

Dressed to Sell

Studies have shown that most home buyers make a decision about a house within fifteen seconds of walking in a door. Many others make a decision without even getting out of their car. It's obvious first impressions count. The goal of home staging is to make that first impression as appealing as possible by transforming the home into a welcoming and attractive environment in which buyers can see themselves living.

By spending a little bit of money on home staging, sellers can reap the reward of selling their property for 3 to 10% more than if they hadn't staged it. If you're selling your home and that doesn't get your attention, you might want to know that a staged property typically spends 50% less time on the market.

According to the July 2007 edition of Realtor® Magazine Online, "a survey of 2,000 practitioners conducted by HomeGain in 2003, at the height of the boom, found that staging could increase the sales price by \$2,275 to \$2,841; cleaning and decluttering could add \$2,093 to \$2,378 to the final price. And a 2004–2005 survey of home owners by training company StagedHomes.com found that staged homes sold for 6.9% more on average than homes that were not staged." Pretty compelling statistics, particularly in the current real estate market. With so many properties for sale, the extra edge that staging gives a property can really make a difference.

So what is exactly is home staging? At its simplest level, home staging can consist of cleaning and clearing clutter. Landscaping, painting, patching and repairing are also forms of staging. On a more professional level, home staging employs design and decor skills to bring out the best in a property. In the hands of a professional home stager, properly executed staging leads the eye to attractive features in the home, while minimizing its flaws. It's pretty amazing to see what can be accomplished with interior design expertise and a relatively small investment of time and money.

The photos shown here are examples of a home that was staged by Lorraine Blais of Blais Interiors, with the help of painting contractor Gary Pitt of GM Painting and Bill Pullin of Pro-Com property management and landscaping. They provide before and after views of both the interior and exterior of a beautiful post & beam home for sale in the Lakes Region that, according to Lorraine, "had great structure and strong internal design, but very little curb appeal." The photos speak for themselves.

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NOT A LOT HAPPENED HERE, BUT WHAT A DIFFERENCE! Removing the free standing shelves in this guest bathroom made it look much more spacious. Painting it a cooler color and adding complementary bath rugs and towels and accents gives it a completely different feel.



THE ENTRANCE TO YOUR HOME IS LIKE A BOOK COVER. It's pretty tough to put that initial judgement aside, and it will set the tone for the entire showing. The walkway to this house was overgrown and not terribly inviting. The addition of a crushed stone path leading up to a freshly painted front door is so much more approachable. The simple addition of potted plants and a porch chair promises a warm welcome within.

Tips for Staging

GET RID OF ALL CLUTTER and furniture that makes rooms look smaller. You want to create a space that breathes and has light, so that when you leave the room you feel energized.

FOCUS ON LIGHTING by using lamps to illuminate dark corners. Clean windows. Let in lots of natural light to the extent of getting rid of window coverings for an open and airy feeling.

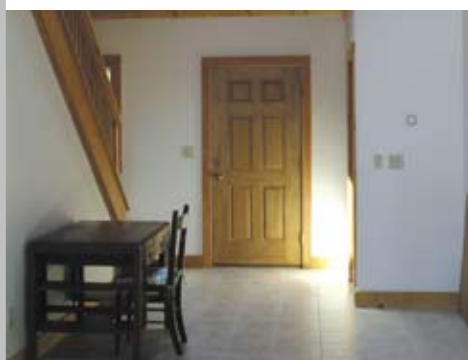
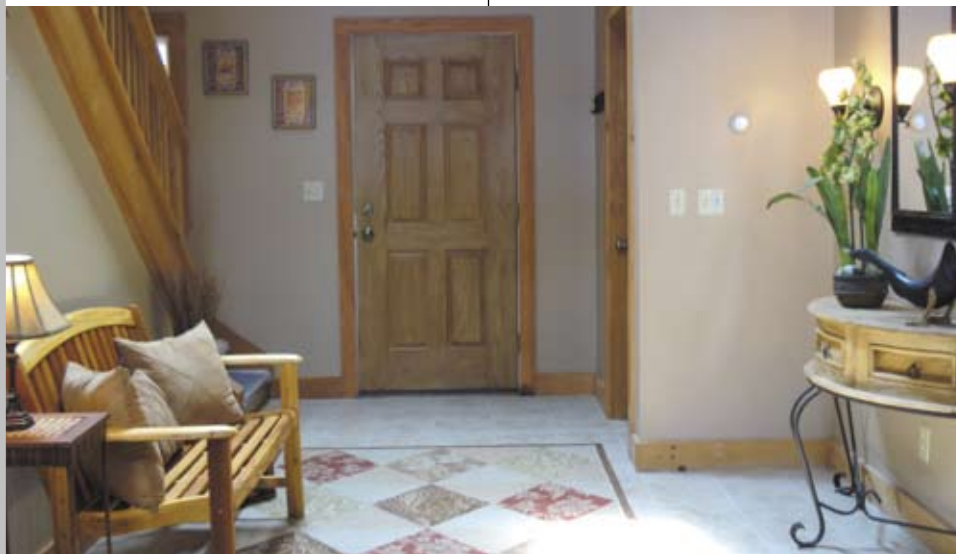
REALIZE YOU ARE SELLING YOUR SPACE, NOT YOUR LIFESTYLE, and remove personal photos and collections. Perspective buyers must feel what it would be like if they had their personal things there. Depersonalizing a home is key in staging.

IF YOU KNOW YOUR HOUSE IS GOING TO BE SHOWN, play on the senses, for example, bake something that morning so the house smells good; pick up fresh flowers the night before and place them on a table near the front entrance.

REMOVE FURNITURE that overpowers the room and makes it feel smaller than it is. You are selling the home, not the furniture. Less is better.

KEEP IN MIND THAT A CONFUSED lay-out may make the home seem very cramped and unlivable.

BE READY TO MAKE THE COMMITMENT of wanting more traffic to be seen in your home by accepting staging concepts such as decluttering, depersonalizing and enhancing space.



"I FIND STAGING A HOME COMES AS SECOND NATURE. Making it warm and inviting and at the same time clean and uncluttered all works hand-in-hand with staging," says Lorraine. The entrance to this house was not very inviting before staging. After, with a warm, neutral color on the walls, an area rug to break up the expanse of floor, inexpensive contemporary furnishings, and the addition of ambient lamp and wall lighting, the entrance says, "Welcome to our House."

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Lorraine Blais has over 18 years of experience with 10 years in the Western Lake Region. For more information visit www.blaisinterior.com

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