



- » CURRENT ISSUE
- » RESTAURANT GUIDE
- » RETAIL GUIDE
- » EVENTS CALENDAR
- » NM EVENTS
- » ABOUT US
- » HOME

ADVERTISEMENTS



## Staging a Sale

By Barbara C. Neff

**"All the world's a stage."**

Shakespeare wasn't talking about today's real estate market, but he certainly could have been. As "For Sale" signs linger in front lawns for months on end, savvy sellers are turning to home staging to capture the imaginations of potential buyers.

Naperville real estate agent Bob Atcheson says realtors have been scratching their heads for ideas to move homes.

"Three years ago, you could just put a lockbox on the front door, and the house probably sold unless it really needed help," he says. "About a year ago, it started to turn."

More supply and less demand, he says, means sellers need to stage their homes.

Staging goes beyond mere cleaning and decluttering to help buyers envision living in a home, says GraceAnn Simoni, a Naperville stager since 2001. It often involves crafting "vignettes," with furniture and other pieces arranged to depict appealing settings.

"You just keep creating that little movie in the buyers' heads," Simoni explains. "You want buyers to visualize an action that can take place in that room, like 'I can see us all sitting here on a Sunday watching cartoons.'"

Simoni launches a staging engagement with a buyer's eye assessment.

"We start in the hallway because the front door is normally where the

## THIS ISSUE

Hosting Hints

That Downtown Lifestyle

Guess Who's Coming to Thanksgiving Dinner?

Happy, Healthy Holidays

Heart of the Country

More Car, Less Truck

Staging a Sale

City Eats

A Strong Ally

buyer stands the longest," she says. "If you don't get them there, they've already said no to this house."

After the assessment, she provides a three-part list detailing actions the client can take, those she could implement, and those requiring the assistance of professionals like painters or organizers.

"It might just take the homeowner decluttering, and then we can rearrange some furniture, which is key to how people move through a house," Simoni says. She may bring in art, plants, pillows and other items in the current colors. "You want to help the buyer make an emotional connection because that emotional connection is what sells the product, whether it's makeup or a book or a house," she says.

### **Staging coach**

Earlier this year, she brought her skills to bear on one of Atcheson's listings in Tall Grass, where more than 60 other homes were available for sale. Atcheson was the second realtor for the home, which backed up onto 95th Street and had languished on the market for six months.

He convinced the sellers to reduce the price by \$55,000, but it remained unsold.

"The home was not getting any kind of TLC," he says. Both of the owners had careers, and a dog had the run of the house. "So that's when I called in GraceAnn," he says.

Simoni's team spent several hours in the home. Among other things, they changed the height of the chandelier and the angle of the dining room table and set some fabric on the table. They also angled the bed and left two place settings on the kitchen island.

"They did in some cases the simplest things, and it made all the difference in the world," Atcheson says. He believes that the staging was critical to rejuvenating the listing. "We would not have had continued showings without the staging," he says.

Atcheson recommends that sellers have their homes staged as early as possible.

"The most critical time in your listing is the first two to four weeks," he says. "That's when the most real estate agent traffic is going to come through."

The costs of staging vary depending on the size and number of rooms staged. Simoni charges \$125 to \$175 for the initial assessment.

"It can start at \$250 to just spruce up a room and bring some life

into it, all the way up to thousands of dollars to bring in furniture," Simoni says. Furniture rental and storage fees will add to the cost.

While the costs may seem daunting, sellers should remember that reductions in asking prices typically run in the tens of thousands. And staging may not cost much at all. Simoni has learned that most people already have wonderful items in their home.

"They were just in the wrong place," she says.