



# How to Prepare Your Property for Listing in Summit County and Fairplay, Colorado

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## Preparing Your Property for Listing

### Feelings Matter

Those viewing your property usually form an opinion within seconds of walking up to it and entering the front door.

Their opinions will accumulate as they walk through the property, filtering and evaluating what they observe and feel.

This guide summarizes the critical elements for ensuring your property provides a warm and welcoming experience and shows at its best; simple staging practices can substantially increase your property's value while decreasing its time on the market.

This guide begins with the walk-up, continues throughout the property, and concludes with the exterior. We'll also discuss key factors that contribute to your home's overall feel and value.

Time spent preparing the property before listing always builds worth, and we'll begin with the walk-up.

### Walking up the Home and the Entryway

A clean, crisp atmosphere as one approaches and enters the property is important for first impressions, and we want to ensure every aspect of the property is orderly, clean, and welcoming.

During the Winter, having the driveway plowed and the sidewalks and decks free of snow is essential. It's not a great experience for many to wade through a snow-covered

driveway and waddle along slippery sidewalks. Adding ice dams hanging from the roof can make the home feel neglected.

As we approach the front door, its condition matters. A tired door is setting the tone for the rest of the property.

- The front door should be clean and scratch-free with fresh paint or stain.
- The door handle and locks should look new, be free of scratches or wear, and be easy to unlock and lock.
- The door should open and close smoothly while latching well.

However, it is not only about the front door. The area around the door should also be clean, free of wear, and as organized as possible.

Upon entering the property, viewers will see it as theirs, and clutter and personal items will distract from their first impressions. We want to ensure that no clothes, shoes, or personal items are visible when entering the home. The first glance should encompass the space as a whole, not the individual items within the space.

We also want the property to be as light and bright as possible. White walls or walls with neutral, lighter tones contribute to the home's bright, light feel.

Other contributors to the property's bright feel are open curtains and blinds, while dark areas can be brightened with floor or table lamps.

## **Living Room / Entertaining Space**

Many properties in Summit County and Fairplay are used for short-term rentals or as second homes, and most are sold either fully or partially furnished.

We want a natural, open furniture arrangement for entertaining in the living room.

Declutter the space as much as possible by removing unnecessary, oversized, or worn furniture. Bins or shelves of old magazines, books, games, or knick-knacks should be out of sight or removed from the home.

Personal items, such as family pictures, are minimal or absent.

The fireplace should be in good working order, whether gas or wood-burning.

For gas fireplaces, the jets should provide a good flame after warming up, and the fireplace's glass is clean.

With wood-burning fireplaces, the hearth is clean, the damper is working, and the chimney has a good draw.

## The Kitchen

We spend a lot of time in our kitchens, which are often integrated into the home's entertaining space.

The kitchen is the heart of the home and can often make or break a buyer's decision.

For a clean, organized, and decluttered kitchen, below is our initial checklist:

- **Counters** – Remove as many items and appliances as possible from the counters.
- **Cabinets** – Remove any unused items, then thoroughly clean the doors and interiors. If the cabinet shelves have worn, dirty liners, it's time to replace them.
- **Stovetop** – cleaned as well as possible. With older stovetops, replace worn inserts or coils.
- **Oven** – The racks, walls, floor, and door are clean.
- **Microwave** – cleaned.
- **Refrigerator** - clean, inside and out. Remove the myriad pictures, notes, and stray items on the fridge doors – they can be distracting.
- **Garbage Disposal** – If it's making any unusual sounds, fix the disposal or replace it. It will show up in an inspection report anyhow, and it's best to have it in good working order.

Any leaks, drips, or slow-moving drains in the kitchen (or throughout the property) should be addressed.

Beyond our initial checklist, if the kitchen is older, it can be brought up to date without redoing the entire kitchen.

Below are items to consider for a relatively quick and affordable updating of the kitchen:

- Painting or staining the cabinets

- Updating the cabinet's hardware
- Updating the backsplash and adding under-cabinet lights
- Replacing the countertops
- Replacing aged appliances

At a minimum, cleaning and decluttering the kitchen are priorities. The additional upgrades we just listed are on a case-by-case basis, and it's a good idea to put the kitchen update in context with the rest of the property. We recommend consulting with a designer and/or the Realtors at Colorado Homes Real Estate to determine if it's worth the time and money.

## **Bedrooms**

Bright, light, organized, and clutter-free bedrooms show best.

The best paint color for a bedroom is a light, neutral color, preferably white.

New bedding and pillows will help refresh the room's feel.

A minimum of items on the dressers and nightstands will create a more airy feeling.

Spacious closets are important to buyers. Eliminate unneeded items and organize the closets. The fewer items in the closet, the better, and the uniformity of the remaining items will help showcase the closet space.

## **Bathrooms**

Thoroughly clean the bathroom cabinets and drawers, and remove as many personal toiletries as possible.

Fixtures and mirrors are bright and shiny to the best of their appearance.

The shower, bathtub, and toilet are also cleaned as best as possible. Replace old shower curtains.

When the grout in the shower or bathtub is in good condition, it's hardly noticeable. However, if the grouting is dirty or in poor condition, all eyes will go straight to it. Clean, uniform grouting is important for maintaining the property's presentation.

Noisy bathroom fans take away from the bathroom and are relatively inexpensive to replace. Like the noisy garbage disposal in the kitchen, old fans will also detract from the bathrooms' feel.

Any leaks, drips, or slow-moving drains are repaired, and the toilet is in good working order.

If there are multiple bulbs in the vanity lights, they should all be identical.

Coordinating the bathroom with towels, soaps, and accessories helps create a nice feel.

## **Utility Rooms**

A disorganized or dirty utility room can raise concerns among potential buyers.

The utility room often contains the furnace, water heater, and, sometimes, the water well's equipment, as well as the washer and dryer. If this utility room isn't organized and sparkling, it makes the property feel unkept, even if it isn't.

## **Garage**

The more open, organized, and clean the garage is, the better response you'll have.

The cleaning and organizing also include the garage's closets and cabinets, which have accumulated items and junk over the years.

Many potential buyers looking at the garage are considering it for more than just the parking area for their vehicle(s). They're also reviewing it to determine whether it will provide the space and storage needed for their toys, gear, and whatever else they may need.

Eliminate clutter and organize the garage and storage closets to make them fresh and orderly so others can imagine their items in your spaces.

Garages tend to become a little beat up with normal wear and tear. An organized, freshly cleaned, and painted garage will help establish the entire property's overall feel and solidity.

Some garages in Summit County have exposed drywall without paint. The exposed drywall can begin to look worn with time, and a fresh coat of paint will help the garage look fresh and maintained.

Wintertime is rough on garages in Summit and Fairplay. The accumulated ice and snow from our vehicles will make the garage appear unkempt in short order. Try your best to keep the garage floor free of water, snow, and dirt that our vehicles track in.

One last garage element – sometimes, when ATVs, dirt bikes, or snow machines are stored in the garage, one may reek of gas. The smell permeates the garage and can be off-putting to potential buyers.

## **Fireplaces**

We discussed fireplaces in the living area section of this guide, but they're important, and this information is worth repeating.

The fireplaces in the home should be in good working order, whether they're gas or wood-burning.

The jets should provide a good flame in gas fireplaces after warming up, and the glass should be clean.

With wood-burning fireplaces, the hearth is clean, the damper is working, and the chimney has a good draw.

## **Carpeting and Flooring**

Typically, the property's carpeting is professionally cleaned before it's listed, even if it looks "OK" beforehand. Clean carpet makes a difference; if in doubt, have it cleaned.

Uncarpeted flooring areas, such as tile, vinyl, or hardwood, show best when they're as clean and glossy as possible.

## **Paint**

Having the paint in good condition and uniform throughout the property is important, and neutral colors are a good choice.

If the walls are dark or off-color, paint them a lighter tone, preferably white.

## **Doors**

Keeping the doors and doorknobs clean and in good working condition is a good practice. They should be tight and work smoothly, with doors that crisply close.

Having the doors and hardware in good shape is especially important for the entrance that the Realtors and their clients will use to enter the home. A dirty door and worn doorknobs set a poor tone for the property before it's even entered.

## **Windows, Casings, and Sills**

No one notices clean windows, but we all notice dirty ones.

The sills and casings of the windows and doors are important too. A good cleaning and the application of orange oil, if they're wood, can often help restore their luster. Tired, dull casings and sills can make the property feel poorly maintained, even if it was well-maintained.

## **Light Fixtures**

Light fixtures gradually attract dirt and grime, which we may overlook while living in the home. Be sure the light fixtures are clean and dust-free.

Replace any burnt-out bulbs, and if a fixture has multiple bulbs, the bulbs are all identical in type and wattage.

## **Keep it Light**

Dark homes don't show well; be sure to have the curtains and shades open for any home showings.

In addition to keeping the curtains and shades open for the showing, keeping the lights on throughout the home can brighten the property, even if it is naturally bright.

In dark areas of a property, additional floor or table lamps, along with plants, can brighten the space.

## **Furniture**

If the property feels even slightly overstuffed with furniture and décor, eliminate some to create a more open, spacious feel.

If possible, remove worn furniture.

## **Closets**

Closets and storage spaces are a premium, and decluttered, organized closets help convey the home's feel and functionality.

## **Personal Items**

Does your property contain personal pictures? We recommend removing them. The prospective buyer wants to feel and think about the space in relation to their world, and your personal pictures can be a distraction.

It's also a good idea to remove any religious or political items; while the property is on the market, let's maintain a neutral space.

If the property is lived in full-time, it's easy to accumulate many items that have found magical places to be stored in. Most of these items aren't used or needed. A property jammed with these personal items may come across as confining and short on storage space.

Removing the clutter from your property will help it sell faster and at a higher price. If it means finding a storage unit or another alternate place to store the items, go for it!

## **Exterior**

If possible, the exterior paint or stain of the siding and deck is in good shape.

Wintertime in Summit and Park Counties can make it difficult, if not impossible, to rectify the paint or stain until probably May or June. If the home is listed for sale between October and April, it will likely have to be sold in its current condition.

Yards are a premium. Be sure yours is organized and clear of clutter and miscellaneous items.

We mentioned this in the opening of our guide, but it's important to have the driveway, sidewalks, and decks free of snow during the wintertime. It's no fun for the Realtor or the buyers to trudge through the snow, and the home can feel neglected with the snow piled up.

## **Typical Inspection Objection Items**

The items below frequently show up in home inspection reports because they're "Health and Safety" items.

The sales transaction and inspection process are smoother if these are taken care of before the home is inspected:

- Install GFCI devices in the kitchen and bathrooms by a licensed electrician.
- Carbon Monoxide Alarms – must be placed within 15 feet of every bedroom entrance or any other room or area used for sleeping.
- Smoke Detector – Typically, they're in every bedroom, on every home level, and in the laundry room and kitchen.

## **Bring On the Handyperson**

Hiring a handyperson to repair minor items around the home before it's listed helps show viewers that the property was well-maintained.

Those viewing your home are creating at least a mental checklist of pros and cons, which ultimately affects how quickly your home goes under contract and how much buyers are willing to pay for it.

Having even 5 or 6 minor items repaired before the property goes on the market typically leads to a much better buyer experience and is well worth the cost of hiring the handyperson.

## **Not sure where to begin with your property?**

Please contact us for a complimentary consultation to ensure your home is staged and organized for a smooth, efficient, and successful sale.

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