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## The Art of Staging

The following article, written by the Ottawa Real Estate board president Diane Hatfield, appeared in an issue of the EMC community newspapers.

Every home for sale is basically a stage. Prospective buyers come in and try to imagine living their lives on this particular "stage." When they feel the stage fits you've got a sale.

Of course, many people know the basics about staging: making sure clutter is removed, keeping the home clean and fresh smelling, keeping the lawn cut and trimmed. But there's a lot more that can be done to help a home sell more quickly and at a higher price. Smart sellers make sure their home is staged for maximum appeal.

Here are some ideas to maximize your property value and minimize time on the market:

- **Let the sun shine in.** Cleaning windows and opening blinds and drapes automatically make a home look more open, brighter, and more welcoming.
- **Remove the clutter that isn't really clutter.** Old magazines and scattered toys are obvious problems. But just as distracting are the various knick-knacks and collections that people accumulate over time. Pack up the adornments and books on shelves and tabletops by half at least. And, make sure every single framed photo is put away. Buyers can't see themselves living where the current residents are very much in evidence. The result is a home that looks more open and spacious, without the strong stamp of the present owner's life.
- **Rearrange living spaces.** Sometimes simply repositioning a couch can make a world of difference in a room. Look at traffic patterns and remove obstacles along with excess furniture. Take leaves out of tables and reduce the number of chairs. When selling a home, less is more.
- **Cut back on the green.** Make sure windows and entryways are not obscured by overgrown shrubs. Otherwise, you're hiding the home from the street as well as reducing the incoming light.
- **Invest in the future.** Consider investing 1/2 of one percent of the home's asking price in staging. Then use that money to paint tired walls, remove out-of-style wallpaper, or store worn out furniture and bring in rentals. The money invested can reap returns of 200% or more.
- **Don't let a house sit totally empty.** Many buyers have a hard time picturing how they would place their furniture in an empty room so always leave a few token pieces of furniture behind. A silk plant, simple chair and occasional table can add a lot of character to an empty room.
- **Go professional.** If you're not comfortable making decorating decisions you can always hire a professional decorator who understands the ins and outs of staging a home. Professional decorators know what works and what doesn't. If you're not a decorator yourself why not take advantage of a professional's expertise to maximize your homes appeal to the fussiest of Buyers.
- **Set the stage.** Set the stage before you put your property up for sale and you can expect a higher selling price as well as a shorter time on the market.