

Sell Smarter

How to Sell for More Without Doing a Full Renovation

If you are thinking about selling, this guide will help you focus on the updates that make the biggest impact without wasting time or money on the wrong projects.

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BEFORE YOU SPEND A DOLLAR, READ THIS

If you are thinking about selling your home, it is completely normal to wonder what you should update before listing and what is simply not worth the effort.

Many homeowners assume they need to take on major renovations to get top dollar. In reality, that is often not the case.

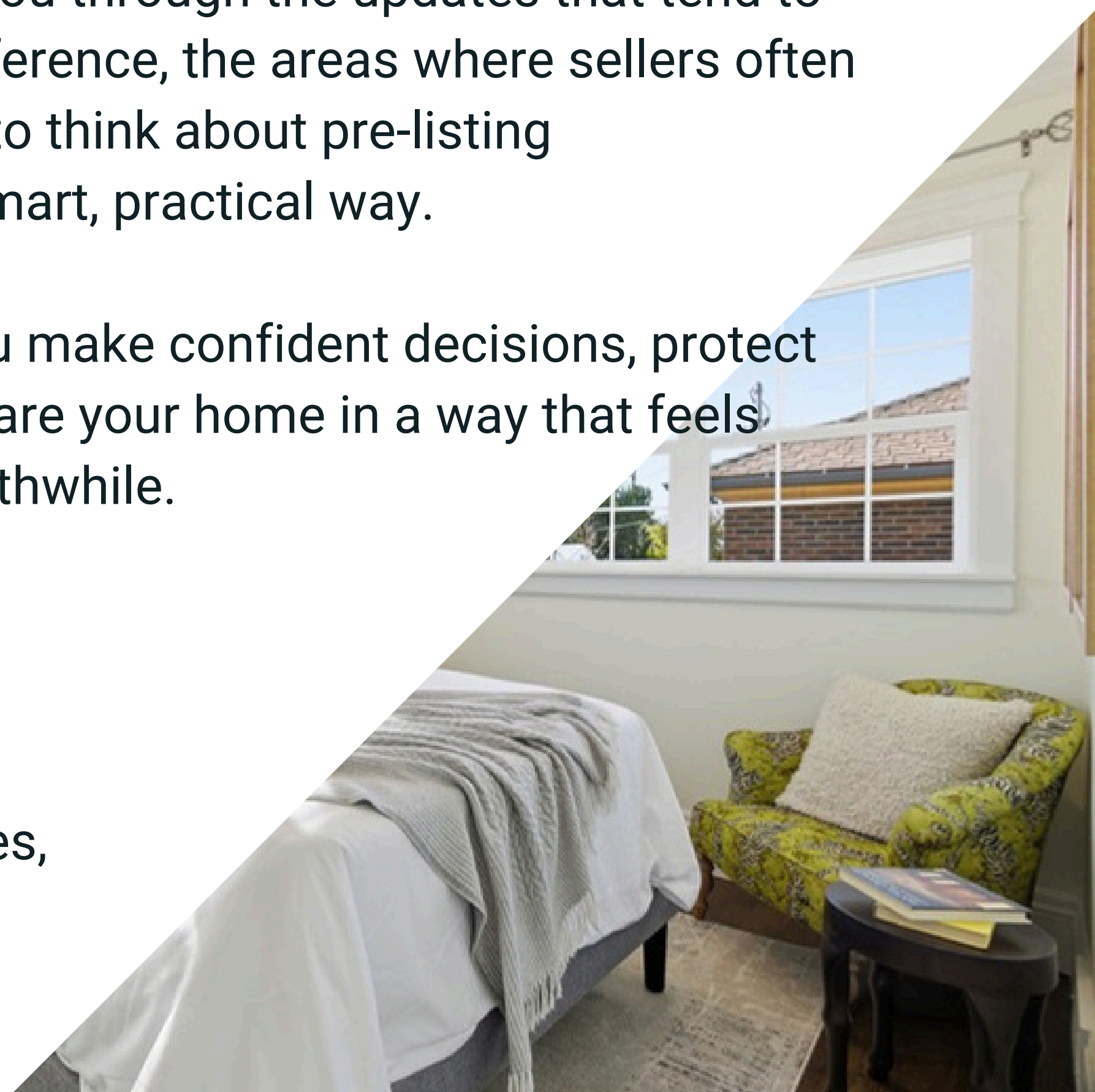
The homes that show beautifully and sell strongly are usually the ones that feel clean, well cared for, bright, and move-in ready. That does not always require a full remodel. It usually requires the right strategy.

This guide will walk you through the updates that tend to make the biggest difference, the areas where sellers often overspend, and how to think about pre-listing improvements in a smart, practical way.

My goal is to help you make confident decisions, protect your equity, and prepare your home in a way that feels manageable and worthwhile.

Warmly,

Judy Kostrencich
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THE GOAL IS NOT PERFECTION

Before diving into updates, here is the most important thing to remember:
You do not need to make your home perfect.
You need to make it feel:

- clean
- cared for
- bright
- spacious
- inviting
- easy for buyers to imagine themselves in

The smartest pre-listing improvements are the ones that help your home make a strong first impression without over-improving for the neighborhood or price point.

WHERE SELLERS USUALLY GET THE BEST RETURN:

- paint
- cleaning
- decluttering
- lighting
- curb appeal
- minor repairs
- selective cosmetic updates





The Highest-Impact Updates Before Listing

These are the improvements that often help a home show better, photograph better, and create more buyer confidence without requiring a major renovation.

1. Fresh Paint in the Right Areas

A fresh coat of paint is one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways to improve how a home feels.

- scuffed or worn walls
- bold or highly personal colors
- dingy trim and baseboards
- high-traffic spaces like hallways, kitchens, and entryways

Why it matters:

Fresh paint makes a home feel cleaner, brighter, and more move-in ready.

2. Deep Clean From Top to Bottom

A true deep clean can dramatically improve the way buyers experience your home.

- windows and window tracks
- baseboards and doors
- kitchens and baths
- flooring and grout
- light fixtures and ceiling fans
- inside cabinets and closets

Why it matters:

Clean homes feel better maintained and create a stronger first impression.

3. Declutter and Simplify

One of the most important things you can do before listing is remove visual clutter.

- excess furniture
- crowded shelves
- piles on counters
- personal photos
- oversized decor

Why it matters:

A clutter-free home feels larger, calmer, and more inviting.

4. Improve Lighting

Dark spaces can make a home feel smaller and less welcoming.

- replace burnt out bulbs
- use consistent warm or soft white bulbs
- open blinds and curtains
- trim landscaping that blocks natural light

Why it matters:

Bright homes feel fresher, happier, and more appealing online and in person.

5. Refresh Flooring Where Needed

You may not need to replace all flooring, but you do want to address anything visibly worn or distracting.

- professional carpet cleaning
- replacing stained carpet
- refinishing hardwoods
- repairing broken tile
- updating flooring in high-impact areas

Why it matters:

Flooring makes an immediate impression and can influence how well a home shows.

6. Handle Small Repairs

Take care of the little things buyers notice quickly.

- dripping faucets
- squeaky doors
- cracked switch plates
- loose handles
- running toilets
- sticking drawers
- damaged caulking
- broken screens

Why it matters:

Small issues can signal deferred maintenance, even when the larger systems are in good shape.

7. Refresh Kitchens and Bathrooms

You do not always need a full remodel to improve these important spaces.

- clearing counters
- replacing dated hardware
- touching up cabinets
- updating caulk and grout
- replacing worn towels or accessories
- cleaning shower glass and mirrors

Why it matters:

Bright homes feel fresher, happier, and more appealing online and in person.

8. Organize Storage Areas

Buyers will look inside closets, pantries, garages, and storage rooms.

- garage clutter
- overflow storage areas
- packed closets
- overstuffed cabinets

Why it matters:

Organized storage suggests the home has been cared for and has enough space.

9. Boost Curb Appeal

The exterior of your home creates the first impression before buyers even walk inside.

- mow and edge the lawn
- trim shrubs
- add fresh mulch
- sweep the porch and driveway
- place potted plants by the entry
- clean the front door

Why it matters:

A welcoming exterior builds anticipation and shows pride of ownership.

10. Refresh the Entry

The front entry is a small area with a big impact.

- repainting the front door
- updating hardware
- replacing a worn doormat
- cleaning glass and trim
- updating outdoor lighting if needed

Why it matters:

The entry sets the tone for the showing experience.

11. Address Odors

A home that smells fresh feels cleaner and more welcoming.

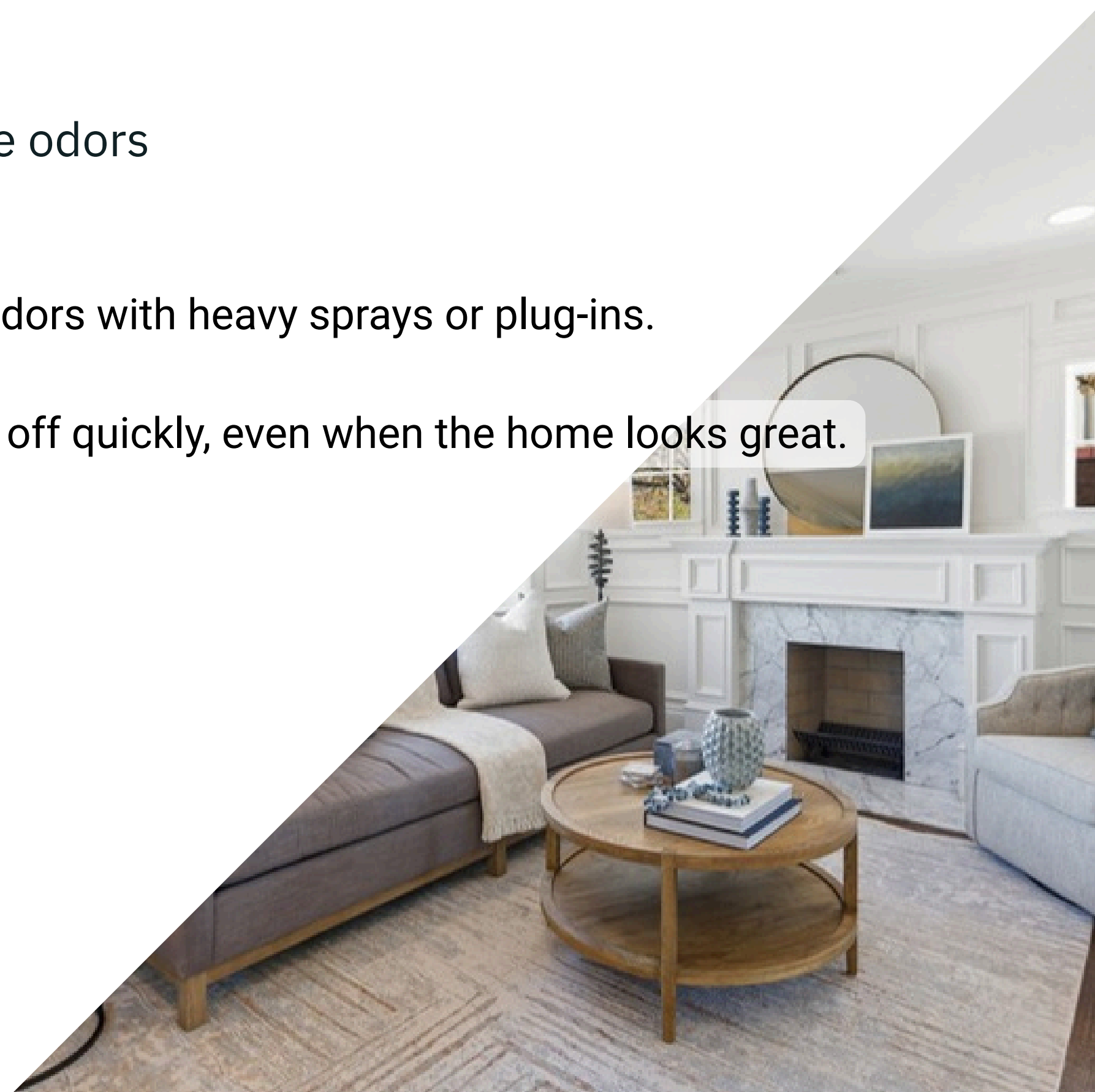
- pet odors
- smoke
- cooking smells
- mustiness
- old carpet
- trash or garage odors

Important:

Avoid trying to mask odors with heavy sprays or plug-ins.

Why it matters:

Odors can turn buyers off quickly, even when the home looks great.



WHERE SELLERS OFTEN OVERSPEND

What Not to Overdo

One of the biggest mistakes sellers make is spending too much on projects that do not meaningfully improve marketability or return.

Before taking on a major renovation, pause and ask whether it is truly necessary for your neighborhood, price point, and goals.

Be cautious about:

- full kitchen remodels right before listing
- luxury bathroom renovations
- highly customized upgrades
- replacing perfectly functional finishes just to chase trends
- large projects that delay your timing unnecessarily

A BETTER STRATEGY

Focus first on improvements that make your home feel:

- cleaner
- lighter
- more current
- well maintained
- more broadly appealing

That is where the best return usually is.

PRE-LISTING CHECKLIST

Pulling it all together

Use this quick checklist as you begin preparing your home for the market:

Inside the Home

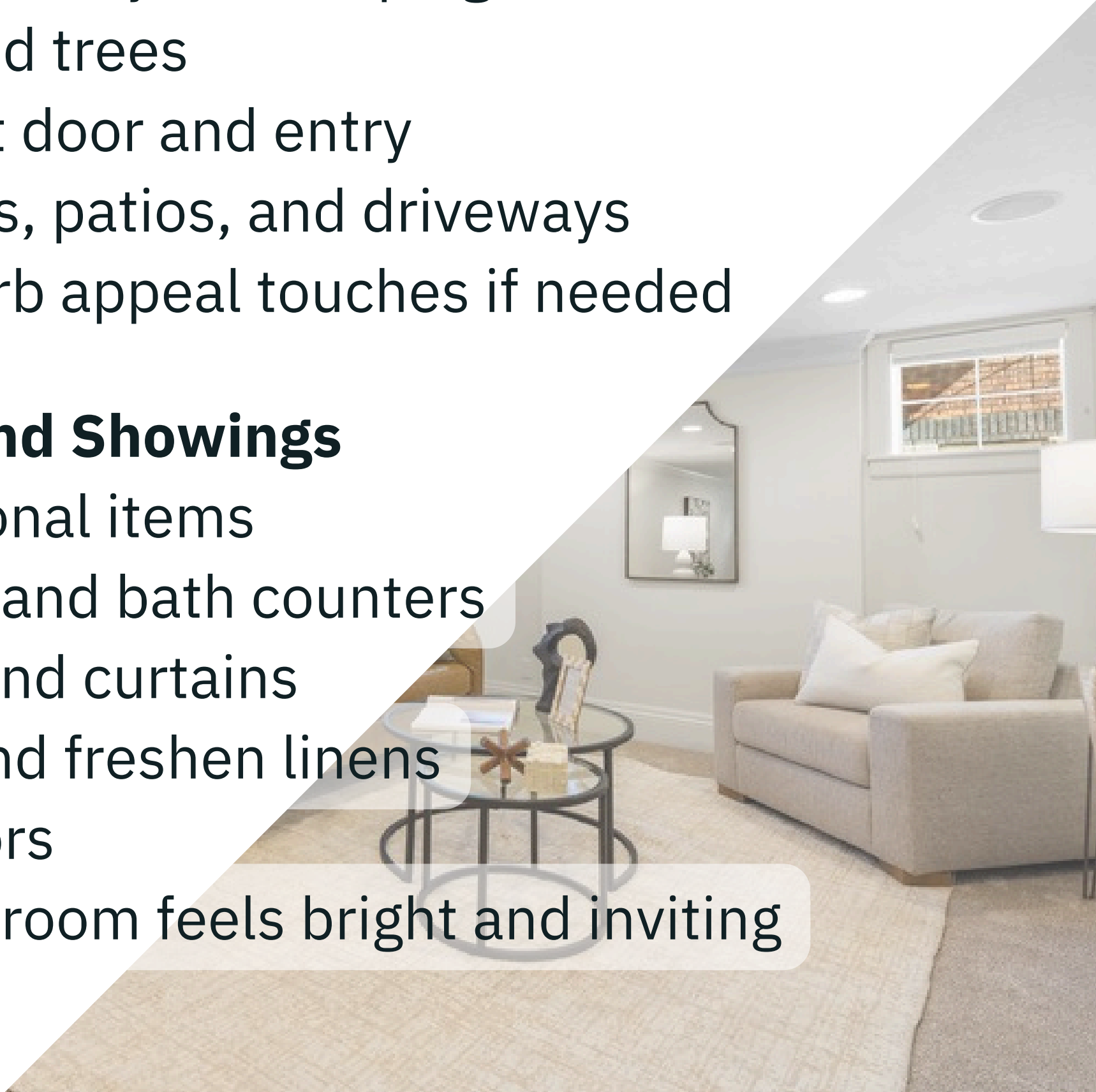
- touch up or repaint worn areas
- deep clean all major surfaces
- declutter countertops, shelves, and closets
- replace burnt out light bulbs
- complete small repairs
- refresh caulk and grout
- simplify decor and depersonalize

Outside the Home

- mow, edge, and tidy landscaping
- trim shrubs and trees
- clean the front door and entry
- sweep porches, patios, and driveways
- add simple curb appeal touches if needed

Before Photos and Showings

- remove personal items
- clear kitchen and bath counters
- open blinds and curtains
- make beds and freshen linens
- check for odors
- ensure every room feels bright and inviting



WHAT IS ACTUALLY WORTH DOING BEFORE YOU SELL?

Every home is different. The right pre-listing strategy depends on your home, your condition, your neighborhood, your price point, and your timeline.

Request your personalized pre-listing strategy review today.

We will prioritize:

- which updates are worth doing
- what to skip
- how to position the home for today's market
- what buyers are likely to respond to
- how to prepare for the strongest possible launch

If you are even thinking about selling in the next year or more, I would be happy to help. Request your personalized pre-listing strategy review today.

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