

STAGING: BEFORE



AFTER



HOW HOME STAGING WORKS

In 2009, the Real Estate Staging Association conducted a national random sampling study of the effects of home staging.

● Vacant homes:

Before staging, 87 vacant homes remained unsold on the market for 277 days; after staging, they sold in an average of 63 days.

● Occupied homes:

Before staging, 39 occupied homes remained unsold on the market for 233 days; after staging, they sold in an average of 53 days.

● Staged vacant homes:

167 vacant homes staged prior to going up for sale sold in

an average of 39 days.

● Staged occupied homes:

117 occupied homes staged before going up for sale sold in an average of 42 days.

Time is a factor, and so is cost.

Take for example: The mortgage and expenses for a home are \$2,100 per month. If the home is on the market 263 days (nine months) the added costs incurred would be \$18,900.

Homes staged prior to market sell in an average of 40 days. Using the same figures, that is 223 fewer days (seven months) on the market, which would be a savings of \$14,700.

Source: www.realestatestagingassociation.com

STAGING

From B1
some tweaking. There's always something that needs to be done."
The biggest mistake home-sellers make? Not dealing with all the things they own. "Almost always when I walk into a house, I'm hit by too much stuff," Minch said. And that's not just bowling trophies and stuffed animal collections. One homeowner she helped had a balanced arrangement of nice furnishings, but there were too many pieces. Minch suggested removing some of the furniture to clear space and make the room feel larger. Even a picture-perfect place can have problems. If it's too pristine, it can come across as sterile, which could be a turnoff for a prospective buyer. "You never want a buyer to walk in your house and say, 'This is gorgeous, but I couldn't live here.' You want a buyer to walk in your house and say, 'This is gorgeous and, boy, would my life be good if I lived here,'" Minch said. About a month prior to putting a home on the market, Minch recommends a consultation with a home stager. The stager should spend 1 to 2 hours walking through the place and pointing out everything that needs to be done. What is the cost of this first step? Ask the stager for fee information up front. Minch, for example, charges \$250 for a verbal consultation, where either the homeowner or the Realtor can take

MEET MICHELLE MINCH

Michelle Minch spent her childhood in New Jersey, where she remembers that visitors to her parents' home always remarked on its elegance.

"I grew up in a house with kelly green carpet, a fake marble foyer and silver marbleized wall paper with a green *fleur de lis* pattern on it," she said. "We thought we were living large."

It wasn't until she was an adult that she realized that her parents' home design was — well, overdone, Minch admits with a laugh.

Minch moved to California to attend the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, but found she couldn't afford it. She worked as an ad agency traffic and media



coordinator, a photo stylist, a TV and film art director and a production designer.

Today, in addition to being a professional stager, Minch is an interior designer and, with a business partner in Atlanta, designs Web sites for stagers and designers. She is the ethics chairwoman of the Real Estate Staging Association and happily shares her knowledge, mentoring and blogging for other stagers.

— Michelle Mills

notes. For \$350, she will supply a written report with a detailed checklist. From there, the homeowners decide whether to hire the stager to coordinate the necessary work or do it themselves. If it's a really small job, such as simply moving a couch, Minch said a stager might handle it during the consultation. The time and cost of staging a home can vary. Typically a vacant home can be staged in three to four days.

Minch likes to bring in a full crew and get everything done in one day. For \$2,500 to \$5,500, Minch will bring in furnishings, artwork and accessories for the rooms that need staging. The setting will remain for 60 days. If rooms need painting or floors need refinishing, it will cost more and may take a little extra time. The costs vary more widely for an occupied home. In both cases, the key areas to make a good impression are

the foyer, living room, dining room, kitchen and the master bedroom and bathroom, she said. Minch hates hearing stories about homes that are on the market for six months, with the price dropping all the while. The asking price might have been too high to begin with, Minch said, but if the homeowners had consulted with a stager, they might have been able to sell for more money in a shorter period of time. "If I was putting my house on the market, absolutely I would need to stage it," she admitted. Minch's Pasadena house is home to three Labradors — Harley, Dewey and Chuck — and Otis the cat, who rules the roost. The menagerie is not going to move out any time soon; still, Minch thinks about what she'd have to do to get her house ready for sale. Her experiences with homeowners have shown Minch how much clutter and disorganization affects people and she recognizes that it has affected her home as well. Minch has to keep at it just to make sure her closets are organized. "Do I have piles of junk laying around? Absolutely, but it's something that's in my mind all the time," Minch said. "Since I've become a stager, I've become much better at getting rid of stuff. I rarely bring stuff in any more. I'm all about trying to get stuff out." Michelle J. Mills 626-962-8811, Ext. 2128 michelle.mills@sgvn.com