SELLING · MICHAEL MCNAMARA HOMES

Home prep checklist

What to do before you list, room by room, in a sensible order. Tick each one off as you go.

Before anything else

- [ ] Walk through the house and write down every repair you already know about
- [ ] Fix leaks, running toilets and dripping faucets
- [ ] Replace burned-out bulbs and make every light work
- [ ] Test every smoke and carbon monoxide detector and replace batteries
- [ ] Repair sticking doors, loose handles and broken screens
- [ ] Deep clean the whole house, including windows and baseboards

Kitchen

- [ ] Clear counters down to a few items
- [ ] Clean inside the oven, fridge and dishwasher
- [ ] Tighten loose cabinet pulls and hinges
- [ ] Touch up scuffed cabinet fronts and walls
- [ ] Replace a cracked or stained sink or faucet only if it looks worn

Bathrooms

- [ ] Re-caulk the tub, shower and sink where it has yellowed or peeled
- [ ] Remove mildew from grout and shower walls
- [ ] Replace a stained toilet seat and worn shower curtain
- [ ] Put out fresh white towels for photo day

Bedrooms and living spaces

- [ ] Pack away a third of the furniture and personal photos
- [ ] Clear closets so they look half full
- [ ] Touch up paint on scuffs and nail holes

- [ ] Repaint only the rooms with bold or damaged color, in a soft neutral
- [ ] Clean and fluff the carpet, or deep clean it
- [ ] Clean the fireplace and stack a few logs neatly

Basement, attic and systems

- [ ] Clear and sweep the basement so buyers can see the walls and mechanicals
- [ ] Gather service records for the furnace or boiler
- [ ] Replace the furnace filter
- [ ] Fix any water stains and find out where the water came from
- [ ] Gather the septic pumping and inspection records
- [ ] Find your most recent well water test results
- [ ] Note the age of the roof, furnace and water heater

Outside and land

- [ ] Clear brush and trim branches back from the house, driveway and walkway
- [ ] Rake, mow and edge the lawn, or clear snow and ice from the entry in winter
- [ ] Power wash the porch, walkway and siding where it is dirty
- [ ] Touch up the front door and make sure the house number is visible
- [ ] Stack firewood neatly and remove any junk piles
- [ ] Clean out the barn, garage and sheds so the space is visible
- [ ] Fix loose steps, railings and the mailbox

The week before photos

- [ ] Clean every window inside and out
- [ ] Hide trash cans, pet bowls, toys and cords
- [ ] Open all blinds and turn on every light
- [ ] Put away the car and any boats or trailers so the driveway is clear
- [ ] Take the pets out of the house for the shoot

Skip these

- Full kitchen or bathroom remodels. Buyers rarely pay back the cost, so clean and update the small things instead.
- New flooring throughout, unless it is damaged or very worn.
- Expensive landscaping. Tidy and fresh beats elaborate.
- Upgrades only you would choose, like a custom paint color or built-ins. Neutral sells.
- Replacing working appliances. Clean them well instead.

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