

12 Strategies for Hosting a Successful Open House

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MANHATTAN — Apartments don't sell themselves — even in today's market where demand is high and supply is low.

Manhattan just saw its most active [spring buying season](#) since 2007, with the median sales price up 4.3 percent to \$865,000, according to Douglas Elliman's second-quarter report. In Brooklyn — where the median price jumped 15.3 percent to \$550,000 — [homes were on the market for shorter periods of time with fewer deals being made.](#)

To help sellers find a buyer quickly, DNAinfo spoke to some of New York's top brokers and got some tips. First things first, though: Set a good price.

“You don't need a golden toilet. You just need a working toilet,” said Holly Sose, of [City Connections Realty](#). “Any wild shenanigans are just that, shenanigans. ... The market will always dictate a trade price. No amount of gorgeous models dancing in bikinis or catered sushi is going to do that for you.”

Once a seller figures out the right price, it may take some weeks to prepare a home so it looks ready for a showing. Here's how:

1. De-clutter your home

“Buyers want to envision themselves in the home, and it's difficult to do so if your clutter is in the way,” said Shannon Aalai, of CitiHabitats.

Cleaning out closets is especially important since many city house hunters are obsessed with closet space and will surely open all doors, she said.

2. Add a fresh coat of paint, and fix anything that's broken, especially if it's squeaky.

"When people walk into an apartment they're nitpicky and want to find something wrong even if they like it," Aalai said.

So, make sure everything is in working order, including light bulbs.

Vik Kukar, of Rutenberg Realty, recalled one open house where a broken dishwasher handle turned off prospective buyers.

“You’re really trying to create emotion when you walk in,” he said. “You don’t want anything to break that positive emotion.”

3. Stash your honeymoon photos and hide your doll collection.

“Take down anything I tell you is offensive or weird, and remove anything personal,” Aalai said.

The goal is to keep the focus on the apartment.

“Your dog is cute but we don’t need to see [it] in every photo,” she said. “People are easily distracted. They look at the photos, and say, ‘That’s a cute couple, that’s a cute baby.’ They’re more interested in [the sellers’] lives.”

When taking a couple to look at a SoHo loft, Aalai heard the prospective buyers talking nonstop about the series of “creepy” collage boxes hanging on the wall instead of chatting about the home.

“The husband said you’ll never get rid of that energy,” she recounted.

4. Consider using a professional to stage your home.

It could cost anywhere from \$4,000 to upwards of \$25,000 to have your apartment staged, but there could be a big payoff, Kukar said.

“It’s often going to have a 300 percent return,” he said, especially if a home has no furniture.

5. Give your agent ample access to your house.

“Allow open houses, and let brokers show the property after work and on weekends,” Aalai said.

In the summertime when many New Yorkers head out of town for weekends, open houses tend to be more popular on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings instead of Sunday afternoons, said [Douglas Elliman](#)’s Jacky Teplitzky. (Mondays people catch up from their getaways and Thursdays, they’re already prepping for their weekend again, she explained.)

6. Target your outreach.

Besides making sure an apartment is listed on [StreetEasy.com](#), the *The New York Times* and broker databases, make sure you tell your neighbors and doorman when you’re hosting an open house, Kukar advised.

“People in a building are often looking for upgrade or have friends and family who want to buy in the building,” he said. “A lot of people buy their second apartment in same building they currently own in.”

Teplitzky stressed the importance of “building momentum” by listing an apartment in different outlets, online and elsewhere.

Sometimes her agents will do mailings in the building or neighborhood to increase the number of people showing up.

“If it’s a high-end building, we’ll target high-end rentals,” she explained. “The whole idea is not like to leave it for chance — it’s to concentrate and target people.”

7. Don’t be home for showings or open houses.

“Buyers are never honest in front of sellers, and frankly it often makes them uncomfortable,” Aalai said.

8. Be prepared for possible questions.

Make sure whoever is hosting the open house knows where to find the nearest gym and grocery stores and the closest subway and bus stops. Make sure they know what, if anything, was renovated and when, and whether walls can come down or be put up, Kukar said.

9. Get a cleaning service.

“People will notice if it’s dirty,” Aalai said, especially in bathrooms where prospective buyers often turn on faucets and use toilets.

“They move the shower curtain when they want to turn the water on, so make sure there’s no hair in the tub,” she said, also advising sellers to make sure there’s soap, and the good towels are hanging.

10. Take the dog or cat out; hide litter boxes and feeding bowls.

Not all house hunters are animal lovers.

“If a dog is there, sometimes people are worried about the dog jumping on them, and they’re freaking out, so they’re not looking at the apartment,” Aalai said. “And with cats, a lot of people have allergies.”

11. Add simple, nice touches.

Aalai likes to bring flowers or set out a bowl with lemons or pears.

Teplitzky likes to offer little bottles of cold water or fruit in the heat of summer.

Sose likes to put on music.

“Music makes everything better,” she said.

12. Make sure the house doesn't smell.

People often get accustomed to their homes' odors, said Aalai, who will often light a scented candle in the bathroom.

Many brokers will open windows before a showing to let it air out.

Kukar gently lets sellers know not to do any heavy cooking an hour or so before a showing. He remembered an open house where a family had just cooked a pot roast.

"It smelled good, but it was too much," he said.

"Apartments are sold on emotion," Kukar said. "The agent is the director of [a movie called] 'Selling This Home.' We're trying to produce these strong feelings of joy, hope and happiness."