



The Value Of Home Staging

Cheri Kasella of HAVEN Home Staging and Redesign on the benefits of staging a home for sale

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Speed is a crucial variable in home sales. If you are selling your home, you want it sold quickly, and not just to find an end to an often complicated and stressful process; most realtors recommend decreasing the asking price by roughly three percent every three to four months that a home is on the market. An investment that supports the speed of sale, then, is one with a potentially high upside.

One of the best ways to invest in speed is by hiring a professional home stager. By arranging your home to appeal to the broadest pool of buyers, home staging increases the chances that one of the first candidates through your doors will become a buyer. ESTATENVY spoke with Cheri Kasella, the owner of HAVEN Home Staging and Redesign, to learn how home-staging professionals maximize a home's design potential to attract buyers quickly.

What is the primary objective a seller should have in mind when staging a home for sale?

The main focus should be creating a look that appeals to the widest demographic. That said, staging should not only allow the buyer to see the features and scale of the home but also, in some cases, draw attention away from certain features. For example, a small or uniquely shaped room can be staged in a way that helps buyers picture how the room might accommodate an appealing furniture layout.

Staging is also about creating a warm, welcoming feeling that makes the buyer feel immediately at home. Gone are the days of putting out a rug, sofa and coffee table and leaving it up to the buyer to imagine what they would do with their furniture. A savvy stager will use art, accessories, pillows and lighting to create a welcoming space.

Without knowing the personal tastes of potential buyers, how do you stage a home so that it appeals to the widest audience?

Our company takes a less-is-more approach to staging. You don't want a room to feel sparse or sterile but you have to de-personalize the space and remove all of the seller's items. You don't want photographs, family-themed decor, toys and personal collections to be visible because they make the buyer feel like they are in someone else's home, and you want them to feel like they are in *their* home.

You want to avoid any specific style as much as possible. Accessories and wall decor should be minimal and placed strategically. You also want to keep rooms as open as possible to give a sense of space. We always remove any extra furniture to open up each room as much as possible.

What are some common mistakes people make when staging their home?

The most common issue we run into is a client who is hanging onto the notion that the property is still their home and not a product they are trying to sell. That can be a hard thing to process, especially if you've lived in a home for a long time, but it's essential to make that switch to thinking of the home as a product and to take the advice of the professionals—not just the stager by the realtor as well—who know how to sell a home quickly and for the highest price.

What are the best ways for sellers to maximize the impact of a well-staged home?

First impressions are, of course, crucial, and these days first impressions are made online. It's essential that a home is photographed well so that the listing will catch buyers' eyes online. Likewise, social media is becoming increasingly important, both in terms of spreading the listing and advertising open houses and showings.

Some sellers may be hesitant to rearrange or re-furnish their homes while they are still living in them. How do you make sure they remain comfortable throughout the process?

Trust. You have to get a seller to trust you with their investment, which is both financial and emotional, and that trust has to be established when first meeting with the seller. We are always careful to explain exactly what changes we envision and why we believe those changes will be beneficial, and we make sure they understand it's up to them whether or not our proposal fits their timeline, budget and lifestyle. That way, even though we are implementing our plans, the seller has some control over the process and doesn't feel like we are completely invading their life.

A lot of sellers are wary of taking on any additional costs. How do you show them that staging is worth the investment?

A lot of people get very overwhelmed with the selling process and the associated costs, and they don't see how they can afford a stager. We are very sensitive to that. We try to show sellers that even a small investment can go a long way. You can hire a stager to come and do a consultation for a nominal fee, and they will provide a lot of great advice that will go a long way in getting the home ready for sale. Ideally, that consultation will also demonstrate to the seller that investing in home staging will pay off when the home is sold quickly and for the best price.