



ah Harmonious Home Adventures

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Autumn Greetings!

Fall, or as we say here in North Texas, A Bit Milder Summer, is a great time of year. We may not have the crisp air that heralds the change of seasons in other parts of the country, but we can be thankful that temperatures are below the century mark.

At least for the most part.

At night, anyway.

In the world of real estate, this autumn is bringing with it a softening in the market. Volume is somewhat down; days on the market are up a touch.

Which makes *staging* a property for sale that much more important.

I've discussed interior changes that you should consider making when selling (you can find those issues [here](#) and [here](#)). But the concept of *staging* is different. It's kind of fuzzy for some - easily confused with other design or decorating endeavors.

This issue of *Harmonious Home Adventures* talks about staging - what it is and what it isn't - and why it is critical in a softer market.

So, let's get right to it!

xo



817.903.1112
dbarrett@virginiacook.com

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Fuzzy Concept of Staging

The other day, an acquaintance of mine asked me a question that brought me up short.

“When you talk about ‘staging’ a house, what do you mean?”

This person is no stranger to real estate. She has bought and sold several homes and, before she met me, hired half a dozen or so realtors (obviously she doesn't need to shop in that market any more – picture a smiley-face emoji here).

Yet the concept of “staging” was still fuzzy for her.

Staging Starts Online

For me, staging is such an integral part of the process that I tend to assume it's the same way for anyone involved in a residential real estate transaction. Apparently, that's not the case.

Actually, I should know better – surfing through MLS photos on the Internet reveals that many homes aren't properly staged before they're

put on the market. And that's where staging has its first - and arguably most important - impact. It's no exaggeration to say that the vast majority of buyers start their search for a new home online.

Take a look at these two pictures:



The same room.

But the pictures are vastly different. The second shows a staged room, shot by a professional photographer. Professional photographs are a must.

But the photographer doesn't stage the property - the stager (or, in my case, the realtor) does. And, by the way, it's the realtor's job to *supervise* the photos and make sure the property appears the way the stager intended for it to look (all beds made, all toilet lids down, clutter gone, window coverings open).

If the property isn't staged well in the online photos, chances are that your buyer won't even come look.

The Point is to Enhance *General Appeal*

Broadly put, staging is the process of enhancing a home's appeal to the broadest possible pool of potential buyers.

It involves, but is distinct from, decorating, interior and exterior design, landscaping, furnishing, color coordination, residential ergonomics, and psychology.

The process can be as simple as de-cluttering and making sure the bed is made or as complex as removing everything from the home, repainting the entire structure, installing carefully selected furnishings in specially designed vignettes, reworking the landscaping, and repairing any visible defect.

As I've said over and over again, *ad nauseum*, the point of preparing a home for sale is to make the prospective buyer envision themselves living there. It is *not* about appealing to *your* specific tastes.

Orchestrating the Evidence of Occupancy

Properly done, staging will have prospective buyers imagining not only themselves in the property but that living there will be a wonderful experience. Staging sells a lifestyle as much as a house.

Piles of dirty laundry are off-putting not only because they look untidy but because they remind you that life involves that drudgery. But a few colorful magazines on an end table with a tea cup brings peace and relaxation to mind.

Dirty dishes in the sink send a far different message than a table beautifully arrayed for a party.

You get the idea.

I offer a free staging consultation with all of my listings and, for homes over a certain value, complimentary staging services.

One of my favorite staging jobs was a house I listed for a dear, sweet neighbor who recently relocated out of state. (And, yes, I miss her quite a bit.)

Take a look at one of the living areas in her house - and, as she might say, excuse the mess; it was shortly before Christmas and I caught her in the process of decorating.



This is a comfortable, cozy space.

But it is almost completely personal to her. The style, the furnishings, the accessories. All are reflections of her unique (and wonderful, by the way) personality.

My goal in staging was to give the space a broader and perhaps more modern appeal - not "hard contemporary," since that can be just as taste-specific as full-on antique - just less "vintage." I also wanted to show off the area's best general features - the floors,

large windows, and trim.

New light fixtures, sleeker, brighter furnishings, some more contemporary art, and removing any impediment to the light flooding the rooms through the large windows did the trick.



This lovely home sold (to a precious family, I'm happy to say) with an above-full-price offer in two days because the buyers could picture themselves living here.

The Result of Proper Staging

A properly staged home is silently welcoming. It doesn't present a blank canvas. Frankly, most people aren't practiced enough at using their imaginations in a way to fill in a blank canvas. You have to give them a jump start.

The staged home presents just enough to allow buyers to complete the picture to their liking, to envision it as a portrait of themselves, the way they want to see themselves.

Particularly in a softening market, that means fewer days on the market, at a price that reflects real value, so that you can continue your adventure, your buyers can start their new one, and everyone can

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ABOUT DEBRA

Debra's experience in home renovation, staging, styling, and redesign sets her apart from the crowd in the Fort Worth area real estate market.

- Creativity to re-imagine existing spaces for broader appeal.
- Vision to see opportunities where others see problems.
- Insight to know what buyers are looking for.

Debra doesn't just listen - she empathizes.
She matches buyers to spaces.

Debra doesn't just sell property - she maximizes potential.
She helps her clients find *harmony* in their lives.

You can - and should - love where you live!



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dbarrett@virginiacook.com
817-903-1112

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