

Desperate Housewives, Yes Desperate Sellers, No



The housewives may be desperate in Orange County, California, but the sellers don't have to be. Even with a five-bedroom Tudor estate with equestrian facilities in prestigious Laguna Hills that had been on the market for almost a full year, developer Shawn Macafee refused to give up hope. An investor specializing in renovating high-end homes, Macafee had remodeled the entry with a sweeping, spiral staircase, new gourmet kitchen, beautiful tumbled travertine flooring and dramatic bathroom. At \$3.4 million, the property was a bargain, especially in famously affluent and naturally beautiful Orange County, where, according to the California Association of Realtors, the median sale price of an existing single-family detached home is \$706,820, and celebrities regularly pay multimillions for real estate.

"Any real estate agent will tell you that even the most opulent residences won't make the right impression if they're vacant," said Lisa Karos, Realtor® with Re/Max Select One. "You want your buyers to fall in love with the house as well as the great location."

Karos should know. She has many listings in Newport and Huntington Beach, where her 4000 square foot ocean-front homes boast elevators, four-car garages and tri-level views of surfing competitions and walkers enjoying the beautiful beach. "When prospects walk into a vacant house, they wander around trying to imagine what to do with the large bare rooms - or small odd-shaped spaces," she said. "But when furnished and staged to showcase the home's advantages, prospective buyers see themselves relaxing with friends over dinner in the great room, or sipping a cup of gourmet coffee in a cozy chair in the alcove, with a great view to the sea. When prospects imagine themselves living in the home, that's when they are ready to buy- and often at full price, instead of risking losing the home by making a low offer. My last home sold in only two days after it was staged and managed."

For Karos and Macafee, the solution was to contract with a company to stage and manage the vacant property, and to give the designer home the full makeover it deserved, transforming it with whole-house furnishing,

professional decorating, staging and a live-in home manager—at no cost to the real estate agent.

"I've come to realize that remodeling is only half of what I need to do to sell these homes," said MacAfee. "The other half is getting furniture and a home manager in them so people can envision a glamorous lifestyle in the home."

Karen Fenn, a real estate agent with Prudential California Realty, had a similar experience with her luxury condominium, located in nearby Yorba Linda. The three-bedroom, executive property, located on a golf course, boasted granite kitchen counters, a gated courtyard and covered balcony, among other

amenities. Priced at \$799,999, it was also vacant.

Within the first month of being staged and managed, the owners had an offer for \$772,000, and the property closed 60 days after.

"There were several other units for sale on the same street, but ours sold higher and faster," said Brower. "I would recommend this service to anyone—anywhere—trying to sell real estate."

Lucy Henner is the director of marketing at Showhomes. She can be contacted at 866.398.3813, or by e-mail at lhenner@realtysuccessionline.com.



Before



After



Before



After