

Curb Appeal

An inside look at preparing the outside of your home for resale
by Robert Treadway

In today's competitive real estate world, improving your home's curb appeal could mean the difference between "Sold!" and sitting on the market.

Take the test

After years of living in your home, its nuances blur together like the days you've spent there. Jeffery Hammerberg, broker/owner of HomeLounge.com, recommends performing the following exercise before establishing an exterior spruce-up plan: The next time you come home, stop across the street or far enough down the driveway to get a good view of the house and its surroundings. Park where a potential buyer would and walk towards the house, looking around as if it were your first visit. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What's your first impression of the house and yard area?
2. What are the best exterior features of the house or lot? How can you enhance them?
3. What are the worst exterior features of the house or lot? How can you minimize or improve them?

Get out of the way

It's essential to increase exposure. Make your home easy to spot. Don't forget to prune and trim trees, tall hedges and sprawling vines.

Make it pop with paint

Tom Landry of TL2 Architecture + Design in Charlotte, N.C., says traditional colors are big right now. Benjamin Moore, Sherwin Williams and Ralph Lauren are a few of the brand name paints with historical/vintage color palettes. Unlike eggplant purple (which was hot a few years ago), the classics never go out of style.

If you're on a smaller budget and want to add some accents with paint, Landry suggests checking out homes in your area and asking the owners about the paint they



LANDSCAPING YOUR ENTRY WAY puts curb appeal into bloom.

Photo courtesy of Campbell & Ferrara

used. You'll find that most of your neighbors will be happy to help.

Bright Spots

Because potential buyers often drive by houses in the evening, it's important for homeowners to evaluate their property at night as well. Nocturnal drive-ups can work in your favor. You can emphasize the dramatic and unique facets of your property by using landscape and architectural lighting.

"I've seen it have a tremendous impact on bringing the house to life," says Sally Hamidi, an agent with RE/MAX Allegiance in Washington, D.C., and owner of CityLightsRentals.com. "Seeing a property at night is like looking at a different version of the house and what's around it."


Grand Entrance

A newly finished door and the walkway leading up to it speak volumes about your home. Give your home's entryway an instant lift with custom colors, handsome woods

such as mahogany or cherry, or cut-glass storm doors. Replace old or cracked concrete pathways with new patterned concrete or pavers. Brick is always a nice look as well. Add a little spring in your visitor's step by dotting the path with terra cotta planters.

Hardware

Sometimes a new mailbox, address numbers, kick plates, lanterns or door handles are small investments that make a big difference. However, these accents can quickly lose their shine, so choose tarnish-free pieces (such as stainless steel) for a clean, modern look.

"The bottom line is, what do you have that the guy next door doesn't?" Hammerberg says. "Usually with a little forward thinking and the completion of a few around-the-house projects, you can easily spotlight your home as the best on the block and increase your home's worth by thousands. There's a lot of appeal in that." 

Editorial Resources begin on page 82