

# Stage Your Home to Sell—for *MORE MONEY*

**THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME Staging Professionals** claims that staged homes sell for 6.9 percent more than non-staged houses and are on the market half as long.

"Your realtor is your marketing director," declares Kitty Schwartz, an accredited home staging professional in Goldens Bridge and founder of Classic Home Staging, LLC. "I am your merchandising director."

"Staging," she continues, "is the opposite of interior decorating. We take away the personal imprint on the house so the buyer can imagine themselves in that environment."

It begins with a consultation, usually priced at around \$250. A stager walks through the house, making suggestions about rearranging furniture, where you might add some accessories, where to de-clutter, where to paint. "Even Formica can be painted!" Schwartz exclaims. If the home seller wants the stager to do some of the work, various hourly rates apply.

A home stager will also rent you anything from a stylish sofa to neutral-colored bath towels that are fresh, plump, and fluffy. Accessories, furniture, even plants and table settings can dress up the old homestead. Many home stagers also offer professional photography services, an important option considering that a huge number of home buyers preview houses online.



## Some **Free Staging Tips**

- Remove extra chairs from around the kitchen table and extra leaves from the table itself. It makes your room look bigger—you are selling your space, not your furniture.
- Make your refrigerator door an artwork-free zone and store your toaster, mixer, food processor, rice steamer, panini grill, waffle iron, bread machine, canisters, mixing bowls, and collection of wooden spoons, trivets, and breadboards anywhere other than the kitchen countertop.
- De-clutter! You probably can do with about half of the furniture in any given room—and the room will look more than twice as large without it. Put the extra in storage or have your tag sale before you list your home—not when you're ready to move.
- Remove family portraits and all those graduation pictures and replace a few of them with impersonal but pleasing landscapes and still-lives. Fill the nail holes and paint where the rest of the personal photos had been.
- Make your home Q-tip clean, including carpets and windows. Dirty windows make rooms dark.
- Remove or replace heavy drapes with sheers or cellular shades to brighten things up. Outside, prune bushes and trees around your windows, too.
- Put the lid down on the toilet, empty out the medicine cabinets, and put the cosmetics, curlers, brushes, and Dad's electric nose-hair trimmer in a drawer somewhere out of sight.



*Your choice: Cluttered and chaotic or clean and serene. Before (upper left) and after (above) Classic Home Staging prepped this house for sale.*