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**Selling in Spring? Start Planning Now!**

Many agree: listing a home for sale in the spring is a time-honored ritual, since that’s when the shoppers emerge from hibernation. Though there is much to be said for keeping your house on the market in winter, when there is less competition from other sellers, winter is a good time to begin the process of spring selling – for which preparation and planning are key. So, as you hibernate this winter, start thinking ahead, getting organized and planning. You will want to consider investing some money in your home to prep it for sale as well, and to prepare yourself financially for your next home. Once you embrace your sale plan as a months-long process, you can put your home’s best face forward when the snow melts and the “for sale” sign goes up.

Here are some winter tips for planning a spring sale.

Now’s the time to find a Realtor. Since you aren’t in a rush, take the time to speak with a few, learn about their experience and marketing expertise. You will also want to get a feel for the kind of working partnership you want with the person representing your home. Your Realtor will be your partner, advisor, cheerleader and a source of valuable information as you make plans to sell. Your Realtor can also begin researching how to price your home.

Give your house a physical. Take the time to inspect your house from top to bottom. Consider hiring a professional inspector to determine what, if any, improvements you wish to take on. It’s wise to know the condition of your property before you list and before negotiations begin – you don’t want to be faced with an unforeseen surprise plumbing issue after an offer comes in, as this can weaken your negotiating position. In addition, it may be easier to find a contractor to address any problems during the winter. From smoke detectors to a leak in the basement, now’s the time to button up as many details as you can.

Begin the home facelift. Your Realtor will advise you to begin paring down your possessions, decluttering to open interior visual spaces, and improving the aesthetic appeal of your house. In addition to clearing space, you may want to consider a fresh coat of neutral paint in areas of your house that could use a boost.

As spring nears, get cleaning. You can do it yourself, or hire a professional for a deep clean, inside and out. Clean the windows, the floors, behind the bookshelves and appliances, ceiling fans, curtains, baseboards and closets.

Plan for curb appeal. The ground may be frozen now, but be prepared for your home’s external facelift. Many buyers will do a “drive by” before making plans to view your house entirely, so make contact now with a spring cleanup crew, a gardener, or a landscaper to help with your home’s visual spark.

Now let’s talk money. If you are planning to purchase another home, begin exploring your financing options and get pre-approved for a mortgage. “Pre-approved” buyers are means that the customer has actually applied for and received approval to borrow money (pre-qualification is a less formal and less certain process).

For obvious reasons, pre-approved buyers are attractive to sellers, since they will know you are in the clear to close a deal in a timely manner, However, in most instances pre-approval is good for only 120 days, so work with your Realtor to plan around this timing.

If you plan to pay cash for your next home, find out what steps you need to take to have this cash on hand.

Make your list, check it twice, and use the winter to begin an orderly process for selling your home.

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