



CHOOSING COLORS THAT SELL HOMES

GUIDING YOUR
CUSTOMERS TO MAKE
SMART PAINT
DECISIONS

BY JIM WILLIAMS

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM SAYS IT'S "LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION"

when you're looking to buy a home. However, that statement might take on an entirely different hue when it comes to selling one.

In a competitive housing market, it's important to seize every advantage. Can exterior color make a difference? That is the million-dollar question.

"True, location is an important factor, but the aesthetics of a home, especially the exterior color, can make a difference if a buyer is on the fence," said Bob Hertzog, a designated real estate broker and owner of Summit Home Consultants in Phoenix, AZ.

"I had a listing in north Scottsdale last year, and the home was painted a burnt-orange color," Hertzog said. "There's no doubt in my mind—based on the feedback I received from agents that showed the home—that the paint color was a major factor in the time it took to get the property sold. We finally got it sold, but only after the seller agreed to an \$8,000 credit at the close of escrow so that the buyer could repaint the home when they moved in. Sadly, the seller just had the home painted six months prior."

The power of color

Sue Wadden, director of color marketing at Sherwin-Williams, is intimately aware of the power of color.

"Of course, it's well known that color can influence a person's mood, and its affect on an individual is heavily considered and thought through in the design process," Wadden said.

"Confident color selection is anything but random—rather, a very thoughtful process that leads to evoking a certain attitude or emotion that, importantly, can also influence a person's behavior."

Wadden says this is especially true in a home setting. "If a buyer sees move-in-ready color, then builders and painters typically see a bigger bottom line. Color is a powerful tool that puts the buyer in the space, planning how they will live, and provides an emotional connection, a key to securing the asking price from a home—and then some."

Jessamy Tisoris, a Milwaukee-based color consultant and owner of Color Zen, equates dressing a home for sale much like you would prepare for an important job interview. "You should always wear a color that's powerful, flattering, and typically classic," Tisoris said.

"For your home, it's less about selecting the neutral everyone is blogging about and more

about what truly complements the home's unique lighting and surfaces, especially wood tones. Generally, light, bright and airy neutrals leaning gray and/or coastal are popular at the moment. You want the home to look as modern as possible."

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WARM, NEUTRAL COLORS ARE THE SAFEST BET WHEN SELLING A HOME.

Photos Courtesy of
Sherwin-Williams

serves much of Westchester County, NY.

Macedo has been in the paint industry for more than 16 years, and has owned his own business for the past 10. He understands there's a science behind choosing a color that will help sell a home. He feels that a good color can enhance the resale value of a home; the wrong color can sink a potential sale. "Before listing it for sale, the safest place to be is with colors that give off a feeling of warmth, yet with neutrality," Macedo said.

Trending personal

Homeowners have both a personal and financial stake in their homes. It can color their judgment when it comes time to prep their home for sale.

"For many homeowners, the biggest driver in color trends is a quest for personalization, which is a significant area of opportunity for painters, builders and more," Wadden said. "In response to this demand, contractors are adding to formerly limited color palettes, which embraced neutrals and other hues, making the days of 'builder beige' part of a bygone era."

Genesis Macedo agrees. His company, Genesis Pro Painting & Restoration,

Wadden says the very definition of neutral is changing, and "drawing inspiration from the earth and sky with deep, rich tones like putty, clay, shell, sun and water. Bright golds are optimistic, yet the shift in beige moves away from warmer, yellow-based tones to brown-based grays. These natural influences feel fresh and modern, while remaining neutral and functional throughout the seasons."

Gray is ... the new gray

"For the last few years, I have specified shades of gray until the strips on my paint fan decks fell off," Tsoris said. "So definitely, gray will be here for a while longer, although we are starting to mix it up after overdosing on monotone gray interiors."

Tsoris also sees white as a big factor.

"White trim—that's a big one," she said. "Many people are painting unfavorable wood and ceilings white. It's instant happiness. I'll never get over the power of white paint. Other colors that are popular—shades of blue, from powder to green/blue/gray to navy. Taupe as well. Taupe weaves through all of the grays and I think we will see it a lot in the next several years in a very soft, organic way."

Tsoris believes the color making the biggest comeback is green. "Green has been gone for a while but is making a major comeback," she said. "Emerald, kelly

and soft sage. Violet as well—many shades, from murky plum to gray-violets to red-violets.”

The art of selling

Back to the million-dollar question: Can paint color truly help sell a home?

Wadden thinks so. “The most obvious benefit to painting your house is elevating the curb appeal. Color can be such a key differentiator,” Wadden said. “Think of homes with great style ... the exterior is the first glimpse of what we see in a home—sort of an indicator as to what’s inside. Great exterior color can tell a story, as well.”

When advising a homeowner on color choices, Wadden likes to play up significant architectural details on a house.

“Maybe a home has incredible trim and a bold, unexpected color is a great way to play that up,” she said. “Does the home have a gorgeous front porch? Try painting a daring and vibrant color on the porch ceiling. Playing up key features can be a really distinctive way to make a bold impression.”

Ironically, Tsoris says many of her clients will tell her they’re not into trends.

“However, when we browse photos, almost 100% of them will ooh and aah over new homes with contemporary decor they would never allow themselves to like if selected independently,” she said. “Humans respond to change and trends in interior design—period. It keeps things exciting.”

When I started Color Zen, we were nearing the end of the Tuscan palette; warm tans, red, gold, yellow/green. We went crazy during that period with accent walls and a new hue in every room. Then we cleansed the palette with light coastal neutrals, taupe, gray, white, blue and an occasional color pop. This is where we’re at today, but new creative choices are creeping into the gray zone. Every year, I notice shifts in overall color selections. It is ever-changing for sure.”

Final touches

When talking to a customer, both Macedo and Tsoris say it’s important to spend time listening.

“About 80% of my time is spent listening to my customer,” Macedo said. “I find out what they want and need. Then the other 20% of my time is used to help educate them on the colors and products.”

Tsoris says to be open to incorporating each customer’s unique perspective on color.

“Try to gently nudge customers who are stuck in their comfort zone,” Tsoris said. “Show them photos of beautiful rooms that showcase colors they might not have considered, but that could

work in their space. Develop the right approach for communicating so you’re not pushy, yet firm enough to be heard and respected. When clients and peers challenge me, I always say ‘I stand by my selections.’ And I do. Believe in your power to help people build beautiful spaces—it’s a moving process.”

Finally, Wadden believes it’s critical to counsel your customer about color selection, in order to help to minimize repaints and increase customer satisfaction.

“Being knowledgeable about color can also differentiate you from the competition and help establish yourself as a trusted resource, ultimately leading to more repeat and referral business.”

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