**Preparing Your Home For Market**

We all recognize that first impressions count—and that especially applies to curb appeal for a home. Here are a few suggestions on how to get your home ready for market, starting with the outside and then providing a few tips on preparing the inside. Some of these suggestions are seasonal; there is not as much you can do when there is snow on the ground—however, that can save landscaping effort!

**Exterior**

* Take a good, objective look at your home from the street: notice the roof shingles (any missing?), the gutters and downspouts, the shutters, the landscaping. If anything looks like it needs repair, repair it before listing your home. In good weather, if it needs paint (particularly trim and shutters), paint it (and/or power wash it). Your home should look crisp and appealing from the street.
* Pay attention to landscaping. Make sure there is no clutter, dead trees, untrimmed shrubbery; weed and mulch the landscaping beds as soon as weather permits.
* Paint the front door, add a pretty wreath, and buy a new doormat. Placing potted, low maintenance/artificial plants on the front steps enhances the curb appeal, even in winter.
* Make sure the mailbox is in good shape with visible house numbers on it, and make sure all exterior lighting is working (replace any burned out bulbs).
* Make sure the doorbell works and all door hardware is in good shape.
* In good weather, make sure the deck or patio is power washed and in good condition.

**Interior**

* Declutter every room. If you have a collection, especially a valuable or breakable one, pack it away before listing your home. Minimize the amount of furniture in rooms—move extra chairs or tables to the basement, if necessary, or put them into storage.
* Nothing sells as well as a clean house—clean from top to bottom, and make sure it smells clean and that there are no lingering pet or cooking odors.
* Make sure everything in the home is in good working order; replace burned out light bulbs, make any repairs, and replace the furnace filter.
* Check paint/wallpaper to make sure it is still in good shape. Touch-up any worn or chipped areas, particularly around corners which frequently get nicked.
* If painting a room, select neutral (but not white) colors. If carpeting is in good condition, have it cleaned; otherwise replace it with a neutral light beige carpet with a good pad.
* Straighten bookcases and shelving; pack away books or knickknacks that are not needed.
* While a family photo gallery is not desirable; do keep some photos—it adds to the warmth of the home.
* In the kitchen, remove as many items from the countertops as possible to make the space look larger, and straighten the pantry.
* Bathrooms should sparkle! Make sure to clean mirrors and wipe out wash basins.
* Beds should be made daily and all items tidied up so there are no clothing on the floors.
* Potential buyers need to be able to move around the basement, so make sure there is plenty of space for them to walk around.
* Have windows cleaned inside and out.
* For showings, make sure draperies/blinds are open, and everything is neat and clean; if you have a music system, soft classical or jazz music can set a relaxing tone.