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## Here's Some Advice on Home Staging and What Should and Needn't Be Fixed or Updated

Any seller should expect to receive advice from their listing agent regarding what should be done to help their home show its best and sell quickly. This might include repainting, new carpeting, and decluttering.

First impressions are exceedingly important. A buyer typically decides in the first 30 seconds whether a particular home is what I call a "contender." Curb appeal, including yard maintenance, the condition of the driveway and sidewalk, and the look of the porch and front door are many times more important than what's inside your home to pass the "contender" test.

Similarly, the rooms closest to the front door need to feel warm (especially in the winter!) and not have any eyesores such as bad carpeting.

By the time buyers pass those first rooms, either they're thinking of buying the home or they have already ruled it out. If it's a contender, then things that would otherwise be a turn-off for the buyer, such as old shag carpeting in the basement, are more likely to be met with, "Oh, we can replace that," rather than confirming that this house is not for them.

My decision to accept a listing is also based on first impressions, but more on the seller's openness to my suggestions about improving the home's appeal.

**REAL ESTATE TODAY**



By **JIM SMITH**  
Realtor®

In addition to giving my own advice on such matters, I also provide a free consultation with a professional stager. Trained in such matters, the staging consultant will make recommendations on furniture thinning and placement, plus smaller details that make the home more inviting. The consultant will also provide a second opinion about the issues I addressed during my first visit.

If a home is vacant — no furniture to rearrange — the question arises as to whether furniture should be rented, but that typically costs the seller between \$1,000 and \$3,000, which may not be warranted depending on other factors, including market condition and whether there are competing listings. You want those listings to help sell your home, not the other way around!

Another option is "virtual staging." I employed that on a condo which I listed in southeast Denver. I provided pictures of the three empty rooms — living/dining room and two bedrooms — and within a couple days I had pictures of those rooms beautifully furnished. Above right are the before and after pictures of two of those rooms. (Notice that it says "Virtually Staged" in the bottom left corner of the staged photos.)

### Newer Apartment Buildings Discourage Energy Efficiency

Newer apartment buildings, such as the one Rita and I just moved out of — GW Apartments in Golden — and the one we just moved into — Bel Aire Apartments in Lakewood — do not have individual electric meters. Instead, they have contracted with a Florida company, Commercial Water & Energy (CWE), to divide up the building's total electrical bill among its tenants, passing on a charge proportionate (I'm told) to the square footage of each apartment. They also add a service fee — mine was \$9.19 per month — on top of the \$120+ monthly electrical bill.

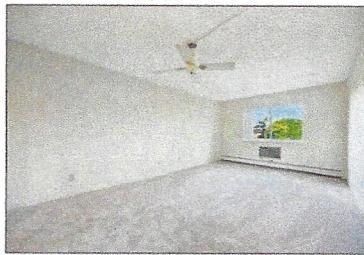
Individual apartments may not have gas service, but the building's gas bill for cen-

tral heating is also charged to each tenant. The same for water and sewer service. Parking, pest control and trash service are also added to CWE's invoice, although those are flat rates derived from the lease.

The result of this arrangement is that tenants are not incentivized to turn off lights or turn down the thermostat, because it will not reduce their energy bill.

Indeed, when we went on a four-month world cruise in 2024, we were charged the same for electricity and gas each month as we were charged when we were home.

Each apartment has its own circuit breaker panel, so submeters could be installed, if a law were passed requiring it.



The cost of virtual staging is minimal, so I provide that at no cost to the seller. The object, of course, is to get buyers to set a showing by demonstrating how livable the unit could be. It's okay that when they get there, they see a "blank canvas" instead.

Other must-do's for the seller is to have

### Denver Ranks 2nd Nationwide in Favoring First-Time Buyers

A study of 30 metro markets concluded that Denver ranks second among metro markets when it comes to the percentage of "starter" homes purchased by first-time homebuyers versus investors. Only Yakima, WA, ranked higher.

The study was conducted by Neighbors Bank of Columbia, MO. A link to the study is at [RealEstateToday.substack.com](https://RealEstateToday.substack.com).

In the Denver metro area, first-time homebuyers accounted for 84.31% of starter-home purchases, leaving investors with just 15.69%, a significant gap compared to the average among all 30 metro areas of 69%. Yakima had 85.71% first-time homebuyers. Rounding out the top five metros in this respect were Seattle (81.16%), Los Angeles (80.75%), and Indianapolis (78.22%).

the windows washed. I also recommend labeling window screens and putting them in the garage or basement. Maximum lighting is critical, so I recommend keeping all blinds and curtains open, and replacing conventional or CFL light bulbs with 100-watt-equivalent "daylight" LED bulbs. They are surprisingly inexpensive.

Investors are the number one competitor for starter homes, because they make great rentals, especially short-term rentals.

Cities like Denver and other Colorado cities, which have restricted short-term rentals, have made it much easier for first-time buyers to compete with investors. Greeley and Colorado Springs are in the top 10 in the study.

Denver's advantage stems partly from its strict short-term rental regulations which prohibit non-owner-occupied properties as short-term rentals, meaning only owner-occupied residents can list their homes on AirBnb, VRBO and similar platforms. These rules limit investor profitability in popular neighborhoods, subtly favoring long-term residents and owner-occupants over speculative buyers.

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Two decades of these columns are archived at [JimSmithColumns.com](https://JimSmithColumns.com).



### Price Reduced on Wyndham Park Ranch Siding to Greenbelt

This 4-bedroom/3-bath home at 6060 Deframe Court is now listed at only \$864,500. It has been beautifully updated and adjoins a peaceful greenbelt. It features hardwood floors and vaulted ceilings with an open floor plan. The updated kitchen includes a dining area with a large bay window and pantry. Find more info and a narrated video tour at [www.GRElistings.com](https://www.GRElistings.com).

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