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What Do Buyers Want?

Remember just a few years ago if you wanted a cupcake you could get vanilla or chocolate and maybe just a few other flavors in between. Now all you see are elaborately flavored and decorated cupcakes. Today, it's almost that way with buyers. Instead of a reasonably priced and relatively plain home in a nice area, many buyers have eaten one too many fancy cupcakes and want it all. Homes with sprinkles or a sparkler or two are the ones that sell.

The buyers we are talking about are young families and adults between the ages of 31 to 45. These buyers are in full course with their careers and are busy with their growing families and don't have the time or money to update a house. Watchers of HGTV, they also have strong opinions about design features their new home will include. Take a look at some of these items and ask yourself how your home stacks up if you decide to sell.

1. Buyers want a deal! We are in a very price sensitive market and buyers want to know that they are getting the most value for their money. Saying that, Buyers are willing to pay more for homes that are in model home condition but either won't buy or will discount significantly a home that needs work.

2. Kitchens and Baths Sell Homes! We know many Sellers do not like granite counters and stainless steel appliances but at this moment Buyers do! Bathrooms with dated tile should be updated and older vanities, sinks, medicine cabinets, hardware and light fixtures should be replaced.

3. Paint is an Easy Crowd Pleaser! Buyers want a house with a neutral palette to help them imagine their own decorating plans. Plain white, however, is mostly out and "Pottery Barn" colors are in. Wallpaper no matter how expensive and dear to a Seller must go as well as dated carpet. And, if you have carpet over hardwood floors, show the hardwoods. They are in and most desirable.

4. Let there be Light! Your brass or crystal Dining Room light fixture is no longer fashionable. Brush nickel and antique bronze are in. And, the overhead light fixtures that you have in your bedrooms and halls for the last 20 years must go. Good news, however, they are relatively cheap to replace.

5. Energy Efficiency! While most buyers won't pay substantially more for "green" and "energy efficient" improvements, they do want to know what it will cost to heat and cool the house and they do question whether windows, doors, the furnace, air conditioner, and hot water heater have been replaced.

6. It's Clean Up Time! Buyers want a clean house. Not just a house where the beds are made and toys are put away but a house with clean windows, baseboards, siding, and refrigerators. Clean carpets, bathrooms, kitchens and flooring are essential as well.

7. Smelly Houses Don't Sell! Any pet odors need to be eliminated, cooking food with strong odors (unless it's bread or cookies) needs to be avoided, and if you are a smoker, your home will need to be de-odorized and you need to smoke outside-no kidding! If you do plan to sell, do not light any scented candles or install plug-ins. Today many Buyers and their families are allergic and will run out of a house no matter what the smell.

8. Oh Give Me Land! Buyers want a home with a connection between indoor and outdoor spaces. So even if your lot is relatively small, landscape it, deck it, fence it or do whatever is necessary to create a perception of another wonderful living area, even if that area is used only part of the year.

9. Size Matters! Buyers want more storage space as well as flexibility in the garage. If you have a storage room or area, make it look big by straightening it up and getting rid of anything that you haven't touched in years or that you don't plan to take with you. If you have a garage, clear it out so that cars can easily fit in. And if you have a carport, the only thing visible should be your car.

10. Beauty Counts! Today's buyers start their search on the Internet and if they are not impressed by the pictures they see, they are not coming in. You simply don't get a 2nd chance to make a 1st impression.

To help you make your first impression GREAT, call or email Earle Whitmore, 703-750-2900 or Earle@EarleHomes.com.