

## **Don't Underestimate What Is On the Outside.**

When most of us think of purchasing a home, the interior elements of a house tend to command primary attention. Things like the size of rooms, style of cabinets and flooring finishes always tend to be among the primary focus of home shoppers. Certainly understandable, as it is under the roof that we place most of our stuff and spend most of the time.

However, what's happening outside the walls of the home is not to be underestimated. This is even more the case here in the Sunshine State where we enjoy the luxury of an attractive year around climate.

The first thing to consider in shifting attention from the inside to the outside is the curb appeal of a home's front design (which in architectural terms is referred to as the "elevation" of a home). Over time, trends and preferences in exterior design change. Leaving their mark in years past on the landscape of housing are trends that have included Contemporary, Mediterranean, Spanish and enduring Traditional motifs.

The bottom-line question becomes, is the design appealing and relevant to current tastes? There are many traditional designs that tend to defy aging which in recent years have become increasingly popular. Past design styles viewed as outdated are not necessarily a detriment. A quality example of an older style can still be viewed as "trendy" and considered desirable. For example, an older Art Deco style home is still viewed as highly desirable in many Florida locations.

Obviously, if an exterior is considered obsolete the value of a home suffers. In many cases some superficial renovations including the addition of stone or removal of a dated design feature or the addition of a new element can rejuvenate an exterior and heighten the appeal for a home. Don't overlook the potential of such changes when considering a home.

Next is an appraisal of a home's landscaping. Is it appealing and in good condition? Unquestionably, the perceived value of a home is influenced by the condition and quality of landscaping in both the front and rear of a home. Fortunately, repairs and modifications to landscaping can be relatively easy.

Depending on a person's preference, desirable landscaping can include both manicured and natural areas with trees. Considerations can also include provisions for garden areas to accommodate an interest in gardening and a prepared sitting area providing a spot for relaxing outdoors. Such features work to create a visual appeal and cater to what can be lifestyle preferences.

If outdoor cooking is a regular activity, providing a place for everything from a simple BBQ grill or creating a full service summer kitchen can become an important concern. Be aware of the space needed and support such as plumbing and electrical service that may be required.

Of course, for many the "piece de resistance" of the outdoor living environment is the ever-present swimming pool ready for that late night dip or Summertime splash party.

Then there is the overall view and potential for privacy that a home's yard provides. It's great if an attractive view or privacy buffer is already present. Fast-growing hedging material, such as species of viburnum commonly used locally, can provide a lasting and economical fix creating added privacy and screening of less desirable views.

Rounding an appraisal of the outdoor area are several small but helpful items including the number and position of outdoor hose bibs and electric outlets. It may also be important to think about a propane/natural gas feed and cable for an outdoor TV in the event you are not streaming programming.

What a home offers on the outside can influence the perceived value of a property as well as how the Florida lifestyle experience is enjoyed. When looking over a home it pays to take the time to truly look past the interior. Give due weight to the outdoor amenities and how they create appeal and enhance your lifestyle interests.