

# Top Dollar

## Tight Budget

### Top 5 Low-Cost Home Improvements That Make Top Dollar At Sale

for home sellers who are living  
in their homes for sale

TRACEY McLEOD



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# 5 Top Dollar Home Transformation Techniques

with **TRACEY McLEOD**

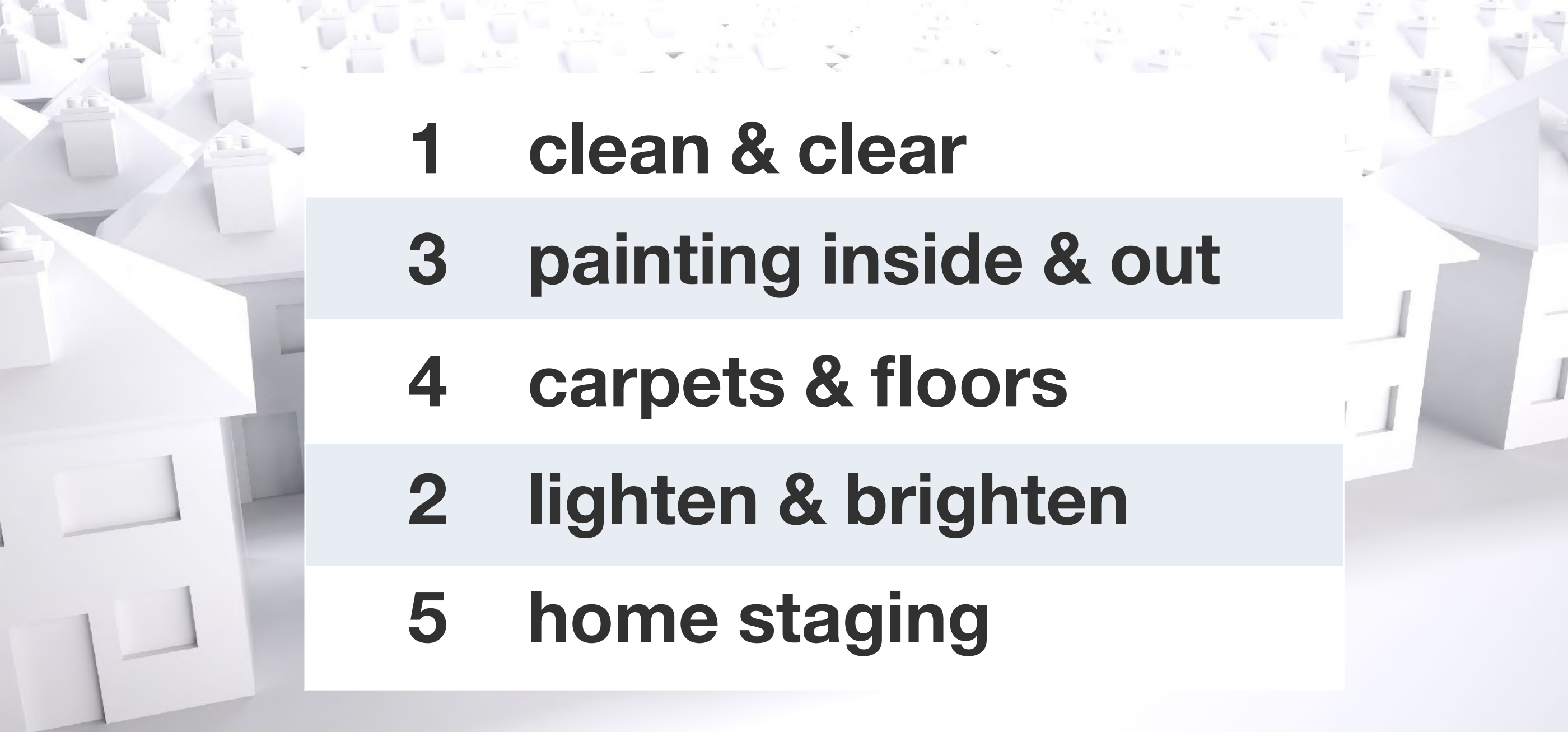


When I presented my first home for sale I had no idea what I was doing. It seems like I made every mistake in the book. By strictly following the direction of my straight talking agent, even as a complete novice, my home presentation efforts ended up **making \$18,000<sup>1</sup> more in just 3 weeks.**

Since then, as a professional real estate stylist I've helped occupied home sellers make between **\$20,000 and \$ 215,000<sup>1</sup> more** than their agent expected, or more than their best offer prior to staging by building upon their existing furniture and furnishings to enhance the home's presentation.

To get top results, I had to create **a step-by-step system** that I follow each time I present a home for sale. As a result, I was unexpectedly given international recognition for customer satisfaction for my professional home staging services. As part of my property training I visited hundreds of open homes for sale and saw first-hand how much money home sellers were donating to their buyers by not knowing how to properly use this information.

As you'll see, the top five low cost home improvements originated from extensive research over a ten-year period. They are constantly being tested in my clients' homes for sale. The ones I have used and recommended most, are my **Top 5 Home Improvements.**

- 
- 1 clean & clear
  - 3 painting inside & out
  - 4 carpets & floors
  - 2 lighten & brighten
  - 5 home staging

## MY TOP FIVE

For most owners, your home is your biggest asset. Let's face it, there's not much else you can pass on to your children that will hold its own over time and **return significant dollar value**.

That's why I'm not a fan of the seemingly harmless 'laundry-lists' of to-dos for D-I-Yers when it comes to presenting your home for sale. I'm often asked to compile them, but using generic lists to guide your home's presentation, often for a younger generation of buyer, is incomplete.

With a mountain of information out there, it's easy to see why **so many sellers struggle with presenting their homes for sale**. Your home is your private and personal space. Inviting buyers in to 'judge' its value is a big deal for everyone. You are not the only seller who is overwhelmed.

None of us lives in perfection. Decisions on what to keep or to clear (declutter) are based on showing off the home's liveability and **highlighting its best features for your ideal buyer**.

Proven survey results, training, and techniques from my professional home presentation experience have been used to bring you tools that can make your home selling journey **smarter, simpler and more rewarding**.



## CLEAN & CLEAR

This one seems like a 'no-brainer' but so many sellers get this wrong. I've tried to be as specific as possible in my explanations so you have action statements and 'before' and 'after' photos of how I've used them.

Remove personal items, but do not lose the personality of your home. There is a tipping point where it looks sterile.

Wash and clean all areas. Focus on the things your buyers will see first, not what you think you should do first.

Freshen air, but be wary of air fresheners or scents when viewing to the public. A lot of people are allergic.

Clear displayed items from counter tops, bedsides and bathrooms; hide any knick-knacks smaller than a melon.

Tidy wardrobes and organise to about two-thirds to three-quarters full. Keep three months of clothes on display.

Polish wood and mirrors; clean shower screens inside and out; dust all glass or reflective surfaces before viewings.

MORNING: 8AM

- Remove personal items
- Clean and dust
- Clear the counters
- Organise cupboards



one

## CLEAN & CLEAR

AFTERNOON: 4PM



*“additional \$130,000 at sale”*

In this home staging we did replace furniture items because it was warranted to make top dollar for the home sellers. The owners attribute an **additional \$130,000 at sale** to the home's preparation and presentation. You can still achieve a great result while using your own furniture and furnishings. This comes from understanding your buyer before you start spending on making your home look 'pretty'.



## LIGHTEN & BRIGHTEN

There is nothing more satisfying than taking a home out of the darkness and peeling back its true beauty, layer by layer. Darkness can lurk indoors in your lighting, furnishings, furniture as well as outdoors in the garden.

Make sure windows open easily; open them for viewing if you don't have air-conditioning and it's not too cold or hot.

It's very important just before the photo shoot to clean windows and skylights and wash fly screens. Remove the screens to lighten during open viewings, if necessary.

Replace or remove old curtains; inexpensive sheers are best to allow light to enter and to soften the window frame.

Remove other obstacles from windows i.e. remove decals and stickers and trim shrubbery that blocks the light.

Repair light fixtures (fittings) and bulbs for safety; upgrade dated light shades and covers for a younger buyer.

Mirrors are inexpensive and fantastic at lightening dark or enclosed spaces and enlarging small rooms.

MORNING: 8AM

- Add mirror
- Clean windows
- Add bedside lamps
- Lighten bedlinen

two

## LIGHTEN & BRIGHTEN

AFTERNOON: 4PM



We styled this home **using the clients' own furniture** with additional decorator items from our inventory. The presentation resulted in a lot of buyer interest, but the steeply sloping block was not desirable for many buyers with children. The owners really appreciated living in the home with their own furniture while it was on the market. They enjoyed their time in every freshly styled living area while waiting for the right buyer to fall in love with the home the way that they had.





## PAINTING INSIDE & OUT

I love fresh paint in a home for sale and, more importantly, I trust it to deliver a refreshed, modern home. A coat of paint is the MOST cost effective way to freshen, lighten and enlarge the feel of your home.

Remove dated wallpaper and paint the walls in warm hues. Warm neutral interior walls in home's for sale give the broadest psychological appeal.

Paint over coloured feature walls unless they are in a neutral colour and look amazing.

Have leaks repaired prior to painting. For safety reasons paint should never be used to cover a problem.

Outdoors, try 2 - 3 paint colours for depth of field to distinguish walls, doors and trims. Remember neutral colours will look at least three shades lighter in full sun.

Paint shutters, window ledges, trims and front door in gloss. Paint stair treads and entry floors in a darker colour.

Paint or re-stain the front fence. Painting can be a big job requiring more coats if the fence is natural timber.



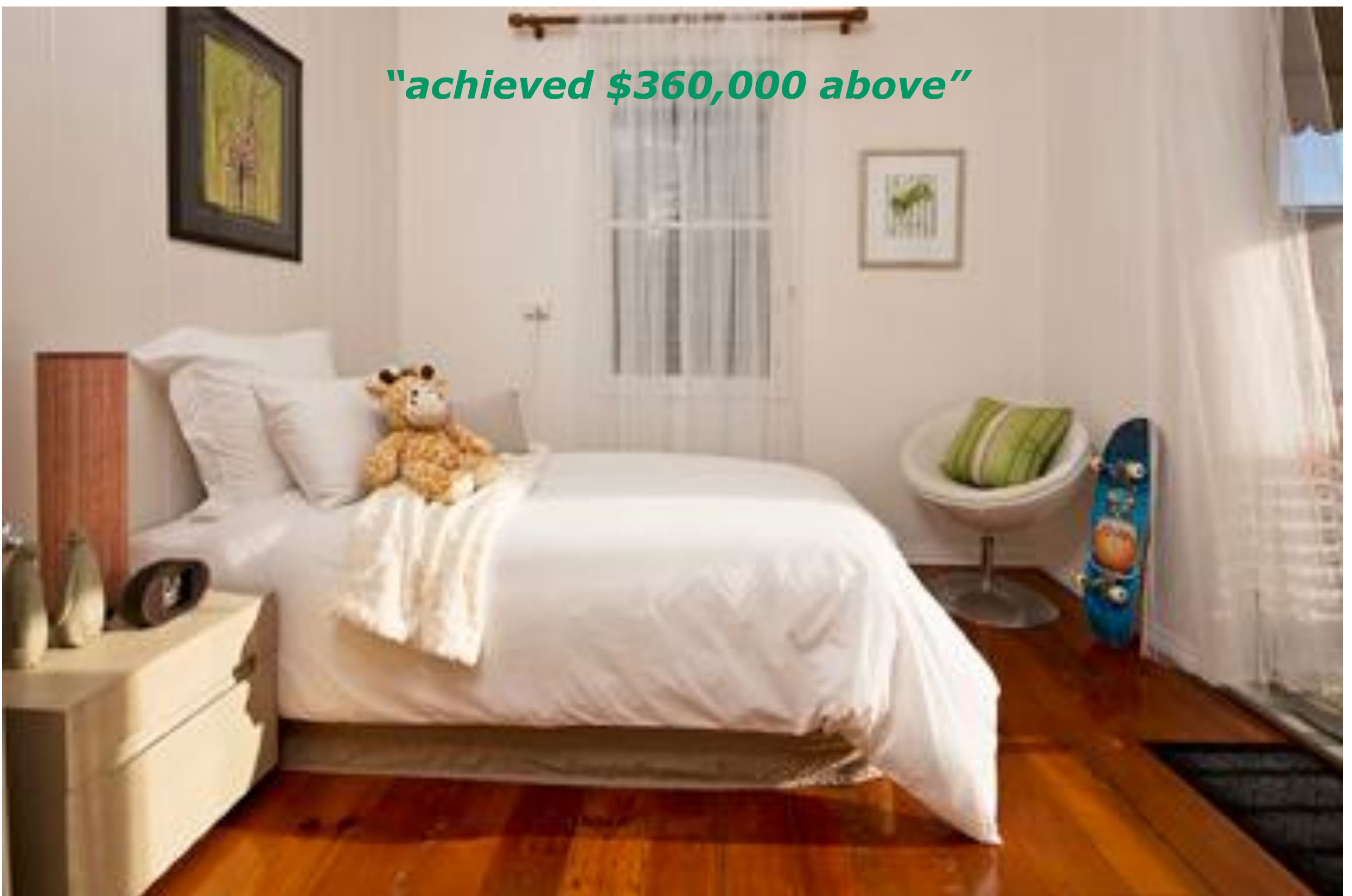
BEFORE

- Fresh coat of paint throughout the house
- Freshly painted front door
- Leaks repaired and watermarks covered

three

# PAINTING INTERIOR

AFTER



*"achieved \$360,000 above"*

An amazing marriage of motivated seller, experienced real estate agency and a professional and experienced real estate staging team paid off big time for this inner city character home seller. After spending \$30,000 on painting inside and out, landscaping, and a new rear deck, the small lot home in a trendy suburb **achieved \$360,000 above** the selling agent's pre-presentation price expectation.

BEFORE



- Exterior painting
- Paint shutters & window ledges
- Paint or re-stain fences and doors

three

## PAINTING EXTERIOR

AFTER



*"home appears larger in the street"*

In full sunlight, the once blue house exterior appears white. The home is in fact painted with Deluxe Beige Royal (left above) on the walls, doors, featured fretwork and posts, and Colorbond Bushland (right above) on the gutters, handrails, floorboards and stair treads. The lighter colours make the **home appear larger in the street** than it did as a blue house.



## CARPETS & FLOORING

Are you starting to see how all these home improvements overlap and intertwine, forming the layers of your home's final presentation for sale? These essential relationships are overlooked in most 'laundry lists'.

The 'before' rooms shown on the next pages are from vacant homes. You'll need to move the furniture before laying carpet or polishing floors.

Steam clean existing carpets thoroughly. Replace worn carpet with a warm neutral coloured carpet that is within your budget.

Buy the most cost effective flooring for your target buyer, not the cheapest. Save by using existing underlay if on a tight budget.

Patch, repair, or polish hard wood floors and shine up the linoleum; Oil or paint decks; steam clean tiles and replace missing tiles and re-grout as required.

If possible, and not too expensive, eliminate creaks in floors before replacing carpets.

BEFORE

- Steam clean existing carpet if leaving as is
- Replace carpet throughout, as required
- Replace underlay, as required



# CARPET

AFTER



The formal living and dining area of this entry-level home in a suburb where new homes were being sold off the plan in an adjacent suburb. Because of this, the home had a price ceiling just under \$500,000. **A top offer was made for \$490,000 at the first viewing**, but the owners held out for a higher price. They sold 3-months later, accepting an offer equal to the original offer made on Day One.

BEFORE



- Patch, repair or replace hard wood floors
- Eliminate creaks in floors
- Clean and wax linoleum
- Replace missing tiles
- Re-grout tile floors

four

## FLOORING

AFTER



*"sold with a set of architectural drawings"*

This character home in a trendy suburb was fully presented inside and out. Because of the potential for outstanding city views from lifting the home and building in the lower level, it was **sold with a set of drawings of the renovation**. The home's presentation and plans added \$110,00 to the sale price. Even though the buyers knew they had paid top dollar, they were not planning to renovate the home.



## HOME STAGING

Our surveyed real estate agents noted that adding fresh flowers, rearranging furniture, adding decor, hanging artwork and playing soft music; all contributed to the ambience of homes for sale and added to their price at sale.

Such **general guidelines are of limited benefit to home sellers** on the front line trying to figure out how to present their homes for top dollar. In my first home for sale I got it all very wrong. Fortunately, my real estate agent knew my market and what buyers would be looking for.

Of course, he didn't know how to visually market my home - how could he, it's not his job. He organised painting and repairs and I went out and bought furniture that *I* liked and would want in *my next home*. I did not consider who my ideal buyer was.

Even so, I made \$18,000 profit from my first sale after making significant changes to the home's presentation. This ignited my passion for property. Since 2011, I've helped occupied home sellers make between \$20,000 and \$215,000 extra while living in their homes for sale.

You deserve to make top dollar from your home at sale. Go to [www.presentationells.com](http://www.presentationells.com) to find out how.

MORNING: 8AM

- Add fresh flowers
- Rearrange furniture
- Add decor
- Hang artwork



## HOME STAGING

while living in your home for sale

AFTERNOON: 4PM Using Clients' own furniture



This home looked very presentable prior to staging. But by following a few simple design principles and rearranging the existing furniture and decor and adding florals and artwork to **draw potential buyers into the space**, a top dollar transformation occurs. By preparing each room to photograph well, you ensure greater buyer interest and home viewings than you can achieve in your pre-staged home.



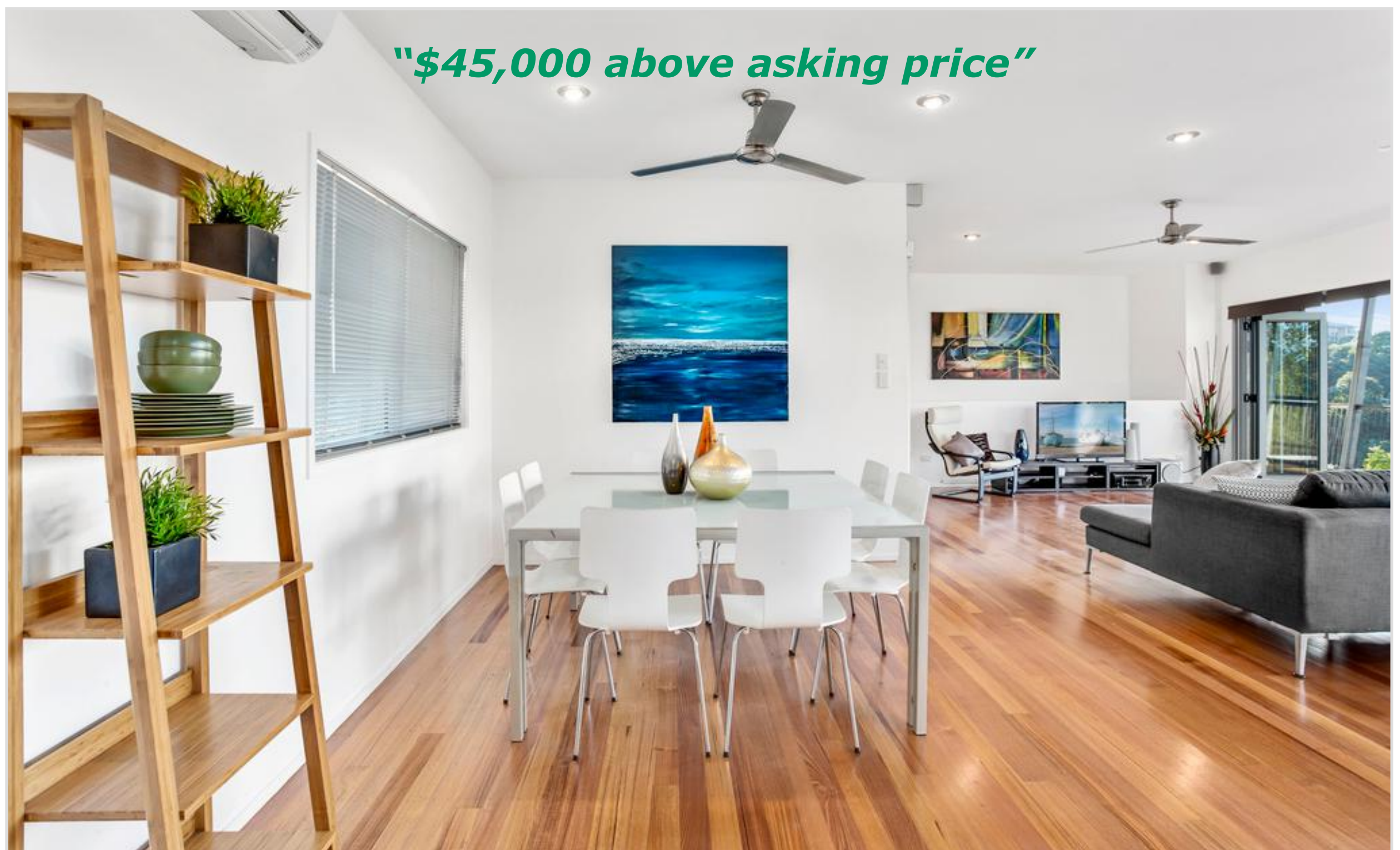
MORNING 8AM



# HOME STAGING

while living in your home for sale

AFTERNOON: 4PM Using Clients' own furniture plus additional art and decorator items



A toddler, a very large hairy dog and a baby on the way is not a dream scenario when selling your home. Properly presenting your home makes it easier, not harder, to live in your home and keep it 'show ready' while it is on the market. This occupied family home had 52 groups, six written offers, and a sale for **\$45,000 above asking price on Day One**; at a cost of less than \$4,500.

MORNING: 8AM



## HOME STAGING

while living in your home for sale

AFTERNOON: 4PM Using Clients' own furniture plus additional furniture, furnishings, artwork and accessories.



This home had been on the market exactly one year before. I decided that adding contemporary rental furniture to their existing items, would mean that the owners could comfortably live in the home and have a family Christmas lunch on the balcony. They spent \$25,000 on presenting the home for sale and sold for an incredible **\$215,000 above the previous year's offer** with only 6 viewings.



## RECOMMENDED

It is essential that your home ticks all of the boxes for your home buyers. The following areas are also important to address for a successful sale.

### Landscaping

You have **less than seven seconds to make a first impression**. Potential buyers will not enter if your outdoor areas do not look inviting from the street. This apartment complex (pictured above) transitioned buyers beautifully from 'lookers' to 'lovers' before they even entered the home.

### Electrical and Plumbing

**A building and pest inspection** is your best friend when it comes to saving time and money in preparing your home for sale. This will guide you as to where to focus your energy when it comes to unseen costs that can have a devastating effect on your sale price if not dealt with up front.

### Kitchen and Bathroom

I've kept the key wet areas off my low-cost list because in the hands of amateurs even minor renovations can soak up profits at sale. Make sure your changes are warranted. **Do the minimum and let buyers renovate.**



**Ellen Brooker, HomeSeller**

**SOLD**

**If you knew what I know, you would never sell your occupied family home unprepared or poorly presented.**

**I just think it's not good enough... not for you, or me, or any home seller... to undersell your biggest asset.**

When real estate staging professionals talk about home staging or styling an occupied home, we're referring to visually marketing the home through proper preparation and presentation that can help it sell for top dollar. It does not necessarily require bringing in additional furniture.

I believe that growing your knowledge about such an important marketing tool as home presentation for sale is critical; and that **every home seller should have access to this information** regardless of his or her selling price or home presentation budget.

Your home's presentation is the one thing you *can* control in the home selling process... and you deserve to know how to make top dollar at sale.

*Tracey McLeod, Presentation Sells*

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**TRACEY MCLEOD**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tracey McLeod is a real estate stylist and home stager specialising in preparing and presenting occupied family homes for a top dollar sale.

Tracey is founder of Presentation Sells - a powerful training platform that helps occupied home sellers properly prepare, present and profit from their homes for sale - while they are living in them. Tracey has been acclaimed as a leading industry professional locally and internationally.



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*"Tracey McLeod is a consummate professional, providing a brilliant service to help home sellers make the most money from their sale. I have worked with her for 6 years now and every home she has staged for me has had phenomenal results. I recommend her to anyone serious about getting the highest price. She is a 10/10 as far as I am concerned....Always!"*

-Lorena Chiappara, Licensed Real Estate Agent

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