

Say You Saw It In . . . The Independent & Free Press Real Estate Digest

Preparing for an open house with the help of your real estate agent

An open house can be an essential part of the marketing plan your realtor develops for you when selling your home.

In real estate, there are generally two kinds of open houses: One type is solely for realtors. This is usually held when your home is first listed and give other realtors an opportunity to assess your home against the needs of other buyers. The second is an advertised open house for potential buyers. These are usually held on weekend afternoons over a period of time. Most of us are familiar with the roadside signs.

If at all possible, the seller should stay away from the home during an open house. Let your realtor take care of all the details and act on your behalf. Your presence could be distracting for a number of reasons: Potential buyers may rush their visit to avoid disturbing you. They may be hesitant to comment about your home with you present. The best way to ensure potential buyers feel relaxed to ask questions and really see the property is to avoid being there.

Not just your presence, but that of a dog or a cat could be a major distraction to some buyers. Your realtor may advise you to temporarily remove any pets from the property during an open house.

Since your home will be open to the public, your realtor will also offer suggestions on precautions you can take to make it a satisfying experience for all involved. You should remove or lock away any valuables, particularly small articles that can be easily removed such as jewelry, camera equipment, money, compact discs, valuable coins or other collections. As added security, your realtor should ask all visitors to sign in, leaving their name, address and telephone number. They should also make every effort to accompany all visitors through their tour of your home.

As the seller, you should attend to any potential hazards by removing any wires or furniture pieces people might trip over, ensuring stairs and floors aren't slippery and keeping all spaces well lighted. In winter or on rainy days, provide a place for shoes and coats near the entrance. Also, avoid cooking foods with strong odors (unless they are pleasant odors) before an open house.

In planning ahead for the first open house, ask your realtor to prepare an information sheet that includes one or more photos of the property, ads as well as a list of key features and advantages. The realtor will place copies of this sheet on the kitchen counter, hallway or dining room for buyers to refer to as they walk through the home and take with them when they leave.

Preparing for an open house also involves spending time with your realtor discussing your home's best features and the things you might do to help it sell more quickly. He or she can offer a lot of advice on how to make your home warm and inviting for an open house.

Use this hand checklist to assess what needs mending or changing around your home before the big day.

Floor coverings

(includes carpeting, tile, linoleum, hardwood, etc.)

- Dirty or stained? • Worn or damaged? • Is there hardwood under carpeting that can be restored?

Walls, ceilings, baseboards

- Any fingerprints or stains? • Any holes, nails, tape residue? • Any crack, shipped paint, ripped wallpaper, water damage? • Are they all neutral or complimentary colors?

Doors

- Do they squeak? • Are the handles secure and work properly? • Any stains or other damage?

Windows

- Are they clean and crack free? • Do they open easily? • Are the coverings clean and also easy to open?

Pet areas

- Are these clean, organized and odor free?

Kitchen and bathrooms

- Are all surfaces, including floors, sparkling clean? • Are countertops organized? • Are all sinks and faucets working properly?

Other rooms

- Have all areas been thoroughly vacuumed and dusted? • Has all clutter, including excess furniture, been collected and removed? • Are books, toys, clothes all neatly stored? • Do mirrors look clean? • Are window coverings open?

Outside the home

- Are all exterior surfaces, including decks, pools, walkways and driveways clean, clear of clutter and in good condition?



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