

# What Are Some Affordable Ways to Increase the Attractiveness of Your Home to Buyers?

This week's column is inspired by an email I received from Brock Pardo of PunchListUSA. His company is in the business of helping sellers fix problems identified in buyers' inspection objections. Toward that end, he also offers free pre-listing consultations and quotes. (I offer free consultations too, but I'm not a contractor, so I can't give quotes, just refer you to my vendors for implementing suggested improvements.)



Being in that business, Brock's email contained a "top ten" list of issues which could be addressed affordably prior to putting a home on the market, resulting perhaps in selling that home for more money.

Usually, when I get an unsolicited email with a top ten list, I find that it's not the top ten items I would have selected, but this time I found that I agreed with all of them, so I'm going to publish his list, but with my own elaborations.

1) **Fresh coat of paint.** Brock cited a report that interior painting returns a 107% return-on-investment, and exterior painting a 50% ROI, but I'd add that it depends on condition. If your home has a faded pastel exterior color popular in the 1990s with or without peeling paint, I'd say that a fresh paint job in a more up-to-date color would make a huge difference in first impressions and the number

of showings that are set and offers that you receive.

2) **Landscaping improvements.** These can be quite affordable and, again, make a huge difference in the first impression that your home makes. A couple months' service by Lawn Doctor can make a big difference in your lawn's appeal, as can a load of fresh cedar chips for your non-grassy areas.

3) **Upgrading lighting fixtures.** Those "brass and glass" chandeliers and sconces are so 1990s, and are inexpensive enough to replace with, for example, brushed nickel fixtures. And even if you don't replace any fixtures, replace all your incandescent or CFL light bulbs with affordable LED bulbs. The best deal on those, I've found, are 8-packs of 60-watt equivalents for \$2.75 (34¢ each) from Batteries+Bulbs. (Don't put your CFLs in the trash. Take them to Home Depot for recycling, because they contain mercury.)

4) **Minor kitchen updates.** You don't have to replace your Formica countertop unless it's damaged or a really bad color, but replacing the faucet on your kitchen sink is an affordable upgrade. Also, I like to see knobs and pulls on kitchen cabinets, and you can get affordable ones, as Rita did, at Hobby Lobby, of all places. Maybe paint or repaint your kitchen cabinets — white is a good choice. Beyond this, I'm happy to bring my stager and consult with you on further upgrades, because kitchens can make a huge difference, and certain improvements are worth considering.

5) **Bathroom upgrades.** Replacing those 1990s plastic Delta faucets is a no-brainer! And you can find some affordable replacement vanities at home improvement stores.

6) **Replace or clean wall-to-wall carpeting.** Unless your carpet is shag or damaged, cleaning it professionally is sufficient and affordable. My preferred carpet cleaner is Bruce Ruser of New Look Dry Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning,

303-697-1584, who uses an environmentally friendly system that utilizes plant-based ingredients. The website [www.hostdry.com](http://www.hostdry.com) explains his process. We use Bruce ourselves.

7) **Replace older appliances.** These can be affordable. Look for Energy Star ratings, too. I had a 1990s listing with its original white kitchen appliances. It just sat on the market *until* the seller replaced them with new appliances.

8) **Install new door and window hardware.** Brock quotes a 2021 Zillow report claiming that updated hardware has up to an 80% ROI, but I'd like to see your current hardware before suggesting this update.

9) **Declutter and organize.** This is more about staging than repair of something. We provide a free staging consultation for all listings, and our report always recommends decluttering, thinning and organizing.

10) **Deep clean your home.** Again, this is a staging matter. And it's a no-brainer! We can refer you.

*That concludes my version of Brock Pardo's "top ten" list. I'd add the following two items:*

11) **Wash your windows.** You'll need to remove screens when you wash your windows, so don't reinstall them. Label and store them in your basement or garage. Removing window screens has a effect similar to washing your windows, greatly improving visibility. If any of the screens are damaged (including sun damage), most Ace Hardware stores can rescreen them affordably.

12) **Update your moldings.** At a recent open house, a would-be buyer objected to the older stained wood moldings on the walls. She said they should be white, and I realized that she's right. You could paint them white (priming first with Kilz), or replace them all with plain white moldings from a home improvement store.

Do you have your own suggestions of additional items? Let me know, and maybe I'll feature them in a future column or on our blog.

## Why Wouldn't a Listing Agent Want to Maximize the Exposure of His or Her Real Estate Listings?

Although the *average* real estate agent barely makes a living and either has a second income source or a high-earning spouse, about 10% of agents earn a *lot* of money — and want to earn even more.

Myself, I make a *very good* living, as evidenced by the fact that I'm writing this week's column while Rita and I are on vacation in Prague, capital of the Czech Republic. (I'll be home by the time you read this column.)

But my business model does not involve doing every single thing to maximize my personal income. I get more satisfaction from trying to maximize my service to others, including my clients *and* the unknown readers of this column. Since long before I became a Realtor, I lived by a motto that has mistakenly been attributed to Confucius. "**Concentrate on giving, and the getting will take care of itself.**"

This column/ad — what newspapers call an "advertorial" — is evidence of that strategy. As a former newspaper journalist trained on the metro desk of *The Washington Post* in 1968, I decided at the very beginning of my real estate career in 2003 that I'd spend my marketing dollars on buying newspaper space to publish a helpful real estate column.

It has paid off quite well. Unlike every real estate agent I know, I have never made a cold call or prospect in any way to get buyers and sellers to hire me. (This month, I just realized, is the 20th anniversary of getting my real estate license

and starting as a broker associate at the Union Blvd. office of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, now called Coldwell Banker Realty for some reason I have yet to learn.)

This column is my sole outreach to past and prospective clients, and every week I get one or more calls from someone who says, in effect, "I've been reading your column for years, knowing the day would come when I'd call you to sell my home. Today's that day!"

The above is a long-winded way of saying that I'm happy to abide by the Realtor Code of Ethics (and state law) which says I should put clients' interest ahead of my own. This brings me back to the question posed in this article's headline.

Last week, members of REcolorado, Denver's MLS, received an email detailing how easy our MLS has made it to withhold a listing from all syndication, including Zillow, Redfin, and even REcolorado's own public-facing website, [www.REcolorado.com](http://www.REcolorado.com).

The email cast its guidance in the context of a seller *requesting* such limited exposure, but why would any seller give his/her listing agent *informed consent* to limit the exposure of their home's listing to just their listing agent's own website or circle of prospects? I suspect the only reason a listing agent would convince his or her client to approve that strategy would be to maximize the chance that the agent wouldn't have to compensate a buyer's agent, thereby doubling his earnings.

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