

Selling Your Apartment While You're in the Hamptons

In just a few weeks, New York will be at its loveliest. Flowering pear trees, gentle breezes, frisbee matches beginning in the Park. And with the pent up demand for Manhattan apartments, if you're planning to sell soon, you'd be a fool to miss the Spring market. But then you think, just a few weeks later, as soon as the kids are out of school or your own schedule lightens up, you're going to be heading to the Hamptons, or Fire Island, or Cape May and you can't sell when you're away, can you?

Actually, you can. All it takes is a little pre-sale planning now and you can be relaxing under a beach umbrella while your real estate agent does all of the work.

The Perks of Selling While You're Out of Town

Listing your apartment for sale while you're out of town enjoying yourself actually has a lot to recommend it:

1. You won't have to leave your home with kids, dog and everyone else in tow every time your agent calls to say you've got a showing;
2. You and your family will not have to live in your home as if no one is allowed to breathe lest anything get dirty, and, perhaps best of all;
3. You will not have to run around cleaning and fluffing pillows every minute of the day in case there's a last minute showing.

When you list your apartment for sale while you're away, all you really need to do is set it and forget it.

So how do you prepare your home for sale while you're away?

Start With a Great Real Estate Agent

When you have the right Real Estate agent, you'll also have the peace of mind of knowing you can easily leave your home in his or her hands, because they'll treat it as if it was their own. It goes without saying that you want someone with a true depth of experience in your market—someone who knows and can sell your neighborhood.. That said, you also want an agent who has extensive experience in property valuation so that you will receive solid guidance on pricing your property correctly relative to comparable property in your area. Yes, you may want to put a certain price on your property, but the role of a good agent is to assess the right price and obtain a quick sale. Putting a pie-in-the-sky price on your apartment, or worse, trying to force your agent to do it, will not only prevent you from receiving offers, it may also alienate other Real Estate agents who will then not show your apartment at all.

The right agent will also qualify those who want to see your apartment ahead of time, ensuring that anyone coming to see your home is truly capable of making an offer. Of course, a good agent will also keep track of all showings and stay on top of feedback about your apartment from other agents showing your property, which gives you the peace of mind to enjoy that beach umbrella.

Staging Your Apartment For Sale

You've no doubt heard other sellers talking about having their homes "staged" for selling, and sometimes professionals are called in who do nothing but stage apartments for sale. But the secrets to staging your place for sale are all things that you as a seller can accomplish without outside help (or bills) and you're about to learn some of the most important trade secrets for staging your apartment for sale right here.

When you met with your Real Estate agent, he or she no doubt made some suggestions for things to do with your apartment to garner a quick sale. Very often, you'll hear an agent tell you, "Clear away the clutter." Many sellers take that advice personally and feel insulted, but nothing could be further from the truth. It's the mark of a great agent. Far from knocking your personal taste, what your agent is really doing is ensuring that a potential buyer can picture themselves living in your space. So, let's make this simple: The most important key to selling your home is letting the potential buyer picture themselves at home in your apartment.

The very things that personalize your home as uniquely yours and truly make it feel like home for you, can have the opposite effect on a buyer, who may look at all the personal things and not be able to see past them to envision their own things in the space. Ideally, what you want to do as you prepare your apartment for sale then, is to look at your home objectively and clear out anything that might prevent the buyer from easily seeing themselves living in your apartment. So, before you start cleaning and arranging things, walk around your apartment looking for ways to increase the feeling of spaciousness. First, be certain that there are clear paths in and around

your apartment and that no area is blocked by things on the floor or a badly placed piece of furniture. If necessary, remove a few pieces to a storage facility to create more space. You'll soon have them back in your new home and you'll sell your existing home much faster if you do. The idea here is to edit your personal possessions back, so that only the most essential possessions remain. Ask yourself if each item will allow the buyer to see themselves in the space or hinder them from feeling your apartment could be theirs and then edit your possessions accordingly. And try not to be offended by this task or by suggestions your agent may make about reducing clutter because, again, they are not attacking your taste, they simply know that the name of the game is to allow that potential buyer to envision themselves in your space. There is absolutely nothing personal about this. It is simply about allowing the largest number of buyers to envision their own things where yours are now.

In addition to editing back your personal items, here are some additional things you'll want to consider to set off your apartment to its best advantage for selling:

1. Since the purpose of staging your home for sale is to create a feeling of spaciousness, make sure that you clear any obstructions to free movement in and around each area of your apartment. Look at furniture that blocks access to a window, or a path to another room and either remove it or reposition it to allow buyers free movement throughout your apartment. Similarly, make sure that all children's toys, magazine piles, books, etc., are neatly stored where they belong;
2. Consider painting your apartment white. Color, like other accessories, is a highly personal choice and at minimum, you should consider repainting rooms that are currently painted in

strong or unusual colors. Again, this is not a commentary on your personal taste, but simply a way to increase the likelihood of a quick sale. It's hard to predict how a buyer will react to your choice of bright color or if a certain color is not a favorite, etc. Certainly consult with your Real Estate agent first about whether he or she feels repainting is advisable. Also look at any painted area that needs retouching. Are there scratches on your front door? Nicks on cabinetry or baseboards that need a quick touch up? Get those minor repairs done now, so that your buyer isn't bothered by all the small imperfections. Even though these are minor fixes, taken all together, they can leave a potential buyer with the impression that there's a lot of work to be done and he or she may offer a substantially lower bid based on that general impression, so head it off at the pass!;

3. In the kitchen, make sure that all counters are clear and hide bulky appliances and other kitchen counter clutter in cabinets. Once again, the idea is to allow the buyer to see open space where he or she can imagine seeing their own things. And since you're going to be away, be sure to toss anything in your refrigerator and freezer that could go bad in your absence, since the last thing you want is an unpleasant odor pervading the room. Similarly, be sure to clear out all kitchen garbage before you leave;

4. Right before you leave, be sure to clear out any dirty laundry in the bathroom hamper or in kid's rooms, closet floors, etc., and then after a thorough cleaning, hang fresh towels and add a decorative item or two which will not require maintenance, such as a small arrangement of artificial flowers, or a lovely candle. As with the kitchen, however, strive to keep the counter tops, vanity, etc., as clear of any other personal items as you can. Also unplug any electric air

fresheners throughout your apartment. Scent, like color, is a highly personal choice and you don't want to risk losing a buyer because they're put off by the scent;

5. You will, of course, want to have your apartment thoroughly cleaned by a trusted professional as you're leaving for your vacation. And yes, this time, someone is going to need to do the windows as well! That way, you'll be assured that potential buyers will find your home in spotless condition. Make arrangements for a cleaning service to come in periodically while you're away as well, since dust gathers even when we're not around!;

6. Arrange to have your mail held either at the post office or in a neighbor's home. You do not want it piling up while you're away on a table or kitchen counter where it will create an impression of sloppiness or prevent a buyer from seeing a clean space. Also, be sure to have any package deliveries, newspapers, etc. held elsewhere as well. You don't want buyers tripping over piles to get in the front door!;

7. If you are not taking your pets with you on your vacation, by all means make arrangements for them to stay elsewhere. Litter boxes, pet food or the presence of an animal wandering around are all big no no's when it comes to making a sale. Remember too, that many people are allergic and much as we love Fido and Fifi, bear in mind that not everyone will! Alternatively, a live-in pet sitter can make it possible for your pet to remain at home, but be sure that any animal is in a crate during showings, preferably outside the main living areas of your home;

8. Fresh flowers, strategically placed, add a feeling of elegance, but only use them if you can

make arrangements with either your cleaning help or a concierge, etc., to change them out frequently enough to prevent them from spoiling;

9. Make sure that you leave your apartment at a comfortable temperature. If this means leaving the air conditioning running on low, do it. You don't want buyers oppressed by an overheated or stuffy space; And,

10. Leave your keys with your real estate agent and prepare to have a great vacation while he or she does all of the work. Arrange to have a back up set of keys available to your agent, or, if you're apartment will be on a lock box, make sure that someone close by—a neighbor, concierge or building maintenance personnel know how to deal with any sticky issues getting in, such as a security system if you have one.

Bon Voyage!

While it may seem like a lot of work now, remember that you'd be doing almost all of the same work to stage your apartment for sale if you were staying home. The Spring market is prime time for real estate sales, but you need to be prepared for showings into and through the Summer when you'd rather be away on vacation. Obviously, you know now, you can be away and miss the downside of selling your apartment altogether, so it's worth the extra effort now to get ready to get off on that vacation and leave the work and the hassles to your real estate professional.

When you're sitting under that beach umbrella, reviewing offers on your apartment, you'll be

glad you did!

Get To Know Us

Agent Biography



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Cono Natale has been buying, managing and developing real estate in NYC for over 25 years. Because he loves making deals happen so much, he decided to use his seasoned knowledge and talents helping others find similar reward. Cono tries to ensure for his clients not only the best home for their needs, but the best deal their budget can afford. He educates buyers, renters and sellers, on the realities of the market, managing their expectations while showing them what's possible and practical based on their unique situations and preferences.

Coupled with his extensive real estate experience is Cono's long and successful 25-year background as an owner in the restaurant/nightlife business, which involved his servicing clients well and scouting the market for prime locations for his establishments. Cono has always been a good manager, whether it involves people or properties. He's also creative in his thinking, quick to come up with solutions for any type demand, and always upfront about what can work and what won't. Clients appreciate his candor, and his dedication to their total satisfaction.

Specializing on the Upper East and West Sides of Manhattan, Cono is a native and lifelong New Yorker who was born in Brooklyn, raised in Queens, and has been living in and out of Manhattan for 30 years. He graduated from St. John's University with a Business and Paralegal degree. He is involved in community fundraisers and has a vast network of contacts throughout the city.

