

NEWS YOU CAN USE

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Be Cautious when Considering Remodeling in 2010

With home prices still down remodeling may not always give you a positive return on the investment. Remodeling is a better investment in some years than others. This year is among the worst if you're hoping to recoup much money when you sell, says a newly released report. Homeowners are getting back just 64%, on average, of a project's cost, compared with 87% in 2005, according to Remodeling Magazine's 2009-2010 Cost vs. Value report.

Basic replacements rule

As a group, low-cost replacements — new siding, windows, doors and roofing — deliver the best bang for the buck now, a considerably better payback than from a two-story remodel or a kitchen remodel.

Given great improvements in materials, you can replace your inefficient 10- or 15-year-old products with highly efficient ones for a decent return when you sell. In addition, the improvements help you save on heating and cooling bills. Replacing leaky windows with highly efficient newer ones is a good example. The technology behind the glass and frames has so improved that you're tightening up your home's weatherproofing in the process. You get more comfort and, from the real-estate agent's point of view, new windows show off your house from the street.

Putting Your House Up For Sale? Get These Essential Tips



If you want to get the best price for your house, it's essential to prepare it for sale. Homes that have been "staged" go for a lot more money... and sell much more quickly, too.

To give you a head start, get my free guide, "50 Essential Tips to Prepare Your Home for a Speedy, Top-Price Sale."

Just call me at 843-368-1510 and I'll send it right out to you.

Extension and Expansion of the First Time Homebuyer Tax Credit

As part of its plan to stimulate the U.S. housing market and address the economic challenges facing our nation, Congress has passed new legislation that extends the First-Time Home Buyer Tax Credit of up to \$8,000 to first-time home buyers until April 30, 2010. But it also expands the credit to grant up to \$6,500 credit to current home owners purchasing a new or existing home between November 7, 2009 and April 30, 2010.

Who Qualifies for the Extended Credit?

First-time home buyers who purchase homes between November 7, 2009 and April 30, 2010. AND

Current home owners purchasing a home between November 7, 2009 and April 30, 2010, who have used the home being sold or vacated as a principal residence for five consecutive years within the last eight.

Contact me for more information

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Dick Berger
Full Service—Full Time

How About Virtual Staging?

Even vacant listings need to look their best. But what if neither you nor your client can foot the bill for staging? To professionally stage an occupied house can cost from a few hundred dollars to more than \$1,000, says Barb Schwartz, a staging pioneer and founder of Staged-Homes.com. The price tag is even higher for vacant properties; add rental furniture and the costs can skyrocket.

That's why some salespeople are turning to virtual staging—using computer technology to add furniture and other décor to photos of their listings. Since many buyers today narrow their choices based on online photos, virtual staging is an economical way to show the potential of a vacant property.

Practitioners have been hesitant in the past to use virtual staging solutions because the images looked computer-generated (similar to the

virtual world of Second Life). But a new generation of these services allows you to create realistic images using photographs of actual furniture.

One option is Virtually Staging Properties, a program developed by professional stagers Krisztina and Jay Bell of Atlanta. The husband-and-wife team photographed more than 1,000 pieces of furniture, creating a virtual database that they use to lay out a room with images.

Cynthia Temple, a sales associate with First Weber Group Inc. in Middleton, Wis., used the service to create staged images of a vacant condo. Turnaround time: less than one week. Cost: less than \$225. "The images are stunningly realistic," Temple says. "It's hard to believe they're computer-generated."

This may not be the answer for everyone trying to sell a vacant home, but for a small price the rewards can be worth it. See Realtor.org for more info.

Wondering How Much Your Home is Worth?

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I'll be able to help.

Just give my office a call for a no-fuss, professional evaluation.

I won't try to push you into listing with me or waste your time.

I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

And maybe I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live!

Just give my office a call at 843-368-1510 to arrange an appointment.



The Hilton Head Choral Society Full Chorus, soloists and orchestra celebrate the season with "The Sounds of Christmas" concert takes place at 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 11, at First Presbyterian Church, 540 William Hilton Parkway.

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Thanks for reading! If you'd like to tell me what you think about this newsletter, or if you're thinking of buying or selling real estate, please get in touch.

