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Adding Value By Adding Outdoor Light

By Nancy Russell
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Good Real Estate agents understand the importance of curb appeal, that is, only during daylight hours. The Professional Real Estate agent understands that curb appeal does not end with sunset. When I represent Sellers, I am interested in having their home show in the best "light" regardless of the time of day. Properties that look so good in the bright sunlight can lose all their appeal under the veil of darkness. In this current

"bottom bouncing" real estate market I have been focusing my clients on making smart, lower cost investments that will add value at the time of sale. One such investment is adding Outdoor Low Voltage lighting.

Low voltage (LV) lights are used to illuminate walkway entrances, accent steps and curbing, outline driveways, accentuate landscapes, highlight architectural features, and decorate patios, flowerbeds and decks. **An LV lighting system consists of a plug-in transformer, low voltage cable and low voltage light fixtures. The transform-**

er plugs into a GFCI outdoor power receptacle that converts your home's standard 110-volt system to 12 volts. The cable attaches to the transformer and distributes power to the light fixtures connected along the length of the cable. The lighting fixtures will typically include bulbs that are 4W, 7W, 11W or 18W. However, certain styles of LV light fixtures include 10W, 20W and/or 50W bulbs, which may require a different power transformer.

Cost of entry is relatively inexpensive. I was recently in Lowe's and there was an LV kit for \$112. This included

six Tier Lights, 50 feet of LV cable, connectors and a transformer. If you have the appropriate GFCI outdoor receptacle, almost anyone can complete an installation. LV wiring is lightweight and weatherproof. It can be laid on the ground or buried. If laid on the ground, you should plan to hide the cable with something like mulch or rocks. If buried, the National Electric Code requires cable to be buried only six inches below the landscape surface so there is no need for big equipment.

It should be noted that I did see
Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

less expensive LV lighting kits while browsing the Internet, but when purchasing one you want to ensure that it is UL certified. Cost can go up to a few thousand dollars or more if you have a professional service design and install a system. However, for the do-it-yourselfers, I recommend that you drive around at night and get an idea of what you like from homes that currently have LV lighting systems. Then visit a few websites and hardware stores since there is a vast variety of LV lighting styles and shapes.

Running the LV lighting system is relatively inexpensive; most are pennies

a day even if the lights are on all night. There are two methods that trigger the lights turning on and off. The most common is that the transformer has a settable built-in timer. Simply set the proper time of day, turn-on time and turn-off time and enjoy your enhanced night landscape. Other LV lights offer automatic on/off control using a light sensor. The sensor detects when it's dusk or dawn.

In summary, it's the little things that are done as part an overall plan that will facilitate a quick sale at top dollar. Each home has a uniqueness unto itself that requires a specific tailored selling strategy. Whether it's

adding a LV lighting system or one of my other recommendations, I will assist you every step along the way in selling your home.

"Whatever Nancy touches turns to SOLD."

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