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Home Staging Guide

SELLER RESOURCE GUIDE

The art and strategy of staging your Calgary home to sell faster and for more — whether you hire a professional or do it yourself.

What Staging Is — and Why It Works

Home staging is the process of preparing and presenting a property to appeal to the widest possible range of buyers. It goes beyond cleaning and decluttering — staging is about strategically arranging furniture, decor, and accessories to highlight a home's best features, minimize its weaknesses, and create an emotional connection with buyers.

Staging works because buyers shop with their eyes and their feelings. A well-staged home photographs better (critical for online listings), shows better in person, and helps buyers imagine their life in the space. When a buyer can picture themselves living there, they are more likely to make an offer — and more likely to offer a strong price.

The numbers: According to the Real Estate Staging Association, staged homes spend 73% less time on the market compared to non-staged homes. The National Association of REALTORS reports that 81% of buyer agents say staging makes it easier for clients to visualize a property as their future home.

DIY Staging vs. Professional Staging

When DIY Staging Makes Sense

- Your home is already well-furnished with modern, neutral pieces
- You have a good eye for design and are willing to edit ruthlessly
- Your budget is limited and you are willing to invest time instead of money
- The property is in a price range where staging costs would represent a disproportionate expense

When to Hire a Professional

- The home is vacant — empty rooms photograph poorly and feel cold
- Your furniture is dated, worn, or heavily stylized
- The property is in a higher price bracket where buyer expectations are elevated
- You are competing against new-build show homes (common in Calgary communities like Seton, Livingston, and Glacier Ridge)
- You want maximum impact for professional photography and online presentation

Calgary staging market: Professional staging in Calgary typically costs \$2,000 to \$5,000 for a full-home consultation and furniture rental for 60 days. Partial staging (key rooms only) can be done for \$1,000 to \$2,500. Many Calgary stagers offer a consultation-only service for \$300 to \$500, where they provide a detailed plan you implement yourself using your own furnishings.

Room-by-Room Staging Strategies

Living Room

The living room sets the tone for the entire home. Create a clear focal point — a fireplace, a large window, or an entertainment wall — and arrange furniture to draw attention to it. Use a simple sofa-plus-two-chairs arrangement or an L-shaped sectional that defines the space without overwhelming it. Add a few carefully chosen accessories: a coffee table book, a decorative tray, and a fresh throw blanket.

Kitchen

Kitchens sell homes. Stage the kitchen to look functional yet aspirational. Clear all countertops, then add back one to three items: a wooden cutting board with a fresh lemon, a stylish kettle, or a small herb plant. Set out a cookbook opened to an appetizing page. If the kitchen has an island or breakfast bar, set it with two or three place settings to help buyers envision daily life.

Primary Bedroom

This room should feel like a boutique hotel. Invest in quality white or neutral bedding — a crisp duvet cover, layered pillows (two sleeping, two decorative), and a folded throw at the foot of the bed. Nightstands should have minimal accessories — a lamp and one small item each. Remove the television if possible.

Bathrooms

Stage bathrooms like a spa. Roll fresh white towels and place them in a basket or on a shelf. Add a small potted orchid or succulent, a quality soap dispenser, and a candle (unlit — it is a visual prop, not a scent). Clear the vanity of everything else.

Home Office

With remote work now a permanent fixture for many Calgary professionals, a well-staged home office is a significant selling point. Set up a clean desk with a monitor or laptop (closed), a desk lamp, and a small plant. Ensure the space feels productive and organized, not cluttered.

Basement

Calgary basements often serve multiple functions — recreation, guest suite, storage. Stage the primary use clearly. If it is a rec room, arrange seating around the television. If it includes a bedroom, stage it as a proper guest room with full bedding. Avoid the trap of letting the basement become a catch-all for displaced furniture from upstairs.

Outdoor Spaces

A deck or patio staged with a clean table, chairs, and a few planters extends the home's living space visually. In Calgary's warm months, outdoor staging can be a powerful differentiator — buyers dream about summer evenings on the deck. Even in winter, a tidy patio with a few frost-resistant planters shows the space's potential.

Furniture Arrangement Principles

How furniture is arranged matters as much as what furniture is in the room. Follow these core principles:

- **Create clear pathways:** Buyers should be able to walk through every room without navigating around obstacles. A clear path from the doorway through the room signals spaciousness.
- **Float furniture away from walls:** Pulling sofas and chairs even six inches off the wall creates a more inviting, intentional arrangement and makes rooms feel larger.
- **Define zones:** In open-concept layouts (common in modern Calgary homes), use furniture groupings to define distinct living, dining, and conversation areas.
- **Scale appropriately:** Oversized furniture makes rooms feel small. If a room looks crowded, remove pieces until the proportions feel right. It is always better to have less furniture than too much.
- **Anchor with a rug:** An area rug grounds a furniture grouping and adds warmth. In living rooms, ensure the front legs of all seating pieces rest on the rug.

Colour and Lighting

Staging colours should be neutral with controlled pops of accent colour. Think of a palette of whites, soft greys, and warm taupes as the foundation, with accents of one or two complementary colours (dusty blue, sage green, or warm gold) introduced through pillows, throws, and accessories.

Lighting is the staging element that is most often overlooked and has the greatest impact:

- **Layer your lighting:** Combine overhead fixtures, table lamps, and floor lamps. Three light sources per room is a good target.
- **Consistent colour temperature:** Use warm white bulbs (2700K–3000K) throughout for a cohesive, inviting feel.
- **Maximize natural light:** Remove heavy drapes, clean windows, and trim exterior vegetation that blocks light from entering.
- **Highlight features:** Use directional lighting to draw attention to architectural details, built-ins, or artwork.

Staging ROI — What the Data Shows

The investment in staging consistently delivers measurable returns:

- Staged homes sell for an average of 6% to 10% more than comparable non-staged properties
- Staged homes spend significantly fewer days on market, reducing carrying costs (mortgage payments, utilities, property taxes)
- Online listings with staged photos receive substantially more views and engagement
- In competitive segments of the Calgary market, staging can be the differentiator that generates multiple offers

Consider the math: On a \$550,000 Calgary home, even a conservative 3% increase in sale price from staging represents \$16,500 — well above the cost of professional staging. The reduced time on market adds further savings in carrying costs.

Calgary Staging Considerations

- **Competing with show homes:** In newer communities, your resale property is competing directly against builder show homes that are professionally staged and decorated. Matching that level of presentation — or getting close — is essential.
- **Seasonal staging:** Adjust your staging to the season. In winter, add warm textiles, soft lighting, and cozy touches. In summer, let the natural light and outdoor spaces do the work.
- **Know your buyer:** A family home in Tuscany or Cranston should be staged for families (show the bedrooms as children's rooms, stage the backyard for play). A downtown condo should be staged for young professionals or downsizers (modern, minimal, urban).
- **Vacant properties:** Calgary has a number of vacant listings at any given time, particularly in the condo market. If your property will be empty, professional staging is strongly recommended — it is the difference between a cold, echoey space and a home buyers can fall in love with.

The bottom line: Staging is not an expense — it is an investment. Whether you do it yourself with thoughtful editing and a few new accessories, or bring in a professional team, presenting your home at its best is one of the smartest moves you can make as a seller.