

## Tips for holiday home selling

By Erin K. Witt

The shopping, baking and holiday vacations packed into this time of year can make it difficult to think about buying or selling a home. But many families in central Indiana are doing just that this holiday season.

Although many potential homebuyers choose to take the holiday season off, those that remain in the market are very serious. This group of shoppers often includes families that plan to move over the Christmas break and start their children in a new school at the semester. Many interstate job transfers are also put into motion during the holidays.

While the holiday season is a hectic time to show and sell your house, there are distinct advantages to staging and showing your home during the holidays. Nothing is more inviting than a home brimming with greenery, twinkling lights and holiday decorations.

So as you set out to win over a holiday homebuyer, consider the following tips:

**Tip #1: Make a good first impression.** Despite the cold temperatures and threat of inclement weather, don't neglect curb appeal during the holidays. Make sure walkways are cleared of snow and ice—or, if late fall leaves are still littering the ground, be sure to sweep them away. Small, potted evergreens may replace the seasonal flowers on your front porch.

**Tip #2: Light up the night.** Many buyers may view it favorably if all the homes in the neighborhood are brimming with lights—it shows unity, neighborliness, and pride of ownership. However, remember that while exterior lights are beautiful at night, they don't add anything during the day—when most potential homebuyers will be looking at your home. Try to find a tasteful balance.

**Tip #3: Adorn your front door.** Purchase a holiday welcome mat for outside, and maybe a festive doorknob sign. Also, consider wrapping your door in foil or holiday paper, and hanging a festive wreath to greet guests. The front door should be a bright and exciting invitation into your home.

**Tip #4: Create a festive feast for the senses.** Play holiday music in the background, and before a showing, bake holiday cookies and treats—the enticing smell will welcome those viewing your house. You can also leave some of those holiday treats and hot chocolate for prospective buyers. These special touches really resonate in the memories of buyers, and may be the added touch that sells your home.

**Tip #5: Keep the house cozy—despite the cost.** Entering a cold house could leave a lasting chilling impression—instead, set the thermostat at a comfortable temperature. It can be tempting to save energy costs by turning down the dial, but you don't want prospective buyers to rush through a showing because they are cold. A toasty fire is also a good idea if you're only stepping out while an agent is showing your house. But never leave a fire unattended.

**Tip #6: Let the light in.** The gray months of autumn and winter should not equate to a dark home. Make sure your windows are sparkling clean, and open all available blinds and curtains. Also, turn on interior lights to reduce the dreary lighting that prevails in the winter months.

**Tip #7: Tone down the tree.** If your house is on the small side, get a smaller tree. You don't want the tree to appear to take over the entire living room. Likewise, don't crowd a room just to get the tree to fit. Remove furniture if necessary so the tree can be the centerpiece of the room.

**Tip #8: Deck the halls—but only within reason.** Although decorations are an important tool in marketing a home during the holidays, keep your efforts on the conservative side. Not all home shoppers may celebrate the holidays in the manner you do. Don't overwhelm potential buyers with abundant displays of holiday cheer—you want your house to be noticed, not your decorations. Try to convey the love, comfort, and joy your family has shared in the house. If conveyed successfully, a new family will be anxious to move in and carve out their own holiday memories.

**Tip #9: Trim the trees outside, too.** This isn't another tip about decorating. Trim back limbs from outdoor trees so unexpected winds don't knock down branches that could damage your home or injure potential buyers. Another safety hint: make sure icy walkways are scraped and salted before all showings.

**Tip #10: Play it safe.** If your house is being viewed in the evening, let your agent know which tree and other holiday lights should be turned on. Make sure the agent turns the lights off when they leave, or plan to return home immediately following the showing. Unattended holiday lights can be a fire hazard. Also, be especially careful to ensure your home's security system is turned back on after an agent shows your house—especially if you have gifts under the tree.