

All dressed up and ready to go: Statistics show benefits to staging

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When Cinderella went to the ball, she probably would not have won the prince if she had gone dressed as a maid. Cinderella would have lost out, and the Prince would have, as well.

There is a fine line between enhancement and camouflage, and staging houses for sale -- like dressing up people -- lies somewhere in between. In good staging, the best features of the house are maximized, and the worst are minimized. Staging a house is presenting the dream, showing it the way it could be. That's what dreams are made of, and the relatively recent (to Michigan) phenomenon of staging homes for sale has proven that actualizing that dream has merit, both for buyers and sellers.

National statistics from StagedHomes.com show that houses that are staged sell twice as quickly as homes that are not staged. My own experience mirrors these findings. As a member of the Great Lakes Chapter of the International Association of Home Staging Professionals, I have contributed RE:STYLE's statistics to those of other stagers from across Michigan. The current average number of days on the market for our staged houses is 69 days. Compare that to the average days on market in Livingston County (October)--132.5 days. I must confess that one of my staged homes skewed the Chapter's findings: RE:STYLE staged a house originally listed for over \$3 million. It sold in just 6 months after staging--an amazingly short amount of time for a house in that price range, especially one that had already been on the market for over a year before being staged.

Staged houses also sell for more money than houses that aren't staged. In Michigan, few sellers are getting their asking price. But most houses staged by RE:STYLE received from 95% to 100% of their list price. In California, where staging has been an established part of the real estate business since the 70's, houses routinely sell for well over the asking price. So, staging works in a down market to sell houses more quickly and maintain more of their value. And it works in an up market, by helping sellers to get many offers, therefore creating a "bidding war" scenario that results in more money for the seller.

It would appear from the above that buyers, like Cinderella's prince, want to see the house "dressed up." Judging from the net sales difference, they are willing to pay for it, too.

I believe that the above findings have significant implications for Realtors, prospective sellers and buyers and anyone else who stands to benefit from the marketing and sale of residences.

Home staging need not be expensive, especially if the homeowner has kept the house updated and performed regular maintenance. RE:STYLE often spends only 3 or 4 hours rearranging furniture and "shopping" a house to find the accessories that will make it appeal to the broadest range of buyers. The result? A house that stands out from the competition by promising a desirable way of life-- a dream home! Staging isn't decorating, it's more like un-decorating--removing clutter and personal statements so that

buyers can see themselves living in the space. Sometimes home sellers need to rent or buy more appropriate accessories and/or furniture, as what they have currently is too much of a particular style. RE:STLE can assist with all these elements of staging.

Staging makes a difference. It improves more than the prospects of selling a home--it actually helps people to move on with their lives. As I always say, RE:STYLE your house, and restyle your life! Who knows, you may even find your Prince or Princess in the process!