



JOAN O'MEARA
The Key to Your Home

REALTYCHECK



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How to Increase your Home's Value: The Top 10 Techniques with Insider Tips from Joan O'Meara

Written by C. Anderson, Contributed by Joan O'Meara

It's quite clear to Joan O'Meara, associate broker with Houlihan Lawrence's Rye/Harrison office, that a Seller who is prepared has the best advantage in today's real estate market. Frequently, Sellers preparing to list, as well as homeowners who may be considering renovations with future resale in mind, inquire as to what are the best improvements to undertake.

Here is a look at the Top 10, along with key insights. These value-boosters impact that ever-important first impression as well as the look and feel for move-in readiness.

1. EXTERIOR PAINT / SIDING Instant value is gained as soon as you refresh the exterior. The home looks cleaner, more modern and communicates "well maintained" to the Buyer. *Insider Tip: Choose a color that has wide appeal...ask a real estate professional or stager for guidance.*

2. LANDSCAPING / LIGHTING A little TLC to your property can go a long way. Sod, mulch, plants and trees can create a whole new inviting feel to your home. Modern and appealing exterior light fixtures are impactful, too. *Insider Tip: Look at your home's exterior in the dark...Buyers often drive by to get a feel of nighttime ambiance.*

3. WINDOWS / DOORS Updating windows and doors give your home an instant upgrade in style and energy efficiency. It can change the way both the exterior and interior looks and feels. *Insider Tip: A new front door was recently ranked #1 on the 2014 Cost vs Value report for Return on Investment.*

4. KITCHEN The hub of the home is an important selling point. If in need of updating, note that it's not always necessary to do a top-of-the-line dream kitchen remodel if you're not going to be there long enough to enjoy it. The alternative? Consider painting cabinets, updating hardware, countertops and plumbing fixtures. *Insider Tip: Granite isn't a mandate—*

consider other lower cost alternatives that give the same visual appeal, functionality and durability.

5. BATHROOMS Another key draw for Buyers, you can create that value boost with cosmetic updates including re-caulking, tile grout, painting, exhaust fans and cleaning. *Insider Tip: If you have chipped tubs, sinks and dated light fixtures, consider repairing or replacing these items. A little shine can instantly add value to the feel of a bathroom.*

6. FLOORING Buyers often immediately tune in to the floors. Lead the way with clean, contemporary and stylish flooring...with a seamless flow throughout. Fix or replace flawed areas, as a hole or stain can be an instant turnoff. *Insider Tip: Prep before you list: wash or wax hardwood, tile, laminate, or linoleum and steam clean carpets.*

7. INTERIOR PAINTING Find out what current colors are most popular and give your home a paint makeover. A fresh coat of paint adds instant ROI and move-in ready appeal, so don't hesitate to seek out professional guidance if you are unsure how to make this investment pay off. *Insider Tip: If you've loved your fuchsia dining room, appreciate the years and now put on fresh paint in a less subjective color before you list.*

8. INTERIOR LIGHTING Often overlooked, lighting can play a significant role in a Buyer's tour of your home. Well-lit homes can accent the best features and create a warm ambience. Lighting that is too dim can counteract your home's appeal. *Insider Tip: Beautiful kitchen counters? Show them off with under-cabinet lighting. Inviting fireplace with centerpiece mantle? Highlight this with appropriately placed recessed lighting.*

9. ROOF / FOUNDATION Ensuring that these fundamental areas of your home are in top shape is critical to your home's overall value...and offers less chance of surprising inspection problems. *Insider Tip: Consider a pre-listing home inspection, which can minimize possibilities of deal breakers and be an added bonus to Buyers if you share the report. Joan feels these are so important that she will cover the cost for Sellers (contact her for specific details).*

10. DEEP CLEANING A truly clean house communicates volumes. Buyers want a home that has been well maintained. A low cost value boost, if done deeply, this instantly pays off when a prospect walks into your home. *Insider Tip: Keep in mind all the doors and cabinets that will be opened. Beyond surface cleaning, Joan has three words of personal advice: declutter, declutter, declutter!*

A Glimpse into a Rye Seller's Path to Add Value

As Lynette Bard, a recent Rye client of Joan's stated, "the changes I made that added value to my home were all important and ranged from cleaning to finishing an unfinished basement" Key for Bard was studying the demographics of recent Buyers in the area—this gave her insight to make smart choices that would increase the value. "Sleeker light fixtures, still in keeping with the home's style, removing oriental rugs to showcase hardwood floors and replacing framed art with frameless contemporary canvases yielded a nice, open and spacious feel to the home that Buyers raved about."

Another successful factor was a rental pod to store at least 1/3 of every room's belongings. As an Interior Designer leading her business, Rue du Rix, Lynette may have a leg up in terms of techniques to stage a home. Yet her advice can help any Seller: to try and disassociate yourself from the house and possessions and how everything was when you lived in it. Be "objective and ruthless" when prepping — if Sellers can change their mindset that they are marketing a house — not their personal home — Bard believes the resultant look can be clean and clear to create that faster sale. With her own "really quick sale," she has the firsthand experience to back that up.

When considering upgrades within your own home, Joan points out the importance of not feeling compelled to go for top of the line or complete renovations — even in the Rye/Harrison market. As Buyers typically prefer to move in without having to take on any major work for a few years, Sellers want to aim for the feeling that major remodeling is not needed. Interestingly, mid-range upgrades can contribute to the value, the appeal and the move-in readiness for prospective Buyers.

Before any paint brushes or hammers are raised, Joan is happy to consult with homeowners for insights on home value upgrades or for recommendation of local, credible experts.