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Kitchens Sell a House

by Carla Hill

It's a tool used by house flippers all across the nation. Stagers know its power. Real estate agents push its importance. What is this not-so-well-kept secret of real estate? A kitchen can sell a house.

A kitchen is the heart of a home. This is true all across the globe. The old saying that the "stomach is the way to the heart" carries a lot of truth. Kitchens are where we spend much of our time and most of that is with our families. It's the room where we nourish our bodies and our spirits.

Kitchens are integral to entertaining and in today's age of open floor plans, they're a focal piece of many family rooms. It's because of this that kitchens play such an important role in the buying and selling process.

This one room is the showpiece of the house. You'll see it every day and your guests will see it during most visits. This means buyers want homes with up-to-date kitchens.

Kitchens, however, can be one of the most expensive rooms to renovate. These projects can also be the most labor and time intensive of all home renovations. It's not just a new layer of paint.

Instead you find a complicated array of flooring, tiling, cabinets, and counters. This means buyers may want a home with an up-to-date kitchen but they aren't willing to tackle this problem themselves. Most buyers want a kitchen that is ready to use the day they move in.

What do buyers look for in up-to-date kitchens? A lot of this depends on what price range your home is in.

The main thing to remember as a seller is to not price yourself out of your market. If homes in your neighborhood are selling for \$100,000 with tidy, but not luxury kitchens, then this is no time to upgrade to granite, travertine, and marble at the price tag of \$40,000+. You simply won't find a buyer.

Scope out the competition. Use open houses in your area or MLS listings to find out what your competitors' kitchens look like.

Do area homes have new solid wood cabinets and granite counters in today's designer colors? You'll be wise to consider making the same move. Are they including new stainless steel appliances and add-ons like dishwashers, wine-coolers, and trash compactors?

Are you in a higher-end neighborhood? It's time to think high-end. Your older home may have a highly functional kitchen, but a buyer will take one look at your formica counters and white appliances and become lost in the stress of how much money and time it would take to remodel. If you don't want to put in the time yourself to make upgrades then you'll have to make concessions in the price.

Don't become overwhelmed, though. Sometimes a kitchen update can mean doing just a few minor changes. Change the paint color to a warm, neutral tone. Get rid of any clutter. Update your appliances, paint your cabinets, change the pulls, or get a high-end looking counter for a fraction of the cost (faux-granite or lower end granite). You might even save a bundle by doing much of the work yourself.

The bottom line is a kitchen can sell a home. Do a little research and find out what your kitchen needs to make it competitive with area listings.

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