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Tips To Make Your House Shine This Home-Selling Season

Pratt and Shelley Barndollar and Nancy Jones of Showhomes offer their top tips for a market-ready space.

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When it comes to selling your home, the devil is in the details. No one knows this better than Nancy Jones and Pratt and Shelley Barndollar of Showhomes, the nation’s largest home staging franchise. For sellers unfamiliar with staging and who may feel unsure of where to start, Jones and the Barndollars offered their top tips just in time for this year’s busy selling season. First and foremost, said the Barndollars, “Declutter, depersonalize and edit. Be harsh!” “It’s difficult,” said the Barndollars, “but treat this as an important first step to moving out. It’s important to help the buyer envision living in the space.” Jones echoed the point. “When a person walks into a room, if their eyes can’t settle because too much is going on, it’s that much harder to really fall in love with the space,” she said. To help show off the size of a room and highlight the potential, Jones recommends “finding one main focal point in the room and enhancing it.” To really make that focal point shine, as the Barndollars pointed out, sellers

must declutter their space, and diligently. Jones emphasized that a clean and minimalist space is especially important given modern home-buying trends. “Today, 90 percent of buyers are looking online first, and if all they can see are things instead of space, it’s unsettling. Your space has to be fresh, crisp and clean so that the buyer can fall in love and want to see more,” Jones said. “Initial photos spark that interest.” To achieve that crisp and clean feel, the Barndollars recommend keeping at least a third of the space on shelves, bookshelves, closets and pantries empty. Items of sentimental or personal values, such as diplomas, photos and certificates, should be removed, and homeowners can show off square footage by packing away smaller rugs and objects—anything that draws the eye down instead of up, they said. Additionally, minimizing the frequency of bright colors and patterns helps to cultivate the feel of a “blank canvas” onto which buyers can project their own design preferences, the Barndollars said. For this reason, they said, updated appliances and a fresh coat of paint are key, and while they are man’s best friend, dogs and other pets should visit friends or relatives during showings. “Remember, you want buyers to see themselves living there, not as a guest in your home,” the Barndollars said. “The intent is not to show off your interesting decor, but to highlight the potential of your home and evoke an emotional offer from the buyer.” So just how important is staging your home to make it market-ready? “A recent client whose home we staged got \$10,000 more than the asking price,” Jones said. Staging is all about emphasizing the positive and minimizing the negative, which is why it’s crucial to stage your home before putting it on the market, Jones said. Homes that haven’t been staged run a higher risk of languishing on the market, Jones said, “and by the 21-day mark with no movement, buyers start to wonder, ‘What’s wrong with this house?’ Especially in today’s market, with homes moving quickly, it’s a major issue if a home sits. People want to know why.” Spending the money to update and stage one’s home before putting it on the market may seem daunting, but doing so can benefit in the long-term and help expedite the sales process, Jones said. “The cost and labor involved in changing your paint colors, updating your home and staging it before you go to market are minimal compared to waiting to see if it moves and then, if it doesn’t, making the changes then,” Jones said. “Buyers will then be in a position to ask for three times more off of the price point than it would have cost you if you had staged in the first place.” Finally, staging also helps assuage buyer concerns about any uniquely shaped rooms the home might have. “So many homes have quirky rooms that are being used for something other than the purpose they were designed for,” Jones said. “Staging is all about defining a space and making a room make sense. It helps people understand the layout and just how they can utilize a space.”