

## **Why Curb Appeal Is Important**

Curb appeal is the attractiveness of your home's exterior when viewed from the street. Studies show that a majority of buyers will not get out their car if they do not find your home's curb appeal visually attractive--that is, if they visit your property at all. With more and more people shopping for homes online, potential buyers could be turned off from viewing your property, just based on the listing photo alone! Addressing your home's curb appeal is a critical component in marketing and selling your home.

Why is curb appeal so important in selling your home? It forms potential buyers' first impressions of your home. Curb appeal sets the tone for your entire home. Buyers associate the condition of the exterior and landscape with the condition of the interior. Your home's curb appeal must invite buyers to view the rest of the property. In a buyer's market, curb appeal can mean the difference between a home that sells quickly for the asking price and a home that sells after months of sitting on the market for below the asking price.

### **Assessing Your Home's Curb Appeal**

In order to boost your home's curb appeal, you must first identify your trouble areas. This means taking a careful inventory of repairs you need to complete before you begin showing your home. Here are a few tips to help you make a thorough evaluation:

- Stand across the street from your house in order to get the fullest view of the front, the driveway and the sides. Note any painting, repairs or replacements needed.

- Identify bushes or trees that are overgrown.

- Walk towards your home following the path that a potential buyer would most likely take. Note landscaping needs such as edging, raking, weeding, pruning and trash removal. Look for items that should be removed or hidden such as hoses, sprinklers, trash cans or toys.

- Look through windows to note interior views that detract from your home's curb appeal.

- Inspect your home's walkway entrance. Note any cleaning, repairs, painting and lighting needs.

- Perform this evaluation again in the early morning and late evening. Many home buyers will pass by a property on their way to or from work. Seeing your home at different times of the day can reveal other trouble areas.

### **Enhancing Your Home's Curb Appeal**

Once you have identified and addressed your trouble areas, you can then focus on items that enhance your home's curb appeal. Even with a limited budget, you can greatly enhance your home's visual appeal by focusing on a few key areas. Items you may consider include:

- Adding colorful seasonal plants to existing flower beds.

- Purchasing new house address numbers and a mailbox.

- Installing a new door with glass inserts.

- Placing a new welcome mat and a grouping of potted plants at the entrance.

- Installing lighting along your driveway or sidewalk.

## **Photographing Your Home's Curb Appeal**

Make sure the photographer takes the best pictures. Great pictures of your home increase your chances of a successful sale. According to the National Association of Realtors, 70 percent of home buyers view a home for the first time from a picture on the Internet. Most Internet shoppers will skip listings with no pictures, and many will skip listings that only have a few pictures. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then what is 20 or more pictures' worth?

Here are few tips from professional real estate photographers:

- Make sure your lawn is mowed and edged.

- Remove cars, pets and toys before shooting.

- Request shots from multiple angles and levels.

- Find angles that show most of your property without looking cluttered or untidy by the surrounding landscape. Relay this information to the photographer.

- Include as much of the front lawn and landscaping as possible. If your landscaping is not at its best, request the photographer shoot from an angle that includes more sky.

## **Wikipedia definition of curb appeal**

**Curb appeal is attractiveness of the exterior of a residential or commercial property. The term was extensively used during the housing boom and continues to be used as an indicator of the initial appeal of a property to prospective buyers.**

## **WHERE DOES CURB APPEAL START AND WHERE DOES IT END?**

### **Flowers for instant curb appeal**

The experts all agree that curb appeal is one of the most important aspects to consider when selling your home. When selling, it's the appearance from the street that will very often determine whether potential buyers come in to see the inside, or never get out of their cars.

Flowers are one of the easiest and least expensive ways to make the front of your house look inviting and instantly increase the curb appeal of your home. Without any real landscaping at all, flowers can transform a rather drab and dreary looking front yard into one that looks colorful and lush. Especially during spring and summer, you should take advantage of the season by planting pots and flower boxes.

You should choose colorful flowers that will be in bloom during the time you're selling your home. Planting the flowers in planter boxes and pots is easier than planting them in the ground and lets you more easily place them where they can have the most visual impact. You don't need to have a green thumb, or spend a lot of money to get great results either. Visit your local home improvement center or nursery and they will be happy to advise you of the best flowers and plants for your purpose. You can put together several very nice planter boxes and pots of flowers for well under \$100. And it's easy! One of the nice things about using flowers in this way is that you'll see the results immediately. And so will buyers visiting your home.

## **The Power of Curb Appeal**

Improve your home's value with these tips

When putting a house up for sale, one of the most important factors you should consider is your home's exterior as this is the first step to draw potential buyers. It's what is known as curb appeal. Here are some changes that will make your home more attractive and functional, and they're also the ones that will give you the most impact for your resources.

First, create an inviting walkway for your guests and potential buyers. Lay bluestone or any other type of slate over the typical concrete steps or walkways to add warmth to an otherwise cold entry.

### **Replace old columns**

Most front porches have columns that are visually too small to support the roofs. Replace all columns that are 4"x4" with larger ones. It will look and feel better if you do.

### **Change out your light fixtures**

For some reason, porch lights are often hung at the wrong height and are not in good scale with the entry. When hanging sconces, put them a bit higher than your eye level to reduce glare. For those of you with unusually high entryways, try independent lights. It's an easy way to add elegance to your home.

### **Consider replacing the front door and windows**

Make sure your entry door does not clash with the style of your home. If you have an arts and crafts bungalow, stick with a door appropriate to that style. If you have a contemporary home, your door should be contemporary. Don't get caught up in the fads of the time. Consider, too, the style of the interior. This is also true of windows.

### **Replace your windows**

If you have an older home, it will probably benefit greatly from the energy saved with new windows. Keep the style of the windows the same as the home's architecture for the best outcome. Replacement windows are less expensive because they are made to sit inside the present frame. Most window companies can replace the windows in this manner in a single day.

### **Add dormers**

Dormers break up a large growth expanse and provide depth and balance to the front of the home.

If repairing or redoing stucco, consider getting some of the foam core crown molding made for exteriors. A little goes a long way to dress up your home. You have your stucco man cover right over the crown molding for a plush look.

### **Add or replace shutters**

Make sure your shutters are not too small for the window. They technically should be wide enough to cover the window opening when closed. Mount operable shutters slightly away from the home. Shutters will provide a decorative element that further defines the character of your home and gives it a custom look.

### **Add flower boxes to windows**

Flower boxes help add color to a home's exterior and make the windows appear taller from the street.

Replace older shrubbery that has grown too large for your home. If you want to make your home appear taller, use smaller shrubs. Watch out for shrubs that are overgrown as they can easily "swallow up" a small home.

### **Landscape all the way out to the street**

For goodness sake, understand that the days of a straight hedge at the front wall of the house to the street are over. The same goes for lawn that stretches from the home to the street with practically nothing of interest. Remember that the exterior decor should utilize focal points and group your plants together. Don't string them out, soldier fashion, along the front of your house or the sidewalk leaving the in between areas bare or endless grass.

### **Exterior lighting is important**

Exterior lighting can warm the look of a home without creating distinct points of light. Where space is limited, well-placed exterior lighting can replace pendants or sconces at the entryways. The home will be further enhanced if the materials and lighting are of the same style as the home.

### **Improve your driveway and make it more appealing**

Use saw cut, apron pavers or stamped concrete in place of regular concrete for the driveway itself. Try changing the location of the driveway so that it sweeps across the front yard, but is still functional. You want the view from the driveway to be of the home instead of the garage door.

To disguise the garage door, build a 2 ft. trellis or arbor with vines over the garage; it will give the garage a softer cottage look and feel.

For a side entry garage, plant evergreen trees to hide the turn around area next to the garage, putting the focus on the front of the house.

### **Frame a doorway with plants**

Try using boxwoods, steeds holly, dwarf Alberta spruce, smaller holly trees or arborvitae. Potted plants can be moved around and taken with you when you move away.

Plant the right things in the right places

If low sunlight is a problem, don't fight it. Low maintenance plants that can grow with little sunlight are azaleas, dwarfs and regular mondo grass, weeping Japanese maples, autumn ferns and hydrangeas. Your nursery can guide you on the varying needs of sunlight and water for each plant you buy.

### **For big results, think small**

Trench the edges of your flower beds to create smooth sweeping lines. Freshen your mulch or pine straw. Get your lawn on a regular fertilizer program.

Simple low voltage lighting at entry points and specimen trees can add a lot of flair to the yard. Highlight and accentuate entryways with annuals.

### **Keep it simple**

Don't confuse guests. Have a clear and defined path from a parking area to the home's entrance. Create paths out of stone or other materials that complement the house.

### **Study the color palette of your home**

Determine the most complementary color for both body and trim of your home. Some houses look better with muted color schemes rather than the standard white trim.

Consider an off white trim with a complementary color for the body of the house. I just passed a home with a white garage door, some white trim here and there, a fairly dark olive green body and a large black front door. The shutters on the windows and window trim was also black. Very stunning and quite unique.

### **Assess your roofs**

Asphalt roofs look best in either black or slate gray. For more informal homes, pressure treated cedar shake roofs have wonderful color and texture. Slate roofs give a premium look to any home. Raised-seam metal roofs are a great option for homes that seek to achieve a distinctive older look.

### **Enhance the trim**

Add wood pediments over the windows or over the front door. There are several sources for ready-made trim that is designed for standard sized openings.

### **Upgrade your door's hardware**

Go to premium hardware companies and look at the options for door latches. Georgian-style homes should have polished brass fixtures, while country French and many cottage-style homes can use fixtures with darker finishes, such as oil-rubbed bronze or pewter gray.

### **Do your research**

For older houses, look for lighting fixtures that look like old carriage lanterns or gas lanterns. Finishes should be black or aged copper. For an extra special look, replace the glass with seedy glass and use lower wattage bulbs. If you have a larger budget, consider installing a gas line to make the fixture a real gas lantern.

### **Avoid clutter**

Stay away from helter-skelter objects in your yard. Pick a focal point or two for the art and leave the rest to more clean and understated design.

### **Think about function**

If you want to use your yard for entertaining or just lazy days sipping sweet tea, make sure you have nice, clean seating and an easy to grow garden.

### **Keep it clean**

Periodic pressure washing will remove molten debris off siding, decks, driveways and walkways leaving a pristine facade on your home

### **Add planters**

Put seasonal plants in pots that will spill over with color and make the front door a focal point.

### **Make it Low maintenance**

Hardier plants will continue to look attractive in the colder months of the year, giving your yard year-round appeal.