

## Say What?

*Sellers often don't want to hear what Realtors have to say when preparing a home for market.*

**By Christa Gala**

Diplomacy is an essential skill when you're a Realtor. After all, what other job requires one to gently explain to a client that his taste may not appeal to others?

When local Realtors get ready to list a client's home for sale, they must go through a lengthy checklist. Is the house clean? Is it staged well? Decluttered? Depersonalized? More often than not, there's room for improvement, and it's the Realtor's job to persuade clients to repaint walls, remove collectibles, store furniture and a host of other things.

Two Cary Realtors share some of their anecdotes and tips about breaking the news a lot of sellers just don't want to hear.

### **It's nothing personal**

Kathy Sims, broker associate with Re/Max United, says some of the most common issues she faces with sellers include homes that need new paint and a lot of decluttering. She breaks the news about necessary changes with delicacy and sometimes a bit of humor.

When it comes to clutter: Sims might say, "You have quite a wardrobe. I have never seen so many beautiful pairs of shoes. Are you related to Imelda Marcos? Since we are going to sell your home very fast, I would suggest that we put all of the clothes and shoes that are out of season into storage. This will show the potential buyer how big your closets really are."

Sims' other diplomatic comments include: "I can see that you have outgrown your home," and "This is a diamond in the rough." The next, more obvious: "I have a great housekeeper that can help us get your home in showing condition."

It's all in a day's work, and it's nothing personal.

"I believe most sellers and buyers are visual," explains Sims. "I remind the client that our competition is brand-new homes and these homes are usually vacant or staged so I tell them to think in terms of 'less is better than more.'"

Sims uses the same response when clients ask about simply giving the buyer an allowance instead of making changes. But buyers want move-in ready and are much more likely to make an offer on a home that's visually appealing.

### **Special Treasures**

What's not to love about a few dozen gnomes, dolls or thimbles? If you don't collect anything, perhaps you cherish spiritual or religious symbols in your living space. But when your home is on the market, you've got to make sure another man or woman can envision it as his or her castle. As a result, most Realtors try to persuade clients to pack away the treasures, and it's never easy.

“Collectibles can be a real sore subject,” says Realtor Brenda Carroll, with the Just Call Brenda Team at Total Source Realty. “People spend a lifetime collecting things, which makes it seem insensitive to ask them to pack them away. I have seen collections of clocks, bunnies, cats, angels, turtles and more. Although they are fun and cute, they create a real distraction for buyers.

And let’s discuss stuffed animals, and I don’t mean toys,” Carroll continues. “Deer, fish, moose heads or the four-foot buffalo head that I had to ask a seller to remove from over the fireplace.”

And how do sellers typically response to suggestions that at first may seem a commentary on their lifestyle?

“They usually pause and consider what I’ve said,” Sims says. “It’s especially that way with religious artifacts. I usually try to say something that’s less offensive...and bring the lighter side to it. I’ll say ‘Some people won’t appreciate your religious beliefs and will not share them and so, just like pets, where some people like them, some don’t, it’s probably best to hide them.’”

Sims says the response she receives is pretty black and white in those cases. Clients will either put the objects away or flatly refuse.

It’s just another example of the variety in the real estate profession, and that’s what keeps things interesting, says Sims. “There’s always something new and different, and every buyer has a new personality.”

The temptation for most sellers is to look at their home as it is and assume everyone will appreciate it as much as they do. But it’s the Realtor’s job to show the property as it will appeal to the greatest number of buyers.

“It’s not easy to ask clients to rearrange their home, but part of our service is our eye for detail to assure their home shows at its best,” says Carroll. “This typically generates a quicker sale and a better price.”