a great deadline to motivate the process for decluttering, cleaning, freshening, and staging.
- ❑ **Day of photos:** Before the photographer arrives, the lawn should be freshly mowed. Blow leaves and debris away from driveway, curb, walkways, porches & patios. No vehicles should be visibly parked in front of the home. Turn on all lights, open all curtains, blinds & shades. Turn off ceiling fans. Clear all items from kitchen and bathroom counters. Toilet lids should be closed. Beds should be impeccably made.
- ❑ **Completing disclosures and extra information:** Sellers will be asked to complete a Property Disclosure, a Lead-based Paint Disclosure (for homes built prior to 1978), and fill out forms detailing Average Utilities, a List of Improvements, and the Seller's Top 10 Favorite Things about the home.
- ❑ **Coming soon dates:** Discuss the pros & cons of having a "Coming Soon" period of no more than 14 days before the listings is "Active" on the market. One high quality photo is required to begin this early advertising online. Yard signage may be installed to build interest. However, no showings are allowed during the Coming Soon period.



- Active listing date:** The day many buyers will first see the listing online. Discuss the pros & cons of going Active on a weekday vs. a weekend. Will the first active day also be the first day when showings may occur?
- Showing date:** Carefully coordinate what date the showings may begin for prospective buyers.
- Open house dates:** Discuss pros & cons of scheduling broker previews and/or public open houses.

## Marketing materials

- Custom signage and web domain:** The listing agent will advise on best signage and custom web domains available to make your listing memorable & sharable.
- Printed marketing materials:** To be installed in the home prior to the first showings.
- Reverse prospecting:** A unique tool available to cooperating brokers of the MLS to personally reach out to buyers' agents whose buyer's search resulted in the listing being sent to at least one buyer.
- Paid advertising:** The listing agent will advise what forms of paid advertising may be most beneficial to make relevant buyers aware of the listing. (Insert stats about Flyer advertising reaches online and social)

## Day of showing

Leave the home "show ready" at least 15 minutes before the scheduled showing appointment to eliminate stress and maintain privacy. Leave the home clean, fresh, & well lit:

- Tidy floors and counters
- All sinks and faucets to be clean
- Toilet lids down
- Put away pet food and beds
- Vent any bathroom or cooking odors
- Take out trash
- Curtains and shades open
- All lights and lamps on
- Calm music on, if available

# The showing process

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## Scheduling a showing

Coordination is the key. Before a sales associate from our firm or a cooperating broker shows or previews your property, a representative from ShowingTime Appointment Center will contact you to confirm the appointment. You will then be notified, typically via text unless otherwise specified, with the showing request. If the requested time is acceptable, you can confirm the appointment. If it is not acceptable, please propose a different or better time to your listing agent and/or the Appointment Center.

## Away from cell service

Let your listing agent know if you may be away from cell service or unreachable for a specified amount of time so that temporary arrangements can be made to confirm appointments during times you are not available.

## Timing

Ordinarily, you'll get plenty of notice for a showing request, change, or cancellation. In cases where a buyer asks to see the property as soon as possible, a showing could be requested to take place within an hour or so. If you need more advance notice for showings or know specific times when showings cannot happen, we need to program your preferences with the Appointment Center. Similarly, we need to program the Appointment Center for any days and times when quicker showings may occur.

## Special instructions

Any special instructions you may have should be given to your listing agent (such as information on pets, parking or security) to be saved in your property file and thoroughly explained to the sales associate who requests the showing. There are some situations where a Seller may require a Buyer to share their lender's prequalification letter or a proof of funds letter on their bank's letterhead, so inform your listing agent if we need to make this requirement known on the MLS notes to other agents.

## Keeping track of showings

Download the ShowingTime app and log-in as "Seller" to easily manage or view the scheduled showings.

## **The showing**

The sales associate will use the bluetooth lock box fixed on the property (typically on a front door or railing) to access the key(s) or key code. It is typical for a sales associate to leave you their business card in a conspicuous location inside the home.

## **Previews**

Occasionally, sales associates may schedule an appointment to preview your property without a buyer. By familiarizing themselves with what's on the market, they will be in an excellent position to alert a buyer to a property that fits the bill.

## **Unscheduled appointments**

For your own safety and sanity, ask any people who show up to view your property without an appointment to telephone the listing agent to request a showing. Even if someone identifies themselves as a licensed sales associate, instruct them to make an appointment request through your listing agent. Do not let strangers into your home!

## **Feedback**

After each scheduled showing is completed, the buyer's agent will be automatically emailed with a request to provide feedback. Specific feedback questions address the interest of the buyer, the overall experience of the showing, the opinion on price, and what it might take to have their buyer make an offer today. Once received and reviewed by the listing agent, feedback will be forwarded to the Sellers. If buyers' agents fail to provide feedback, the listing agent will attempt to get feedback through other means.

