

5 Tips to Sell Your Home During the Holidays

By Janna Herron // December 1, 2015

While most people are busy with their holiday traditions and shopping for gifts, some are still on the hunt for the perfect house. Even though the number of buyers tends to fall as we approach winter, those who remain are often highly motivated to find a home before the New Year.



The number of signed contracts (which will likely close in November and December) edged up slightly in October from the previous month and was 3.9 percent higher than a year ago. The tepid growth is largely due to a lack of homes on the market, which is also driving sales prices higher. The limited supply could work in a seller’s favor.

“There is less competition in the off season, so your home will stand out more,” says Scott Wilkinson, owner of Wilkinson ERA Real Estate in Charlotte, North Carolina. “Now may be the best time because there isn’t an influx of homes that hit the market at the same time, which results in less inventory and more buyers.”

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Here are five tips that will increase the chances of selling your home during the holiday season.

1. Brighten up.

The winter brings dreary weather and earlier sunsets. In some parts of the country, it can get dark outside by 5 p.m., earlier than many house showings. Try swapping out regular lightbulbs with LED ones to give “a brighter, sunnier warmth to your home,” says Grattan Donahoe, broker/owner of ERA Donahoe Realty in Temecula, Calif.

Don’t forget the outside, either. Invest in quality lighting to make your home more inviting and safe. If you want to hang holiday lights, stick to white lights rather than colored ones and use sparingly, says Maureen Bray, president, Real Estate Staging Association and owner of Room Solutions Staging in Portland, Ore.

2. Take attractive pictures.

“To get top dollar during the slower sales months you need the home to look like a model,” says Donahoe. Have your real estate agent take high-quality photographs for online listings to attract more potential buyers. Take new pictures right after the holidays if your original ones include seasonal décor that could make your home look dated, Bray says. You don’t want buyers to think, “this home has been on the market for a while now. There must be something wrong,” she says.

3. Consider pricing.

“The most important thing is price,” says Jim Zarkadas, vice president of support services at Century 21 Commonwealth in Natick, Mass. “Pricing the property correctly or slightly below market value will create a ‘feeding frenzy.’ In most cases, the property ends up selling for more than market value.”

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But keep up with market changes during this time of year, says Donahoe. If a neighbor had to discount their home, maybe it’s not the best time to sell and you may want to wait until spring.

4. Pare down holiday decorations.

“We all love our holiday decorations but many times those decorations make the home appear cluttered and smaller,” says John Mangas, broker and co-owner of Re/Max Preferred Associates in Ohio.

Bray agrees, especially when it comes to large Christmas trees that take up valuable floor space. To add some festive spirit, use more neutral, seasonal décor like fresh greenery on a fireplace mantel to appeal to the largest pool of buyers, she says. Opt for winter colors like white and silver rather than red and green and skip religious symbols. Tuck away wrapped presents in closets or attics to clear space and discourage sticky fingers.

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5. Get an inspection.

Last, be proactive and get a home inspection that you can give to potential buyers. “That will become a huge point of differentiation,” says Mangas, “and provide the buyer something of value when compared to other homes on the market.”