

3 Ways to Downplay Negative Features in Your Home

Close attention to detail can minimize the impact of a bad location or small room.

By Tori Toth

Play up positive features, like a nice view, when you arrange other details in the room.

Every room has positive and negative features, it's what you do with those features that can make a buyer excited about your space. Take a look around the space you're sitting in right now – is there a glaring eye-sore, repair or imperfection staring back at you? That's considered a negative feature in a home.

Now, if you don't see an unsightly feature in the space, take a second look. Many times negatives are overlooked in a home because a homeowner either doesn't want to see the issue, or they're essentially wearing blinders and can't see those details that may be unappealing to others.

How can you remove those blinders? Home sellers should walk through each room of their home to critique the space as a buyer would and make a list of tasks or projects to complete. Here are some negative features you'll want to take note of:

- Undesirable location of the home
- Uninviting curb appeal
- No garage
- · Unappealing or no landscaping
- Peeling exterior paint or bad paint colors
- Old roof
- Old windows and doors
- Small or awkward layout
- Carpeting rather than hardwood floors
- Outdated kitchen and bathrooms
- Small bedrooms
- · Limited ceiling lighting
- Structural problems
- Electrical or plumbing problems

Some of these negative features can have a real impact on whether the buyer makes an offer or not, and if an offer is made, how much will they take off the sale price to budget in improving these features? You wouldn't want to pay full price for an item that's broken or missing from your wish list, and neither will a homebuyer.

Many times there is nothing a homeowner can do about a negative feature, it's just out of their control – like the location of the home, for instance. If the home's backyard is a highway, under a flight path or next to a power plant, chances are any home in the area, regardless of its price tag, will have a harder time selling as a result.

Acknowledge and Move On.

If you have an impossible negative feature like this plaguing a home, the best thing to do is to acknowledge it and refocus buyers on the positive aspects of the neighborhood, like the great proximity to the beach or an amazing view of the city skyline.

You can decrease the impact a nearby highway has by adding a fence or a vegetation barrier and window treatments that deflect a bad view. Also try adding a water feature to reduce bad noises with more preferable ones, and make sure to play soft music – tuned to a Top 40 station – during an open house. The most important area to focus on, if your home is in a bad location, is on the inside.

Focus on the Positive.

Most of the negative features that relate to the maintenance and appearance of a home can be controlled based on your budget, time and willingness to complete the task. A positive feature may vary across neighborhoods and differ between homes, but here's a list of features buyers look for:

- Large front yard
- Landscaping and sprinkler systems
- Two-car garage
- · Deck or patio
- Swimming pool
- Outdoor living area
- Outdoor view
- · Energy-efficient windows and appliances
- Picture windows and sliding or french doors
- Grand foyer
- Wood floors
- Built-in shelving
- Fireplace
- Lighting, fans and chandeliers
- Lots of storage space and closets
- Kitchen with island
- Home office
- Master suite with spa-like bathroom

- Large rooms
- Family room or additional great room
- Open layout
- Finished basement

These are just a few of the positive features buyers look for in a new home. So, if you have these types of features, guess what? You're one step closer to the closing table.

Now you just have to make sure they notice those features. Plan on dressing up large front yards with landscaping. Let buyers know about a sprinkler system or energy-efficient products in the space by offering a feature list at an open house.

In order to highlight each positive feature within a room, make sure the area is light, bright, clean and clutter-free so the buyer's eyes can easily see the value of the home by keeping them focused and engaged.

Create a Focal Point.

Every room needs a focal point, which is defined by what the purpose of the room will be. Is it the living room? A bedroom? What is this room used for?

Based on the function of the room, what is the focal point? In a bedroom, it's the bed, while in an office the focal point is the desk. Focal points can come in many shapes and sizes – in fact, there can be many focal points in the same room competing against one another.

There are natural focal points, like an amazing view, or architectural focal points, like a fireplace or built-in shelving. When choosing a focal point for each room, you want it to have a huge impact and get the buyer's attention. You can do this by using color, texture or hanging vertical pieces on the wall to emphasize a room's height.

Once you've determined the focal point, you want that to take center stage to anything else in the room. If you have a fireplace in a room, for example, make sure the furniture faces toward the fireplace.

Remember, whatever your focal point is it should be placed on the focal wall – the wall adjacent to the door or the longest wall – so buyers can instantly see this positive feature and know what this room is used for.

To sell a home for maximum value, you need to subliminally keep the focus of each buyer that walks in the door and hide those negative features out of sight.

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