What's Trending in Homebuying

Consider revamping your home with these simple, eye-appealing updates buyers are sure to notice. BY AIMEE ROBINSON

A house nestled on a wooded lot with a view of Lake Michigan was on the market for three years with no offers.

It was time for a change, says homeowner Reece Peterson, as she detailed her "Cinderella story" of a home sale. "We kept hearing great things about the house, but still no offers," she says. In January 2014, she partnered with the **Jay Schmidt Group** (205 E. Silver Spring Dr., Whitefish Bay) to catapult the sale.

The group came in and offered to stage the home, originally built in 1946, by using some of the existing furniture and also adding fresh pieces. While Jay Schmidt Group staged the home, the owners cleaned, decluttered and painted based on the group's recommendations, says Lindsey Vebber, a licensed agent from the Jay Schmidt Group.

"It's amazing what they did," says Peterson. "The day we put it on the market, we received an offer over asking price." Peterson's lake-view home sold for $475,000, and she says the decision to work with a professional was "a no-brainer."

Milwaukee real estate agents report seeing a rapid increase in home sales during normally slower months. So for those looking to sell, "Don't wait until spring," says Tom McCormick, owner-broker at **Exit Realty Horizons** (7635 W. Bluemound Rd.). "Put it on the market now. There are buyers out there." McCormick, like the Petersons, says staging with a refreshed look is vital for listing a house.

Revamping a home without hiring staging professionals can be done on a budget. Just a simple change in paint, fabrics and accessories can make for a more attractive living area. "Reinventing your space with small pieces can be a real surprise," says Emily Bachman, director of design at **Warren Barnett Interiors** (14755 W. Capitol Dr., Brookfield). "Clients come to us to reimagine what they already have."

Trending color forecasts for 2015 sway toward orchids and bold blues. Loose geometric patterns are fun to spice up the place, and the classic crisp black and white has never gone out of style.

Transitional pieces are the latest trends in furniture. The sleek design molds traditional and contemporary qualities to form an eye-appealing appearance. "It's a very clean look, and clients can easily mix in other pieces," says Tara Wilke, owner of **McNabb and Risley** (215 N. Main St., Thiensville). For those listing a home on the market, Wilke suggests going with a neutral-colored sofa in a transitional style and hanging overscale art. "Buyers can be taken aback from strong color choices," says Wilke.

For buyers, it's important to understand all the bells and whistles. **Sazama Design, Build and Remodel** (6027 W. Vliet St., Wauwatosa) offers a walk-through service for homebuyers, assisting with any questions. Their expertise helps narrow down the scale of costs for any renovations a house might need. "Most people buying a house will want to put their own touch on it," says owner Don Sazama. He says it's important to discuss the house with a prospective homeowner so you can go over a wish list and weigh the costs of updates. It's not uncommon for sellers to reduce prices after a detailed walk-through with a potential buyer.

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Haven Interiors (1457 N. Farwell Ave.) works with architects across the area, including Sazama Design, Build and Remodel, to create a unique space. "We work with [clients] to make the space their home," says Anna Miles, interior designer at Haven Interiors. The agency likes a good trend, but they prefer a timeless look that lasts. "When people hire a designer, it helps them avoid costly mistakes from overthinking things." ■

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