

# Decisions, Decisions

## EMPTY NEST

Sometimes it's necessary to settle into a new home before you've sold your old one, perhaps due to a job transfer or the start of a new school year. When the home you're selling is an empty one, how can you make it more appealing to buyers?

With so many options available to you, narrowing down your search for a new neighborhood to the one that's just right for you seems a daunting task. To help make it easier, here are a few pointers:

First, consider having your vacant home professionally staged. There's a reason model homes are furnished: Buyers must be able to envision themselves living in the space – when it's empty, that's harder to do. As well, without furniture, buyers have no point of reference to help them assess the rooms' proportions. However, depending on factors like your home's location and market conditions, staging may be more or less of a priority. Real-estate sales representatives are familiar with staging needs, and can help you to determine how beneficial staging may be for your particular home.

If you don't stage, be sure your home's floors, walls and ceilings are in tip-top shape – with nothing else in the room for buyers' eyes to focus on, these things will be under much heavier scrutiny. Have carpets professionally cleaned or replaced (depending on their condition) or consider installing hardwood, and fix holes and cracks in walls and ceilings and give them a fresh coat of paint. As well, swap out finishing touches like light fixtures and cabinet hardware for more modern models, and consider replacing appliances, or even just their front panels.

Lastly, if possible, take some pictures of your home while it's still furnished (provided it's clutter-free and sparkling clean for the camera). These pictures can be helpful in marketing your home, when displayed in an album prospective buyers can flip through, for example.

- Make a list of the amenities most important to you. Whether they lean more towards playgrounds and community centers or theatres and restaurants, be sure to include everyday necessities like transit, grocery stores and banks. You may find it helpful to start by listing the amenities in your current neighborhood you've most appreciated and those you feel it was lacking.
- Visit any neighborhood to which you're seriously contemplating a move more than once, at different times of the day and week. You might discover that an area you had first visited during the day has a different tone at night. As well, you may find it useful to know what rush hour looks like on the highways and byways in and around the area.
- Find out about the crime rates (and the type of crime), property values (are they falling, rising or stable?), and the quality of schools (even if you don't have children, this is important as it can impact your home's resale value) in any prospective neighborhoods you're considering.
- Work with a real-estate sales representative. In addition to providing you with the information mentioned above, a good representative will find out your needs and wants and match them to a community ideal for you. Real estate representatives save you the time and stress of finding your new neighborhood by doing the legwork for you.

