

ATLANTA

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# Stage and Sell

During the cooling real estate market, staging can make a difference  
by Amy Meadows

Photo courtesy of Peachtree Home Staging



**THIS STAGED LIVING AREA** incorporates neutral colors and offers a bright, airy feel. Visitors can imagine living in this space, thanks to the chest of books placed by the fireplace, as well as the couches.

Are you ready to move into your dream house, but you're not having any luck selling your current home? One buyer is all you need. To avoid being held hostage in today's cooling real estate market, you need to find ways to be a step ahead of your neighbor.

Despite your home's many selling points—upgrades, updated appliances, four bedrooms, good school district—you probably have not received an offer. Don't feel powerless: It's time for a reality check. Ask yourself what the market will bear, and follow these simple steps.

## Think ahead

Home staging shouldn't be an afterthought when you're getting ready to put your home on the market. In fact, according

## A NICE ARRANGEMENT

According to Kathy Nielsen, owner of Georgia Interior Solutions, the arrangement of your furniture is key when you're showing your home. "The flow needs to be right from room to room," she explains. Therefore, consider minimizing the number of large furniture items you have in rooms like the living room and relocate the pieces you take away to an offsite storage unit. For those items you keep in the room, arrange them in a way that showcases the best feature of that space. For instance, if your living room has a beautiful fireplace, make sure that the furniture is placed so that it opens up the space and emphasizes that particular feature. Keep in mind that the last thing buyers want to see when they walk in a room is the back of the couch.

to Christine Addlesberger, owner of Embassy Home Staging LLC in Duluth, you should consider hiring a home stager before you ever list your property with a realtor. That way, you can ensure that the home looks great for the pictures that your real estate professional will take and place on the Internet as part of your listing; it will also be completely ready for viewing when the first potential buyer steps through your front door.

## Picking a professional

If you don't know how to start the process of finding a professional home stager, Karen Dembsky, president of Peachtree Home Staging, suggests that you ask your realtor for recommendations. Real estate professionals have their finger on the pulse of the market and just might have someone

**OCCUPIED VS. VACANT** When you're selling a home, you could find yourself in one of two situations—selling the home that you currently live in or selling a home that you've vacated. Karen Dembsky, president of Peachtree Home Staging in metro Atlanta, reveals that the investment you make in the home staging process will differ for each selling situation.

**Occupied:** With you living in the house, you'll have furniture, accessories and more to work with. If you have an average-size home

for the Atlanta market, you could end up spending anywhere from \$150 to \$400 for professional home staging services.

**Vacant:** This may seem like an ideal situation because you're giving potential buyers a blank slate to view, but in this case, you have to go into "rental mode." Furniture and accessories will need to be brought in to key spaces like the living room, dining room, kitchen and master bedroom. With light staging, you're looking at an investment of about \$350. If you have a big space to fill, you could spend \$850 or more.

**IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL** When potential buyers walk into your home, they're trying to envision what the space would look like decorated with their own furniture and accessories. Christine Addlesberger, owner of Embassy Home Staging LLC in Duluth, recommends removing personal items like family photos, kids' schedules and such from places like the refrigerator. Not only does the effort declutter the space, but it also could make your home more inviting to the individuals who tour it.

in mind to help you. You can also ask neighbors and friends for referrals. In any case, you may want to talk to more than one home staging professional to find the person who's the right fit for your needs.

**First impressions**

When you're working through the home staging process, pay close attention to the front entrance of your home, Kathy Nielsen, owner of Georgia Interior Solutions in Atlanta notes. Paint the front door or bring in some fresh plants to ensure that a buyer's first impression is a positive one.

**Steer clear of the multipurpose room**

Like many homeowners, you probably have a room that serves more than one function, such as a guest room that doubles as a home office or an exercise room. Having elements from each type of room in one space could turn off potential buyers. Instead, figure out what the best function of that room is and emphasize it, which "lets the homeowner really visualize what they can do with the room," Dembsky says.

**Pet patrol**

Many families have pets, including the one that could purchase your home, but you don't want to flaunt the fact. "During the home staging process, be sure to take away pet bowls, beds and crates so they're not out in plain view," Addlesberger says. It will give your home a more pristine look.

**Go green**

There are a few things you might want to bring into your decorating scheme while showing your home. The green color of fresh plants can bring real warmth to a space. "It's like bringing the outside in," Nielsen says. That look can work with any decor.

*Editorial Resources begin on page 120.*

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