



## Getting Market-Ready Strategy Guide

Up to 5 years out from selling – Preparing for the race!

Getting ready to sell is like preparing for a race – you don't just go out and run! You work your way up to it; you train and prepare. To win the race, you have to put in the work! What does winning the race look like when selling a house? It means more money in your pocket and a shorter time on the market. Some sellers will say that they're not in a hurry, but less time on the market usually translates directly to more money – less wear and tear on your house from people tromping through, and fewer mortgage payments to make while you're waiting, not to mention attracting a more motivated buyer.

There are a lot of good reasons for starting early (training for the race) to get your house ready to go on the market. First, you'll just plain enjoy your house more as you get things done. Second, as you prepare your list of updates, upgrades and major repairs, it won't look like you neglected your house until right before you put it on the market. Buyers look more favorably on a house that has been regularly maintained. Third, you'll be able to spread out the cost of the updates, upgrades and repairs over time.

Note that any repairs, service, updates or upgrades should be done by licensed contractors. Even if you're the best handyman out there, using licensed contractors can offset liability from your wallet to theirs, and give you a paper trail. It should go without saying but get at least 3 estimates. Most repairs vary quite a bit in price from contractor to contractor.

### Training for the race

- As soon as you think you might sell your house:
  - Start a list of updates and upgrades, plus records of maintenance – this will be very useful for marketing purposes, and critical for the appraisal. Keep it somewhere where it will be easy to keep updated, like the refrigerator.
- You may have been doing all of the following, in which case, congratulations! But if not...
  - Schedule regular maintenance on your HVAC, water heater, older appliances, so that by the time you go on the market, you have records to show. This is particularly important if those items are 10 years old or older.
  - Clean your gutters at change of seasons. Make sure they are firmly attached to your house. Replace unsightly gutters, particularly on the front of the house.

- Now would be a good time to have a pest inspection. Then you'll have documentation of either a clean inspection or of treatment, if necessary. If there is structural damage due to wood-destroying insects, you should have it repaired by a licensed contractor. You might consider signing up for a service, which includes an annual inspection.
- Correct any chipping, peeling, flaking paint, both inside and outside of your home. It's only required if the house was built before 1978, and if the buyer is getting an FHA or VA loan, but realistically, its presence hurts your sale regardless of the age of the house.
- Have your roof inspected for an estimate of remaining life, particularly if you don't know how old it is. You also want to be sure there are no loose or missing shingles, cracked or damaged flashing. Goal – to keep water out of your house and add peace-of-mind.
  - If your roof has only 2 or 3 years of life left, you might consider replacing it before going on the market. According to the Cost vs Value report, a new roof can re-coup 73.2% through increased home value. This beats bathroom remodels and additions in terms of Return on Investment (ROI). Buyers may not be able to get a loan if your roof is that close to its end of life.
- Landscaping
  - Trim bushes – often sellers will trim bushes right before going on the market and they find they have a well-shaped bush of sticks and no leaves. Trim the bushes regularly between now and going on the market so that they have time to fill out.
  - Check grading – make sure the soil isn't sloping toward the house. These two videos are excellent at showing how to keep water away from your foundation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RQYN9fRcc8> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcqHbw1EkcY>
  - If you have vegetation touching your house, you should cut it back. Inspectors recommend that you should be able to walk all the way around your house – between the walls and the vegetation.

### The warm-up

- About a year out:
  - Pressure wash your siding and make sure to replace any damaged or deteriorated siding (see Top 10 Inspection Issues)
  - Check your screens for tears and your windows for broken glass. Replace as necessary.
  - While you're outside, check your trim for damage or deterioration. You don't want any water intrusion!

### The sprint to the finish line

- About 2 to 6 months out:
  - Clean all windows, inside and out
  - Stain and reseal your deck, replace any rotten wood
  - Fix cracks and broken cement on driveway and patios

- Replace any fixtures that will not convey with the property. For instance, your grandmother’s chandelier will go with you to your next home. Replace it now and carefully pack the old one for the move.
- Paint the interior and the trim on the exterior, if it needs it or if power washing doesn’t make it look better. Be sure to paint over walls that are strongly personal – that sparkly red and gold painted wall might be your favorite touch, but buyers will be distracted by it.
- In the month before going on the market:
  - Look at your belongings with a critical eye. Maybe bring in a trusted friend to take a good look around. Often things that stand out to others have become invisible to us. Pack away even more of your belongings, particularly items of value.
  - Your house should be “show ready” about a week from actual showings – now it’s time for photography and final staging.
  - Have a cleaning service do a Pre-Market Clean. They’ll bring in a crew and get all the nooks and crannies.

Your House, Your Plan

- Interior

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- Exterior

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## What you'll get from me between now and when you're ready to sell:

- Quarterly maintenance checklists based on the upcoming season. You don't have to remember where you put the checklist. I'll send it to you each quarter!
- Lifespan of residential components – appliances, roof, plumbing and more
- vipHomeLink – a digital home management system. One place to organize, maintain and improve your home. (A \$50 value)
- You'll be subscribed to my HomeActions newsletter – articles you can use as you prepare for the home-selling race.
- Suggested contractors and places to sell or donate your unused belongings. After all, if you don't need it, don't pay to move it!
- As you get move from "Training" to "Warming up", I'll send you suggestions on staging and what appeals to today's buyers.
- About 6 months out, I'll send you a suggested "Moving Survival Kit" that will be a big help when you get where you're going.



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