

A FREE RESOURCE FOR NORTHWEST SUBURBS HOMEOWNERS

The Northwest Suburbs Home Prep Checklist

Maximizing Your Equity: What to Fix, What to Skip, and
What Local Buyers Are Searching For



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A Quick Note Before You Start

Hi, I'm Mari. If you're thinking about selling your home here in the Northwest Suburbs, I want to save you some time, some money, and probably a headache or two. Today's buyers are not looking for a project, they're looking for a home they can move into and simply live in. That means move-in-ready homes are earning a real premium in our market, while homes that need work sit longer and sell for less, even when the bones are good. Here's the good news: getting your home into that move-in-ready category almost never means a full kitchen gut or a new roof. It means a handful of targeted updates that buyers notice the moment they walk in the door. That's what this checklist is built around.

The Room-by-Room Checklist

The Kitchen & Bath Quick-Fixes

These two rooms sell houses. Buyers form an opinion here fast, and small updates go a long way.

- ☐ **Swap the hardware.** New cabinet pulls and faucets in a brushed nickel or matte black finish read as instantly updated, for very little cost.
- ☐ **Repaint in a local favorite neutral.** Sherwin-Williams Agreeable Gray and Benjamin Moore Swiss Coffee are go-to shades I recommend to NW Suburbs sellers because they photograph beautifully and appeal to the widest range of buyers.
- ☐ **Upgrade outdated vanity lighting.** A dated fixture in the bathroom is one of the fastest tells that a home hasn't been touched in years. A modern fixture fixes that in an afternoon.

The Curb Appeal First Impression

Buyers decide how they feel about a home before they ever get out of the car.

- ☐ **Power wash the siding.** Vinyl siding builds up grime over our Chicago winters. A power wash instantly brightens the whole front of the home.
- ☐ **Refresh the front door.** A freshly painted front door in a warm, welcoming color is one of the highest-return updates you can make, and it's a weekend project.
- ☐ **Update the house numbers.** Modern, easy-to-read house numbers signal a well-kept home before buyers even reach the porch.
- ☐ **Edge the lawn and clean up the beds.** Crisp lawn edging and tidy landscaping make the whole property look cared for.

The Hidden ROI Killers

These quietly cost sellers the most at the negotiating table, especially with NW Suburbs buyers who look closely at basements and lower levels.

- ☐ **Replace worn-out carpet.** Flattened, stained, or dated carpet is one of the first things buyers mention, and it's inexpensive compared to what it costs you in perceived value.
- ☐ **Neutralize odors before every showing.** Pet odors and heavy cooking smells are an immediate red flag, even when the rest of the home shows beautifully.
- ☐ **Fix visible drywall cracks and water spots.** Even small cosmetic cracks or a faint water stain will make buyers assume a bigger problem exists.

The “What to Skip” Matrix

Just as important as knowing what to fix is knowing what to leave alone. Here's where I see sellers spend money that doesn't come back to them at closing.

Don't Do This	Why It's a Skip
Replace working mechanicals	If your furnace, water heater, or roof is functioning and within its expected lifespan, a full replacement rarely pays you back. A recent service record is often more reassuring to buyers than a brand-new unit.
Take on minor structural changes	Knocking down a wall or reconfiguring a layout is expensive, time-consuming, and highly a matter of personal taste. Buyers would rather see the potential and make that call themselves.
Over-customize a room to your taste	A bold accent wall or a highly personalized built-in may feel special to you, but it narrows your buyer pool. Neutral, flexible spaces sell to more people, faster.

Every one of these can turn into a costly detour if you tackle it without a clear reason to. Save your budget for the fixes on the page before this one, they're the ones buyers actually pay more for.

Every Home Is Different

Don't guess what your specific house needs. This checklist covers the fixes that tend to matter most across the Northwest Suburbs, but your home has its own story, and a quick conversation can save you from spending money in the wrong place.

Your Complimentary Walk-Through Equity Assessment

In just 15 minutes, online or in person, I'll walk your home with you and tell you exactly which three things will give you the biggest return before you list.



Scan to book your free 15-minute Discovery Call
calendar.app.google/ujT66PePErKcxZGP7

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