

The Art of the Open House

By Andi Peterson Brown

The 2015 spring real estate market is in full swing and you've decided: this is your year to jump in. You've found yourself starting to use terms like Days on Market and Offer Deadline, and every front yard Coming Soon sign seems to be speaking only to you. This can only mean one thing—you're ready for the next level. The Open House. Believe it or not, there is an art to perusing other people's homes, and below are some tips to help you make the most of your Sunday afternoons.

Do have a game plan. While it's easy to hop in the car and follow random signs, finding your next home is not a scavenger hunt. Do research ahead of time.

Do bring business cards. If you already have an agent, hand their business card over to the hosting agent.

Do open doors. Checking closet and storage space is important.

Don't rummage through any personal belongings.

Do ask questions, **don't** forget to take notes. After a day of house-hunting, houses tend to blend together.

Do make decisions quickly. If you like the house, find out if there is an offer deadline and have your agent follow up right away.



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Feng Shui Tips When Selling Your Home

By Michele Duffy



Adding a wind chime at the front entrance of your home can activate the good flow of energy or Qi. Photos provided

Spring is in full swing, and the new beginnings, and upward growth and development associated most with the Wood Element can apply to the sale of our homes. If you have been contemplating putting your home on the market, spring is an auspicious time since many buyers are naturally drawn outside to look for homes in warmer weather. Ignoring the energetics of home while selling or buying, however, can complicate a transaction that is already stressful.

Feng shui can be of enormous help to gain insight when preparing your home to go on the market. Choose symbolic versus sterile staging, or use feng shui principals to understand what to avoid or what to seek out when buying a new home.

Be aware of poor feng shui that can cause stagnant energies or Qi, and utilize fixes that can help smooth the selling process. One home for sale in Moraga was on an energetic dead end, in the round part of a cul-de-sac. As a fix, I suggested the owners place a medium-sized tiered water fountain between the front door and the street to circulate the stagnant street Qi. The realtor commented it was one of the

most-attended open houses she had in months.

In another real estate readiness project, there was a lot of draining Qi. The people selling were in short sale, the husband had a long-term illness and they were downsizing not by choice. We did a thorough space clearing to attract buyers that would connect with fresh new energy devoid of the heavy illness and financial loss Qi. In under a week, the owners had the offer that ultimately sold the home.

Remember, doing all of the mundane tasks like picking a professional realtor who listens, creating fabulous marketing materials, and deciding on a reality-based price will all help whatever feng shui you create to draw in a buyer who emotionally connects with your home.

Staging is as important as decluttering and depersonalizing, however, make the environment warm and inviting – not sterile. Welcome an abundance of buyers by placing fresh flowers in the foyer, for example, and a large bowl of oranges in the kitchen.

Additional feng shui real estate tips include:

1. Pay attention to outdoor landscaping, lighting and color to enhance curb appeal. It takes a nanosecond to make a good first impression. Use red drought tolerant flowers.
2. Conduct a space clearing and home blessing to remove energy obstacles. Is everyone on the same page regarding selling the home?
3. Finish all indoor and outdoor repairs. Broken objects in certain areas of the Bagua (see map page D18) can create stagnant Qi.
4. Arrange furniture for easy conversations.

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Color doesn't have to be daunting. Use fresh colors, like in this Lafayette bedroom.