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Money-makers

Five questions with Cindy Bryant
Staging homes adds a dimension to selling

By Purva Patel
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MAYRA BELTRÁ CHRONICLE

Cindy Bryant grew up watching her mom prep homes for sale.

After spending most of her career marketing professional athletes, she started her own home-staging business, Redesign Etc., a year ago.

Staging entails cleaning, stylizing and depersonalizing homes so others can imagine living there.

Staging can also mean painting, new landscaping and other changes, depending on how much a homeowner is willing to invest in marketing a home.

Bryant recently spoke with Chronicle reporter Purva Patel about home staging. The following are excerpts of that conversation.

Q: With home sales slowing in parts of town, are you seeing more sellers resorting to staging services?

A: Absolutely. Yes, the market is not great, and I'm getting a lot of calls every day. People are having their houses on the market three to six months now and they're not getting any traffic to the house.

If you can't get traffic, you don't get offers. I'm getting more calls, and some people are calling before they put their house on the market because they realize there is so much competition. They want to start out with a bang rather than have to sit on the market for six months.

Q: How long does it take to sell once a house is staged?

A: Nationally is a whole different can of worms because every city and every market is different. In Houston, for my business, I've had houses sell in two days. My houses usually sell under 30 days. On average they sell about two weeks after they've been staged by our company.

I had a house that was on the market for a year,

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and it sold two days after it was staged. I got a call from an owner, who said the Realtor had said their million-dollar view would sell the house. After a year, she called me and said, "My million-dollar view is not selling this house."

I came in, picked out some paint color, completely repainted the whole place, brought in furniture and redid the whole place. Two days later, she had a full-price offer. So it does work.

Q: Are there any particular types of pieces that are better suited for staging?

A: It depends on the demographics of where the home is that you're staging. It's different in the suburbs versus a loft downtown. That's going to appeal to two different types of people — a family home in the suburbs as opposed to a loft that would appeal to young professional couple living in the city. That's why I pick up all kinds of pieces: urban, modern contemporary and traditional pieces as well.

Q: What's the biggest mistake people make when it comes to staging?

A: The biggest mistake is, and I come across this every day, people usually love their homes and it's a very, very emotional thing for them, so it's very hard for people to detach themselves from the house.

Because of that, they cannot look at their house objectively because they've lived there and it looks fine to them. They can't get past, say, their red dining room that maybe they spent hours and hours picking out that red color they love.

They don't understand that not everybody is going to love that red dining room. It's almost like a child to them.

They're just so emotionally attached to it that they can't give an objective view.

Q: Have you had to adjust your prices because of rising gasoline costs?

A: No. I should because I do go all over Houston. But I haven't yet. I can tell you it's tough because I drive a Suburban, so it's definitely driving up costs.

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