

15 KEY STRATEGIES

To Sell Your Home

"Making you an expert"



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Welcome! If you are thinking about selling your home this year, today is a great day to make a plan for the weeks or months ahead. According to the National Association of Realtors, **5.3 million homes** are expected to change hands this year. That's a lot of moving around! I have written this guide as a resource for you as you start your journey. Whether you are downsizing or looking for a larger home, my hope is that you can benefit from my 30 years of experience in the Seattle real estate market. This is surely an emotional time with equal measures of excitement, anticipation, and sadness as you move from one home to another. My goal is to provide you with a list of things that you can do as a seller to make this transition as smooth as possible and get top dollar for your beloved asset. So, please pour yourself a cup of tea (or coffee for you Seattleites) and enjoy reading and dreaming of your new home. Cheers!

Steve Kennedy "Making you an expert."

1. Price Your Home Correctly

For most people in Seattle, their home is their greatest asset. We have an emotional attachment to our homes, which makes it even more difficult to determine the fair market value. It is tempting to base your asking price on what you paid, what you owe, how much you have spent on remodels, and how much you need to buy a new home. But this method of setting a price will not sell your home.

When pricing for sale, it is important to set those emotions aside. The reality is your house will sell for market value. How fast it sells depends on how you price it.

This is what happens when a house is priced too high:

- You simply don't get offers.
- Comparable homes in your neighborhood sell first.
- You miss buyers who aren't looking in that price range.
- Your listing becomes stale.
- Dropping the price makes some buyers cautious.

By pricing your house correctly the first time you will:

- Attract more interested buyers within the first few days on the market.
- Make it easy for buyers to find the listing based on price searches.
- Create a sense of urgency in buyers, who see good value.
- Potentially receive multiple offers which will raise the selling price.

The Steve Kennedy Team can provide you with comparable sales in your Seattle area so you can price your home correctly the first time.



2. First Impressions and Curb Appeal



It is often said that you only have one chance to make a first impression. Nothing could be more accurate when it comes to selling a home. Buyers often make the emotional decision to purchase a home from the outside, standing on the curb of a home (thus the term “Curb Appeal”).

Buyers that have fallen in love “at first sight” will then spend the rest of their tour and subsequent visits justifying their emotional decision with facts.

Prospective buyers want to see a home in tip-top condition. They want to imagine what their life will be like living in your home. Make that an easy leap by creating the perfect picture. Start by standing on the curb. Beginning with the roof, and inspect your house with a critical eye.

- If your roof is mossy, have the moss removed.
- If the roof needs repairs or replacing, now is the time.
- Is your house “dirty”? A good pressure wash is in order.
- If your paint is in good shape a simple touch-up will add freshness.
- Wash all windows, inside and out.
- Replace the doormat and the mailbox.
- The garden and walkway up to the home should be inviting and well maintained.
- Grass should be mowed and free of bare spots.
- Bright, seasonal flowers and fresh mulch make for a cheery and welcoming entry.
- Buying a home is a very emotional decision. It is much easier for potential buyers to imagine living in a well-cared-for and loved home. Avoid any sense of clutter.

3. Paint, Paint, Paint

You may have heard that paint is one of the least expensive ways to freshen a space. You have heard this so many times because paint is one of the least expensive ways to freshen a space. Fresh paint lets potential buyers know that this is a clean, well-maintained home, that they can feel good about moving into.

When I was first selling real estate in Seattle in the early 1990s, I typically brought cans of white paint with me on trips to see sellers who were about to list their homes. As we talked about the listing process, I would often paint out a few areas that needed a quick touch-up; provided that I had the right color. Painting is a fun and low-stake venture. What type of paint should you choose? Paint technology has come a long way in the last decade. The days of toxic chemicals and foul-smelling paint are a thing of the past. There are many low and no VOC (Volatile organic compounds) options on the market.

These are an especially good choice when you are getting ready to put your home on the market, as potential buyers will be impressed that you thought ahead to their well being by using a quality low VOC product (a tasteful sign posted with the paint brand and color is a thoughtful touch).

What color should you choose? Again, you have most likely heard “neutral colors sell houses”. But what is a “neutral color” and how do you find one? Most paint retailers have modern neutral color collections for you to choose from. If you are still overwhelmed by all the options, ask your local paint retailer for a color consultation. Most offer this service for free when you purchase their paint. Remember, a neutral color is a backdrop that allows potential buyers to imagine their furniture and their life in your home. And make sure to leave one unopened can for the new owners for touchups.

4. The Kitchen Sells

The kitchen is the heart of the home. Even for those who don't cook. And for those that do cook, the kitchen is even more important. Even If your kitchen is in great shape, there are still a few things you can do to make it more appealing to buyers.

- Remove all small appliances from counters. This will make counters look more spacious and less cluttered.
- Organize and wash all cabinets and drawers, inside and out. If a buyer is considering your home, they will peek.
- Remove all photos and papers from your fridge and counters; allow buyers to imagine living there by depersonalizing.
- Deep clean your oven, range, and hood.
- Take out all trash and recycling, and stow all bins.
- Keep cooking to a minimum before a showing.
- Make sure your kitchen and disposal are odor-free.

Is your kitchen a little tired? While a full-on remodel may be over improvement, these are some areas where you really will get back what you put in:

- New countertops.
- Paint or reface cabinets.
- New hardware for cabinets and drawer pulls.
- Replace a dated appliance with something high-end and stainless.
- Purchase new modern bar or counter stools.
- Replace faucets and sinks with something new and modern.

We all love to entertain in our kitchens. Make sure people can move around freely and envision their own gatherings in the space.





5. Bathrooms sell houses

Just like the kitchen, the bathroom is another workhorse of your home. With our mild damp Seattle weather, bathrooms tend to stay more humid and moist than in other parts of the country, so good ventilation is important to home buyers. Make your bathroom as elegant as a spa, no matter the size.

We all love to go on vacation and love a welcoming hotel bathroom. But what is it about a hotel bathroom that is so appealing? Incorporate the following into your plan:

- **QUICK TIP**

If your bathroom is in need of a full remodel to get top dollar for your home, check out our resource page at SteveKennedy.com. We work with some outstanding contractors in the Pacific Northwest who will provide you with just what you need.

Clean, clean, clean!! Everyone loves a clean bathroom.

- Declutter; leave nothing on the counter except perhaps a nice soap bottle, a candle, and a small vase with fresh flowers. We love hotel bathrooms because other people's stuff isn't on the counter.
- Clean grout or have it professionally cleaned, sealed and re-grouted if needed.
- Make sure the shower door is clean.
- Clean toilets inside and out (and even remove and clean the toilet seat screws).
- Purchase a new neutral shower curtain.
- Repair, replace, or remove any damage wallpaper.
- Roll up new crisp white towels and place in a basket.
- Clean all cabinet drawers (people will look).
- Make sure your bathroom is free of mildew.



6. Floors

It may be tempting to forget about flooring or believe it isn't that important, but as you declutter and remove furniture to show more floor space, you may realize that your floors need some attention. Buyers on QueenAnne and Magnolia are looking for move-in-ready homes. Make your floors look new and fresh to prospective buyers.

Hardwoods: Sometimes a light sanding and a coat or two of polyurethane is all that is needed to take out surface scratches and make floors look new. If hardwoods are in poor condition, having them refinished may be a good investment. This may seem like a huge and daunting job, but buyers looking for move-in-ready homes also see this as a daunting job. Do it for them, and they will thank you by making a good offer on your property.

Carpet: If your carpets are in good shape, have them professionally cleaned at least one week before an open house so they have time to fully dry, especially before you put furniture back in the room. A fan placed in the room after cleaning will also help dry carpet faster. If you need to replace the carpet, investing in a high-quality pad is a very good value. By doing so, the new carpet will last longer and prospective buyers will notice when they walk on the new carpet that you went the extra step and invest in quality.

Concrete: If you have concrete in a laundry room or garage that has seen better days, try painting or staining it. There are many paints and stains on the market made specifically for concrete. Buyers will notice these fresh new floors.

Porches & Decks: There is nothing like a fresh coat of stain or paint to make porches and decks look brand new. Plan well in advance so Seattle's rainy weather doesn't interfere with the drying process. If you are listing your house during the rainy season, a quick power wash may be all that is needed.

Of course, if you are selling a fixer-upper and prospective buyers will be putting their own stamp on the floors with a major remodel, then your best bet is to make sure the floors are as clean as possible. In this case, leave the new flooring job for the new owners.

7. Garages for Cars

If your Seattle home has a garage, then you are in luck! Home buyers love garages. They want garages. They beg for garages. However, they don't want all the stuff in your garage. They want to envision their stuff (and hopefully their car) in your garage. If you are like 75% of the population, your garage is a little like the island of misfit toys, and is full of bikes, trikes, scooters, old paint cans, left over building materials, furniture, and things that just don't have a place in your house. Before you put your home on the market, clean out the garage. Here is what I recommend:

- Removing everything from your garage.
- Sweep and pressure wash the floor.
- If you have drywall, paint it with a fresh coat of off-white paint to lighten and finish the space.
- If the concrete floor has stains, a coat of paint specifically made for garages or concrete stain will give this space a face lift.
- After everything is dry, start slowly putting just a p• Sell items you no longer need at a garage sale, on Craigslist, OfferUp, or EBay.
- Take any unsold items to Goodwill.
- Ballard Reuse will gladly take unused building materials.
- Consider placing things that don't belong in your garage in storage before your open house
- Does the garage door need to be painted or replaced? Now is the time.
- Does the door open and close easily? If not, new hardware, rollers, hinges, or a new opener are in order.
- Your garage is a huge asset. Show perspective buyers just how roomy, clean, and fresh your garage really is!



8. Declutter and Depersonalize

Most people live in their homes through the listing process, which makes decluttering and depersonalizing somewhat challenging. However, this is a time to make potential buyers feel that they can walk into your home and start living in it. That means putting away anything that distracts the buyer from this vision of “what if I lived in this house”. I advise clients to start your move before you list by packing up items that might be seen as too personal or clutter to potential buyers. Below is a list of common culprits that should be packed up, given away, sold, or stowed before listing.

- Personal Photos
- Personal Artwork
- Extra coats, shoes, & boots
- Toys
- Books
- Anything showing excess wear
- Magazines
- Small Appliances
- Papers
- Files
- Fans and space heaters
- Excess Furniture
- Oversized furniture
- Knick Knacks
- Accessories
- Collections
- Craft and Hobby Supplies
- Linens in closets
- Pet dishes
- Dog beds
- Pet toys
- Children’s art

Invite a friend over to walk through your home after you have decluttered and depersonalized. Give them a shopping bag and ask him/her to put anything distracting into the bag for packing. Then serve your friend a cup of tea, and pack up grandma’s tea pot and tea cups.

9. Network with Friends and Neighbors



As you are getting your home ready to list, spend some time with your social network. Tell friends, family, and neighbors that you will soon be listing your home, and ask them to spread the word. Have you ever had a visitor say, “I really LOVE your house! Please call me if you ever decide to sell”.

You may have thought this was just a flattering compliment, but they may have been quite serious.

Now is the time to call that visitor. By selling to a friend, family member, or neighbor, you may not get top dollar for your house, but if you have a strong emotional attachment to your home, it may be very comforting to sell to someone you know.

What a legacy to sell a beautiful family home to someone who loves it and will care for it as much as you do. You will have the assurance that another family will make lasting memories just as you have.

Selling “By Owner” can be very intimidating, as there are contracts, home inspections, escrow, title insurance, closing costs, and more to deal with. Steve Kennedy Team can help you close your sale for a flat transaction fee.

10. Pet Plan

Most of us own, love, and care for pets; my dog Oliver is part of our family. The problem is other people simply don't love our pets as much as we do, and many are allergic to pets. When you are selling your home, having a Pet Plan will make for smoother showings and happier animals.

I once went to show a client a house and was greeted in the foyer by cat vomit. While my clients laughed about it, the presence of the two cats in the home became more and more apparent as we walked through the home to find an unclean litter box and a strong urine odor in the basement. That house didn't sell that day. While it may be difficult if not impossible to get pets out of the home for the listing period, it is wise to find another place for pets to be during an open house and any showings. Having strangers in the home can make some pets nervous which can lead to unpredictable or territorial behavior. Some animals are not allowed outside, so for their own safety crating or boarding them is best.

Here are some ideas and considerations when making your Pet Plan:

- Take pocket pets and their cages to another home during your open house.
- Dogs might enjoy an afternoon at the dog park or a very long walk.
- There are many doggie daycare centers in Seattle, and many offer pick-up services.
- Indoor cats can be boarded for the day to keep them safe.
- Ask for at least an hour notice before a showing.
- If you are unavailable to implement your Pet Plan, have a neighbor, dog walker or pet sitter on standby who can take your pets during the showing.



11. Yard Clean Up

Curb appeal and first impressions were discussed earlier, but yard and garden care are so important, I am going to circle back. If you are lucky enough to own a home, townhouse, or condo with a yard, garden, parking strip or even a few pots on a deck, this is for you. Whether you maintain your own garden, hire a gardener, or have a whole crew working at it, this is the time to get your landscaping in top form. Start one to two months before listing your home to get your landscaping in top form. Start one to two months before listing your home to ensure ample time to tackle all the garden projects and give plants time to recover from pruning, trimming, and lawn patching.

- Remove all clutter from the yard such as unused pots, tools, toys, and any other debris.
- Mow the lawn and make sure it is free of holes and brown patches.
- Trim and prune any shrubs that look overgrown.
- Remove dead or shabby looking plants.
- Have trees professionally pruned if needed.
- Weed and mulch all beds, planters, and pots.
- Fill in any bare places with new shrubs and some seasonal annuals.
- Fill pots with colorful seasonal plants.
- Clean up any water feature or fire pits.
- Clean or repaint garden furniture.
- Paint or stain fences if needed.
- For long range planning, plant tulip bulbs in the fall for spring color.



If you have an extensive perennial garden, consider sharing photos of the garden with potential buyers at different times of the year. For instance, if you have a lovely flowering cherry tree (that isn't flowering while your home is listed) consider sharing a photo. If you have beautiful Northwest azaleas and rhododendrons in your garden, again, share photos of these native plants in their full glory. Labeling plants (and the spots where they will grow back the following year) will appeal to home buyers who enjoy gardening. To remove moss and mildew from fences and deck railings, start with a gallon of warm water. Add ½ cup of bleach, and apply with a scrubbing brush to affected surfaces. Rinse after 5 minutes.

12. Lighting

Lighting is one of those things that people don't usually notice; unless the light isn't quite right. Lighting can be either too dim or too bright.

Different types of bulbs can cast yellow, blue, or red tones, and your home will look very different depending on the time of day. Here are some tips for getting the lighting just right, whether you are showing your home in sunlight or under our gray Seattle skies.

- If your home has fixtures that are old and tired, replace them with new, fresh, modern fixtures. They are surprisingly inexpensive at big box stores.
- Make sure you have no burned out bulbs, inside or outside.
- Swap out bright high wattage bulbs for soft lower wattage.
- Pink or red tones are most flattering to interiors.
- Scatter several task lights in rooms rather than one or two harsh overhead lights.
- Walk from the curb and into your home at night. Is there enough light for visitors up your walkway and stairs?
- Make sure your house numbers are well lit and readable at night.
- Place a free-standing reading light next to a chair. This will allow buyers to imagine themselves sitting in that cozy spot reading a favorite book.
- If you have older fixtures that are charming, make sure your broker points them out to potential buyers.
- Dust, clean, and polish all fixtures.



13. New Soft Goods and Linens

When we think of new linens and soft goods, we often think of sheets and pillowcases. But what about pillows, cushions, and towels? Take a walk through your home with a critical eye. What might stand out to buyers as shabby, dingy, or dated?

Here is a list of items that should be checked, then removed, washed or replaced if needed:

- Throw pillows
- Bean bag chairs
- Bedroom pillows
- Duvet covers & comforters
- Bath towels
- Shower curtains
- Bath mats
- Kitchen towels
- Rugs
- Draperies
- Valences
- Bench cushions
- Stuffed animals

When picking out new items, white and neutral shades photograph well and appeal to buyers. New items need not be expensive; just fresh and clean. Now is also a good time to clean out your linen closet and donate items you are no longer using.

Make your move easier, and also allow buyers to imagine their stuff in that linen closet. And the joy of purchasing fresh linens for your house, is that you get to take them with you to your new home!

14. Staging

20 years ago, staging a home for sale was reserved for “premium” properties. Today, staging can be done for a home at any price point, either by a professional stager or the home owner. Realtors, buyers and sellers alike have seen the benefits of editing a home to the bare bones, then “staging” it with neutral furnishings (either the owner’s or rented furniture and art) in a minimalistic fashion to give potential buyers a feel for the way the home will look with appropriately placed furnishings, and to let buyers know with furnishings how a room might function or what its purpose might be. Hiring a professional stager is a great option. If you are doing some of the work yourself, here are some tips from the professionals:

- Start with a clean slate by clearing out each room.
- Stage rooms as they are intended to be used (don’t stage the dining room as an office, even if that is how you have been using it)
- Remove leaves from the dining room table for more floor space.
- Stage the master bedroom minimally with neutral bedding that appeals to both sexes.
- Children’s rooms should be staged, with only a few toys and books displayed.
- Bathrooms should be staged to look like a hotel or a spa.
- Porches and decks should be staged with clean fresh patio furniture, potted plants, and outdoor pillows.
- Stage the kitchen with a new kettle, new dish towels, a fancy soap container, and fresh flowers.



15. Always be Ready

Once you have listed your home, you should always be ready for a showing. Ask your agent to give you one hour notice. Even if your home is always ready for visitors, when you are living in the home while it is on the market you will need some time to make it just right. Make a short checklist and post it by the door. Then you won't have to remember if you turned all the lights on, hung fresh towels in the bathroom, picked up the toys in the basement, or put the dog dishes away. When you get the call, grab your list and you can calmly go from room to room and check those items off before you leave. It is never a good idea to be in the house during a showing. Buyers want to imagine themselves living in your home.

Pre-Showing Checklist

Whole House

- ☐ Open all blinds
- ☐ Turn on all lights
- ☐ Initiate your Pet Plan
- ☐ Empty all waste cans
- ☐ Turn on low music
- ☐ Check the thermostat

Bedrooms

- ☐ Make all beds
- ☐ Pick up all toys
- ☐ Stow any laundry
- ☐ Remove any valuables

Bathrooms

- ☐ Clean toilets
- ☐ Wipe down vanity
- ☐ Stow all toiletries
- ☐ Put fresh towels out

Outside

- ☐ Sweep the front steps
- ☐ Move any bikes or toys

Living Room

- ☐ Fluff and arrange pillows
- ☐ Organize any books
- ☐ Fold and stow any throws

Kitchen

- ☐ Wipe down kitchen counters
- ☐ Wipe stainless appliances
- ☐ Wash any dishes
- ☐ Clear counters of any clutter

Congratulations!

You are ready to show your house!





STEVE KENNEDY TEAM



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