

# Staging Model Homes

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**M**any buyers become enamoured with a property within seconds of entering it. Conversely, a buyer will decide a property is of no interest to them just as quickly. For this reason, it is essential that all properties—including builder model homes—are professionally showcased. Without a staged model home to show, a Realtor's job is much more difficult. Staging ensures the key selling features are highlighted and attention is drawn to the focal points, function, space, and lifestyle of the property. Negative attributes that are not addressed by showcasing could in fact work against the sale or encourage low or no offers.

Knowing the targeted buyer is key. Creating a connection between the buyer and the property is vital. Buyers may be searching for a house, but ultimately they are seeking a home. Stagers select furnishings, artwork, lighting, and accessories to tailor the hidden desires of the buyer in order to make the connection from house to home. This can be very challenging and complex in new, small-scale properties or townhomes where the targeted buyer is not as clearly identified.

Depending on the property style and size, buyers may be single professionals, young families, newly married couples, or retirees. If the targeted buyers are widespread, it is important to stage model homes to appeal to this vast audience by keeping the furnishings and decor both age and gender neutral.

The selection of furnishings and accessories influences the buyer's impression of the space. Most buyers need a visual connection as to how their furnishings will look and feel in the home. Buyers have difficulty gauging the size and functionality of unfurnished rooms, as well as visualizing possible furniture layouts. Today, many buyers have large-scale furniture pieces such as king-size beds and sectional sofas. Staging the property with a bedroom suite and ample seating will provide a visual reference for them to gauge how their furnishings will fit.

It is equally important to ensure excellent traffic flow throughout the space as buyers move from room to room. Not



only should the placement of the furniture be correct, it should also be the correct style, scale, shape, and color; all factors influence both visual and physical flow.

Professional stagers need to be aware of all current trends, and keep them in mind when selecting furnishings and accessories to showcase a model home. Color trends begin in the automotive and fashion industries and trickle down into home furnishings. New trends are often in the general marketplace at least a year before they catch on with the majority of the public and are seen in individual homes.

Model homes often display the latest in fixtures and materials; however, it is important to keep major items such as cabinets, countertops, flooring, and backsplash neutral colors to offer the widest variety of coordinates for the buyer. A monochromatic color scheme (using varying tones and value of one color) allows the buyer's eye to travel throughout the space uninterrupted. This creates the impression of more space. Too many color schemes can overpower a home. Using no more than three related paint colors throughout the property maintains continuity, visual flow, and cohesion.

# for Builders

Buyers are seeking ample room, and it is important that model homes visually appear to be as large as possible. Townhomes often have limited floor space and tend to be long and narrow. Making effective use of the space is key to creating an open, airy feel. Although this can be challenging, the stager must determine how to create multipurpose rooms, maximize the square footage, and visually create wider spaces. Stagers employ optical illusions to emphasize available space by using light or reflective surfaces such as mirrors, silver, crystal lighting fixtures, and glass-top tables. Low-scale and open-base furniture with negative space will magnify the available light and make the room appear larger. When incorporating area rugs into a model home, it is important they are to scale. Too small a rug will appear to float as an island and not relate to anything in the room. Too large a rug can stop the sightline and visually reduce the size of the room.

Empty rooms often feel cold and hollow. So property left unstaged will lack the necessary elements for sound absorption. Empty spaces result in uninviting echoes; rooms evoking warmth and comfort are much easier to sell. Because of this, it should be no surprise that vacant property with furniture sells 78 percent faster than those without furnishings.

By showcasing model homes with on-trend furniture, artwork, and accessories, you can help buyers emotionally connect with the property. Because no one has lived in the home before, stagers have a unique opportunity to create a vision for buyers without the influence of any other homeowner, and sell the property quickly as a result. ■

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