

25

Things to get Your Home Ready for Market



Hi I'm Val,

As a 15-year resident of Bronxville, I understand the importance of relationships. The magic of any community is steeped in friendships with neighbors and merchants that add style and vitality to your town, and the community that keeps everything running on track. My client relationships are no different – friendship, professionalism, and keeping things on track and on time.

Moving on can be a bittersweet thought. If you're considering a move, there's a lot to think through, and it helps to have the right person to help you get it done. My job is to make it as easy as possible for you by demystifying the process, providing insightful counsel, removing the pain points, and communicating regularly. I believe in being available – whether that's over a cup of tea, a text, or an old-fashioned phone call – to listen, strategize, course-correct as needed, and have a few laughs to boot!

After an in-depth consultation, I'll put together a custom plan to move forward. I'll ensure that your house looks great and that your photographs are magazine-worthy. As a modern digital marketer with 14 years' experience as a marketing exec, I will showcase your property locally and broadly, digitally and old-school. I'll guide you on the pricing strategy and ensure that you have all the facts on our evolving market, so that you can make decisions based on information, not emotion. I'll personally be there to do open houses and make sure your home is shipshape, complete with fresh flowers.

Most of all, I'll be there for you every step of the way to make sure your house sells seamlessly, at a price that makes you smile all the way to the bank.

But before we get ahead of ourselves, let's get back to why you're here in the first place. This is my *Getting Your Home Ready for Market Checklist*. You can download it and run with it or look it over, then call, text, or email me. I'll help prep your home in half the time, with my trusty pros on speed-dial.

Not quite ready? That's ok too. Check out my *Working With Sellers Process* to get a better sense of how I do what I do and to see if I'm a good fit.

To get a PDF of my process, just email me *here at votto@houlihanlawrence.com*.

Thanks so much for stopping by, I am so excited for your journey ahead!



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YOU'RE DETERMINED TO GIVE YOUR FAMILY THE VERY BEST. I'M DETERMINED TO HELP MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Considering Selling Your House? What You Love, Hate, and What's Next.

Before you get started on the checklist, a couple of questions to mull over. This will come in handy later when you're getting your house ready and you want to showcase your home's best attributes!

A Think about why you bought this house to begin with. What are your favorite things about it? Write down the top 3 things you love(d) about the house when you first saw it and while living there. These are important attributes that you'll want to highlight when you prepare your home for market.

B If you were to live here for another 5-10 years, what would you change? Write down the top 3 things you would change. These are things to consider completing before you list your house, so when your buyers fall in love with your house, they are confident to move forward.

C Time to dream! Often what holds us back from moving on is that we don't yet have a firm idea of what we want the next step to look like. Take a little time to think about this and write down 3 ideas and scenarios about where you want to be and why. No pressure — it's just to get the ideas flowing.

Ok, now for the checklist!

GETTING YOUR HOME READY FOR MARKET

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#1 **Pull It Together:** Gather together all paperwork related to your home. Buyers like to have a handle on all monthly expenses so they know exactly what they're signing up for.

- ✓ Estimate monthly maintenance, utility costs, and taxes.
- ✓ Gather all available warranties and guarantees for appliances, boilers, water heaters, and heating and cooling systems.
- ✓ Write a list of improvements you made to your house and approximate how much they each cost.

#2 **Declutter, Declutter, Declutter!**

✓ **Schedule Donation Pickups in Advance:** It's worth scheduling pickup times for donations in advance since nonprofits will pick up when they are scheduled to be in your area, which could be 3 to 4 weeks out. Set up a few times for pickup over the next few weeks and work toward those dates to give away clothes you no longer wear, small appliances you don't want, and tchotchkes you no longer love but someone might.

Some nonprofit orgs that pick up are:

- Vietnam Veterans of America at www.VVApickup.org (free pickup and they take everything)
- Gotjunk.com (they charge a fee)
- The Salvation Army at satruck.org/donate/choose
- Drop off at your local Goodwill
- Pickupplease.org/donation-pickup
- therealreal.com for consignment of your designer stuff from bygone days
- upside2downsize@gmail.com for furniture and other cool consignment items

✓ **Categorize:** Get boxes, tape, and color-coded Sharpies to label boxes: donate, recycle, and store. Over the next 2 to 3 weeks, start filling your boxes, working toward your pickup dates. Go through your clothing closets, office, kitchen, linen closet — pretty much everything.

✓ **Trash it:** Throw out anything you don't want and that nobody else wants — old prescriptions, cosmetics — basic stuff that just has to go bye-bye. If there is a lot and you have an attic-worth of stuff that nobody else can use, arrange for a dumpster to get dropped off in your driveway for a few days of purging. Believe me, this can be quite liberating!

✓ **Store it:** If you still have a lot of stuff and are busting out of your closets, consider renting a small storage unit for overflow you can't part with. You don't want your closets to look stuffed.

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- #3 Hire a Realtor:** Select someone with local market knowledge and excellent reviews who illustrates a commitment to putting you first, is personally available, has business and negotiating experience, and someone you like hanging out with. Bring your Realtor into the process relatively early so they can advise you on many of these steps and help you get things done efficiently and economically, with the buyer's mindset and market conditions top of mind – so your house really stands out.
- #4 Warning: This Part Is FUN:** Put your feet up and look at websites/magazines like *Serena and Lily*, *West Elm*, *The Container Store*, and maybe *Architectural Digest* for inspiration. I mean it. These are often the looks that buyers are into. Look around your house and think about what would be easy to refresh and make a little more current. Discuss with your Realtor how to best stage your home and be open-minded to their suggestions. It's what we do!
- #5 The Ta-da Factor:** The entry into your home is your first impression (well, ok, after looking online and then curb appeal), and buyers will have an instant response as they enter your home. Make that work for you, not against you. Your foyer should be the equivalent to that sincere smile, eye contact, and firm handshake your parents taught you as a kid. In other words, remove all clutter from the front door area and have something beautiful there to greet your buyers – whether that be a punchy painting, fresh flowers, or an inviting and pretty bench to sit down on and take a load off.
- #6 Look at Your Lighting:** Modern light fixtures can really spruce up a place and add flair. Consider replacing anything that looks a little outdated with something more modern – you don't have to spend a lot. Don't forget to replace any light bulbs that have burnt out, including outdoor ones. Light is super important when showing a home.

Ready, Set – Organize Like Crazy!

(Now take a deep breath – if you can't do it all, that's ok. You don't have to do everything at once. Make this list work for you and prioritize.)

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- #7 Organize Your Kitchen:** The kitchen is the hub of the house, and buyers want to know that it's practical, spacious, and a comfortable place to cook, eat, and connect with family and friends (because what party doesn't end up in the kitchen?)
- ✓ Remove all unnecessary clutter, like countertop appliances — your Vitamix, Cuisinart, milk frother, SodaStream, and coffee grinder. Clean and clear countertops are the way to go (and you will love how it looks).
 - ✓ Clean out all of your cabinets and fridge and clean all of the shelves. Get rid of any excess — it's important that buyers see that there is enough space for their stuff.
- #8 Organize Your Linen Closets:** Fold and categorize everything neatly. Label shelves if you're feeling really inspired. Take a hard look at your bed linens and donate what you don't need.
- #9 Beautify the Bathrooms.** Get some new fluffy white towels (for staging, not using), remove all visible toiletries, replace old accessories like soap dishes. Buyers love bathrooms with a zen vibe, so less is more. A small plant might be nice for an added spa-like feel.
- #10 Master Your Master Closet:** Do your best to categorize your clothes so they look neat and orderly. If you're really motivated, replace all hangers so they're identical. The Container Store has some good ones, and you'll like how your clothes will look like neat little toy soldiers, all in a row. It may feel a little weird, but buyers will want to see your master closet, so put away whatever is private.
- #11 Make Over Your Master Bedroom:** Again, think luxury, even if in reality you only spend 6 hours there every night burrowed under the covers with your mouth guard on. White linens, a white duvet, and splashy pillows (HomeGoods — they have some great stuff perfect for staging) can make a big difference, as well as editing out family photos and personalized doodads. We want buyers to see the space of the house and envision themselves moving in — not be distracted by how cute you and your family are.
- #12 Corral Your Kids' Bedrooms and Closets:** Make it look fun and inviting — limit toys and clutter with some organized baskets.

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- #13* **Living Room Love:** This is a place of gathering and should feel welcoming. Clean the rug and the upholstery. If your rug is a little out of date, there are really cheap, more current rugs available online (Overstock.com is always good). Sisal, or other neutrals, freshen up a room. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, declutter so that surface areas are clear. If you have bookshelves, remove some books so that you have two-thirds white space and can punctuate book shelves with art and plants.
- #14* **Delightful Dining Room:** A comfortable and elegant dining room conveys the promise of delectable dinner parties with friends and fabulous family holiday gatherings. Spruce up your dining room by cleaning or reupholstering chairs and editing what you see and what you don't. You can also complement your antiques with a few contemporary pieces to appeal to today's buyers.
- #15* **Office Overhaul:** Now everyone needs a home office. If you don't have one but can carve out a space for one, it's worth doing. An office should look neat, clutter-free, and like a good space to be inspired to write your next book or start your next business venture.
- #16* **Garage Godsend:** Having a space for all your gear and maybe even a car or two is a dream for many New Yorkers moving out of the city. Showcase the joys of outdoor living in the suburbs. Hang bikes, skis, and golf clubs, and organize tools, potting sheds, and workbenches. Make it look like everything has a place.
- #17* **Befriend Your Basement:** If your basement is unfinished, it's worth cleaning up, organizing, and maybe painting floors and walls. Finished basements are great rec rooms, gyms, wine cellars, and more, and these spaces are more important than ever to families who are spending time at home. This is New York. Every inch of your house matters, and buyers will want to know how you use it.
- #18* **Paint and Repair:** Repaint rooms or just touch up imperfections. Usually soft neutrals are best, but consult your Realtor for colors. A Mr. Clean Magic Eraser works wonders on scuffed baseboards, handrails, and doors. If needed, refinish floors (consult your Realtor for trusted pros who won't break the bank) or just give them a good polish.

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- #19* **Wonderful Windows:** Get your windows professionally cleaned. Light is crucial, and nothing beats sunlight streaming into a room. If you have heavy or ornate curtains, consider removing or switching them to something lightweight and fresh.
- #20* **Curb Appeal:** Stand across the street from your house and eyeball how it would look if you saw it for the first time. Write up a punch list to improve curb appeal, like clip the hedges, repaint the front door, clean the gutters, and plant some annuals. Don't forget about your backyard: Create a welcoming outdoor seating area by cleaning your patio furniture and BBQ!
- #21* **Pet Plans:** If you have pets, it's often best to have them out of the house when your house is being shown. If this doesn't work, figure out a plan to have them in a designated space for showings. I have two dogs and totally get how this is their space too, but they would be a distraction to anyone who would want to see my house (they're that cute). Make sure kitty litters are clean and tucked away, food and water out of the way, and your pets' favorite napping spots have been cleaned and are scent-free.
- #22* **Set Your Boundaries:** Think about what kind of guidelines are necessary for you and your family to keep everybody sane when it comes to showing your house. Do you want to have designated days and hours for showing the house? A 24-hour-notice requirement?
- #23* **Schedule an Inspection:** When you do accept an offer from a buyer, the first thing that happens is an inspection. At this point, you don't want anything to pop up that you don't already know about. If there are any significant issues, you want to either take care of it in advance or have an estimate for the cost of fixing it. You may have to negotiate the cost of repairing something of significance once your buyers have had the house inspected themselves, or simply state upfront that the house is being sold as-is.
- #24* **Make 2 Extra Sets of Keys:** So that your Realtor can show your house snafu-free to all of those interested buyers!
- #25* **Let It Show:** Walk around your house and enjoy it. Give it a final once-over. Your Realtor should set up a professional photo shoot ASAP to market your home online. Discuss the benefits of still photographs, video, and Matterport (3D virtual tour). Pictures say a thousand words — especially now that the beginning of the buyer's journey is online. With the right prep, staging, and marketing, buyers should be clambering to set up an appointment to see your home IRL (In Real Life).

As always, get in touch if you need help in executing this checklist, need to brainstorm, or just to set up a plan. I'm here for you!

(I can also set you up with some awesome, fully vetted contractors and service providers to get many of these jobs off your never-ending to-do list. Because I get that you also have a life.)



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