



Top Ten Ways to Maximize Your Property's Curb Appeal

by Karen Rauch Carter

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I've done it, and I'm sure Realtors experience it all the time: When a potential buyer says "There's no need to get out" when you drive up to a property that you intended to show them. The buyer has already made up their mind based upon the curb appeal of the home.

As a feng shui consultant (and licensed landscape architect,) I help buyers find the most suitable property for them, and I help sellers get homes and properties in their best shape to sell. This article is a compilation of items that I find to be the top subliminal "deal-breakers" from a curb appeal standpoint. Some are common sense and some require a little feng shui boost - like using a mirror or a chime - to get the job done. If your listing passes this checklist - I'm confident that you'll at least get the potential buyers in the house!

There are two main goals to maximizing a home's curb appeal:

- 1. Remove or reduce the quantity of "red flags" in view from the curb.**
- 2. Create the most enjoyable trip from the curb to the front door as possible.**

Here are some ideas to consider:

1. A Visible Address is a Must

Make sure the address is clearly visible from the street. Preferably, the numbers should be in a horizontal line versus vertically, or on a diagonal line and be lit at night - at least while the home is listed.

2. Maximize the Front Door Appeal

The front door equals the mouth of that home's body. Energy must be able to find it easily and then enter. The trip from the street to the threshold should be easy to navigate; ie: no "trips" in sidewalk, no thorns grabbing you along the way, no cob webs to go through, no dead plants in pots along the way.

The actual front door should be clean and fresh. If there is a screen door, it must be in tip-top shape and dust-free. If the door is in shadow because of solar orientation, keep the porch light on. Add color and fresh items such as foliage to attract energy towards the door.

If the door is not visible from the street, hang a metal chime somewhere near the door on the non-hinged side of the door. The actual door should be able to open fully, and not stick or squeak. A welcome mat is always welcomed here.

If there is a doorbell - it must work. If there is no doorbell, consider adding a knocker to the door.

3. Make the Plants Work for You

Nothing says "creepy" like ill-maintained plants. Their weak and droopy energy tells the story of how life will be if you buy this home! Plants should be clean, and their droppings picked up.

Plants can be up against the walls and foundation, but not "touching them." Trees touching the eaves and roof, and vines clinging to the walls takes away health energy from those living within the home. There should be no white flowers touching the building - long story - it's just a traditional feng shui thing. Happy, healthy, and colorful and well maintained plants say "someone cares," and "this home is capable of taking care of you."

If there are sick, weak, or poorly trimmed plants (I'm thinking of trees that have been "topped" and look like a big trunk with a few sprigs growing out of the top) they are distractions to buyers as well as weak energy and should be removed. In this case, less is definitely more.

If there is a tree, shrub, boulder or any other landscape item directly in line with the front door (say, within at least 50 feet or

so,) it's best to have it removed. This subconsciously creates blocks with the home, as if it is hiding from the very people who want to buy it! It also makes the home struggle to hold health energy for those who live there. A gate is the exception here.

4. Have a Clearly Defined Edge Between Lawn and Planting Beds. This Boundary Mirrors Boundaries in Life

Grass growing into the planting beds not only create a maintenance problem, but it also shows up as lack of boundaries in life. Clearly define planting beds with mow strips (any material is fine) and you will help buyers subconsciously understand this home's front yard. They will subconsciously "feel safe."

5. Use Color to Your Advantage

Color can be an easy way to add energy to a home's curb appeal. Red attracts - use it when the door is out of view or the home seems "lost," or people have a hard time finding the home. Yellow evokes friendly and clear communication, green is simply the color of life, and blues are more introverted and quiet - perhaps what a home on a busy street needs. Orange is subjective, but can create boundaries and a healthy appetite! I would not usually recommend a lot of white.

6. Balance Offensive Neighboring Buildings and Landscape Issues

If there is a church, cemetery, funeral home, school, commercial building within the visual "neighborhood" of the home, try adding landscape screening to block these views. You may want to hide a mirror in the landscape facing the negative item in question with the intention of deflecting its energy away from your home. (No one has to see your secret cures to make them work!)

If the offensive building (or even a tree, or "T" of the street) is directly in line with your front door, hang a mirror above the door facing the item with the intention of pushing it away if you can't do anything about it (like removing the tree.)

If you have significantly taller buildings next to your home and your home is "in its shadow," apply a mirror on that side of the house and face it towards the taller building with the same "pushing away" intentions.

7. Clear the Clutter

Clutter is one of the more obvious "red flags" and should be removed immediately. Extra cars, pots full of dead plants, the kids bikes, garden tools, old holiday decorations (get the lights down!) all need to go. The trash cans should not be visible from the street. Basically, any "personal affects" other than a fresh plant-filled pot or a working water fountain should go.

8. Check Lighting Levels Both Day and Night

Landscape, security, and aesthetic lighting should be in good working order to put the home "in it's best light" for a potential buyer. If the home sits lower than the street, consider placing an upright on each corner of the home, with the light pointing up at the eave. Keep this light on at all times (at least while the home is for sale.)

9. Attend to General Maintenance Issues

Peeling paint, dead spots in the yard, broken pickets in the fence, etc. will not give you that warm and fuzzy feeling as a buyer! Dripping hose bibs and broken irrigation heads won't either. The front facade and front yard MUST appear in good working order.

Also, take the five senses into consideration: If you can smell a compost pile - it has to go. If you can hear the train next door - cure it or any other offensive noise by hanging a chime between the house and the noise.

10. If You Have the Chance To Design the Front Yard From Scratch, Consider Shape and Element-balancing Characteristics of Walkways, Planting, and Other Front Yard Amenities

Now is the time to put all your feng shui knowledge to work.

1. Consider free-form and undulating shapes (like sidewalks) and water element items in the front yard.
2. Make a "transition space" (like a porch) between the walk and the threshold to "slow down" the chi before entering the home.
3. Use color to your draw attention towards your door.

4. The sidewalk should connect the street and the door - not just the driveway and the door.
5. Create strong mow strips shape and lines within the landscape.
6. Appeal to all five senses.
7. New sod goes a long way to make the home look fresh.
8. A moving object like a flag, whirligig, chime, water fountain in the front yard can attract new buyers!

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