

Stage Today – Sell Tomorrow!

By Kitty Schwartz

“The real estate market is in transition.....the real estate market is dead.....the real estate market is picking up.....we’ve reached the bottom.....if you don’t have to sell your house, don’t.....now is a great time to sell your home....or not.”

In any given week, we hear many different “inside opinions” on the real estate market. In Westchester, we have been protected from some of the horror stories we are seeing around the country. But, we still need to work harder for our equity than we used to. What is the predominant sales strategy in this market? Price it right and make it beautiful!

Pricing and Staging go hand and hand – when one is out of line with the other – homes take longer to sell. First, how do you determine the correct price? Choose the best Realtor you know and work with them to realistically come up with the correct price point for your property. Secondly, how do you make your home beautiful without completely redecorating or extensively remodeling? Stage it! The money and time you spend to prepare your home for sale is a wise investment – and money well spent. The key is keeping the money spent to a minimum while yielding the maximum return on investment!

Some **cost-effective tips for staging your home** include:

- **Start with digital photos.** After living in a home for an extended period of time, it is difficult to be objective. What is going to appeal to the buyers and what is going to stop them from considering a purchase of the property? Take the photos, put them up on your computer and look at your home through the “eyes of the buyer”. Since 84% of buyers preview houses on line now, they are going to be looking at your house first through the camera’s lens. Would the photos you are looking at motivate you to make an appointment with your Realtor to tour this home?
- **Clean with a vengeance.** Take advantage of your upcoming move to clear clutter and to extricate yourself from the years of accumulated stuff. Furniture you have long stopped loving, books you will never read again, the thousands of Tupperware pieces that you will never fill with leftovers, the clothes that will not fit again in this lifetime – need to go! Once that process is done, the surfaces need to be cleaned, painted and polished to the glow of the current decade. New paint colors will immediately update spaces and cleanliness is tantamount to a successful sales effort.
- **De-stink your property!** If you smoke, good luck! Buyers really, really, really do not want to buy a house that a smoker lives in. That’s reality – you have to deal with it. Have the air ducts cleaned – paint everywhere – clean or replace carpeting – use air purifiers and dehumidifiers around the clock. Clean slipcovers and take down drapes. Launder bedding – get new towels. Putting a few air fresheners around the home is not the answer. Go to the source of the smell first and deal with it, whether it

is smoke, animal smell, humidity, dead mice or smelly refrigerators. Buyers don't want to smell your life – they want to buy a house that smells and looks fresh, clean and “move-in” ready!

- **Creatively Update Kitchens & Baths:** It is true in real estate, kitchens and baths sell houses. But your kitchen and baths have not been updated since 1972 and you are not going to pay to renovate those rooms. “Let the buyer do the work” is the old way of thinking when it comes to selling your house. The cost of starter homes today is so high that often both partners work full-time in order to be even considering the purchase of a home. Now complicated with the sub-prime crisis and the need to come up with real cash, and a lot of it, in order to qualify for any mortgage, buyers are not as “cash-rich” as they were a short time ago. They really don't want to “do the work” that you think they should. It is their market now, they are driving the bus. What does a home seller do now? Update those rooms with paint, hardware, new flooring and lighting fixtures. Get creative and realize your goal is for a buyer to say, “I am going to renovate the kitchen, but I can live with it for now.” For a few hundred dollars and some innovative ideas, you can effectively change the entire feel of a kitchen or bath

There is opportunity in every real estate market. Educate yourself, understand the playing field and do your homework to get your home sold successfully. If the time has come to move on in your life, don't put off selling your home waiting for the market to change. Who can predict whether the market will be better or worse a year from now? Take charge, find a great Realtor and stage your house for a successful sale. Price it right and make it beautiful – the one two punch in any market!

Kitty Schwartz, an Accredited Staging Professional, founded Classic Home Staging in April, 2005 and quickly became a resource for Realtors and homeowners alike throughout the Metropolitan area. She has been featured in the New York Times, New York House Magazine and Westchester Magazine, just to name a few. To date, Kitty has successfully staged over \$100 million dollars of real estate and has built her reputation entirely on referrals from satisfied customers!