

Increase Your Home's Value



It is no secret. 2010 was a hard year for home values. While you cannot protect yourself against market corrections, you can take small steps to help increase your home's value and make it more marketable. The following tips are meant to inspire and motivate you to treat your home like the investment it was meant to be.



1. Make Repairs: Homes require regular maintenance and repairs are a necessary component of homeownership. Procrastination gets you nowhere when it comes to home value. Stay on top of repairs as they are needed. And be sure to address large projects before placing your home on the market. For example, roofs are expensive to replace or repair. Many buyers will pass up your otherwise wonderful home when faced with roof issues.

2. Curb Appeal: Curb appeal is about first impressions. It is also about neighborhood values. Drive down a street lined with manicured lawns and well-maintained homes and the values

are sure to reflect the care their owners take. On the other hand, streets with overgrown trees, junky yards, and chipped and faded paint are fighting an uphill battle in the values game.

3. Community Involvement: The classic quote from Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu says, "A journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step." This is especially true for improving the health and wealth of a community. Change starts with yourself. By becoming an active member of your community, you can inspire the change you desire. Family, friends, and neighbors will follow your lead of civic duty. How can you get involved? Run for city council, join the PTA, volunteer, and help organize fund raisers and events that inspire community togetherness.

4. Updated Kitchen: Kitchens are a real selling point. Outdated cabinets, counters, and appliances will stick out like a sore thumb to buyers. Be sure, however, that you research your comparables before beginning a remodel. You do not want to price yourself out of the running. This means



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if you love granite and travertine, but other homes in your area are selling with laminate, you will probably not be able to ask for a drastically higher price that covers the price of the granite.

5. Updated Bath: Bathrooms also hold much of a home's value. New low-flush toilets cost as little as \$100. And tubs and showers can be easily replaced or resurfaced. Be sure, above all else, that your bathrooms are clean for showings.

6. Energy Savers: Buyers are looking for homes that are energy efficient. Low-flush toilets, solar panels, water filtrations systems, and insulated windows are all inexpensive fixes for energy zappers.

Consider these simple tips and decide for yourself what may help your home retain its value. ❖

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Lemon Cooler Cookies

- 1/8 teaspoon unsweetened powdered lemonade drink mix
- 1/2 cup white chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup butter
- 3/4 cup powdered sugar (split into 1/4 cup and 1/2 cup portions.)
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 whole lemon

Preheat oven to 350F. Add drink mix powder to the white chocolate and melt in a double boiler. Whisk to integrate and keep heating until it is fully melted.

Spread the melted chocolate out over a parchment-lined sheet pan until 1/8 inch thick and pop in the freezer for 15 minutes to harden. Once frozen, run a knife thru the white chocolate to dice it into pieces about the same size as minced onion.

With hand or stand mixer on medium, beat butter and 1/4 cup powdered sugar, for 2 minutes, scraping bowl as necessary. Add vanilla and salt and mix 30 seconds more to integrate. Slow things down to a stir, add flour, 3 tablespoons lemon zest and 3 tablespoons lemon juice. When it comes together, stir in the chopped white chocolate.

Roll cookies into 3/4 inch balls and space evenly on a parchment-lined sheet pan. Bake in preheated oven for 12-14 minutes, or until the bottom edges just begin to brown. When done, let rest 5-7 minutes on the pan before removing to wire rack to cool completely.

When completely cool, coat the cookies in the remaining 1/2 cup of powdered sugar. ❖

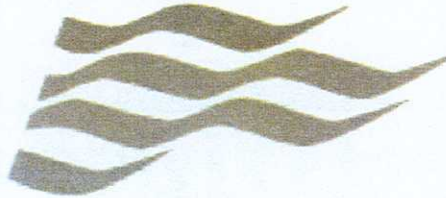
SALES ACTIVITY

RECENT SALES

April 2011

River Hills Country Club

	Sq Ft	Sold Price
3219 Stronebridge Trl	1,738	\$137,500
3506 Autumn Glen Dr	2,552	\$280,000



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Spring Cleaning

Spring is here and if you need some ideas to get you motivated to begin this annual cleaning ritual, try one of these ideas on for size:

1. Set aside twenty minutes per day for spring cleaning. Commit to doing a little bit of cleaning every day for the entire season and you will find that you barely feel like you are working at it at all but your home will be completely clean and organized before summer is here.

2. Pick one room or closet to start with. This way you accomplish at least one task even if you do not end up getting around to a full spring cleaning this year. Choose the room or closet that you most wish was organized and plan to do that if nothing else. Most likely you will find that getting started with this puts you on track to doing more spring cleaning.

3. Use the "love it", "hate it", "like it" system for getting rid of things. With this system, you go through whatever room or closet you are cleaning and separate everything into the above three piles. Anything in the "hate it" pile gets put in the donation bin without a second thought. Anything that you love gets put back in an organized fashion. The rest can then be sorted through more carefully as to what you want to keep and what should be tossed out.

4. Focus on floors and walls. Doing a wash down of the walls and sprucing up the floors with a steam cleaning for carpets or a polishing for wood floors will do wonders for the appearance of your home. It will feel like you did a serious touch-up to the house.

5. Commit to making your bed every day. If you do not already do this, it is a really great spring goal for making your home feel fresh and clean every single day. A newly-made bed is basically a new start and that is exactly what spring is all about.

6. Organize your income information. One of the things that we should do during the spring is to get our financial stuff in order. Since we are still in the midst of tax time, it is a great time to organize tax information so that next year's taxes are easier to do. Work with financial software to make this easier.

7. Be kind to yourself. So what if some of the cleaning does not get done this spring? Spring will surely come around again and you can do it then. ❖

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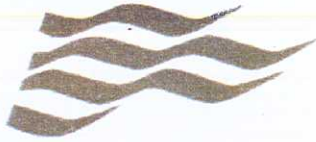
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