

# Joan O'Meara

## The Key to Your Home.



Honest, Insightful, Successful

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## Realty Check

*Ready...Set...Prep! Time to get ready for the fall market? You bet!*



**Joan O'Meara, Associate Real Estate Broker for Coldwell Banker/Country Properties in Rye, clears up common myths and answers questions about the local real estate market.**

*By J. Smath with Joan O'Meara*

Believe it or not, it's time to get ready for the fall market. And chances are when the leaves start to fall the prices in the 2004 autumn market will likely do the opposite.

In fall 2003, there were more than \$141 million in house transactions in the Rye/ Harrison area, and fall 2004 is projected to be just as impressive or better. Our area enjoyed a stellar spring market with a 50 percent jump in houses sold over last spring. So if you're thinking of selling this fall, now is the time to start prepping to gain that competitive edge for this busy market.

"Sellers that take the time to adequately prepare their house for sale are often rewarded with a faster sale and the best price possible," states Joan O'Meara of Coldwell Banker/Country Properties in Rye, adding that factors such as the age and condition of your house will determine how much time you need to allow for sale prep, which could take anywhere from one week to two months.

### The first step in house prep

O'Meara expertly advises clients on how to prepare their houses for sale. "My favorite advice is to give your house and property a thorough look, starting with the exterior. Be objective and imagine that you are the buyer seeing your house for the first time," says O'Meara. She then goes one more step - she'll walk through with her clients, make a To Do list and assist with the prioritizing and coordination of resources.

### Curb appeal

Start at the curb and look at your yard and house. This will be the buyer's first impression.

### A few examples of what you want to see:

- \* A well-manicured lawn with flowers, shrubs & trees
- \* Uncluttered yard & driveway
- \* Clean windows
- \* Nice welcome mat

### A few examples of what you need to fix:

- \* Loose shutters
- \* Chipped paint
- \* Rusty gutters

### Welcome home

Next move to the entrance of your home. When the front door is opened, you want the buyer to think, "I could live here." Warm and welcoming, the entryway should boast un-scuffed stair risers and clean, un-frayed runners. As you move on to each room in the house, keep in mind characteristics that lead to overall impressions. Examples include:

- \* Clean walls; re-touch paint if necessary
- \* Brightness with lights on and curtains opened
- \* Cleared countertops
- \* Elimination of any offensive odors, such as pet smells and cigarette smoke
- \* Clean, uncluttered feeling throughout
- \* De-cluttered bookshelves, closets and garage

Little items such as broken cabinet hinges should not be overlooked, since too many items in need of repair can give buyers the impression that the rest of the house - including structural maintenance - may have been let go as well. De-cluttering is important to make countertops, rooms and storage areas look bigger and more inviting. Once the prepping is completed, if the seller wants, O'Meara will do another walk through to make sure nothing else stands out.

### What is Home Staging and do I need it?

Professional Home Staging companies come to your house and will recommend and execute prep steps such as rearranging furniture or adding finishing decorating touches. According to O'Meara, "This is worthwhile if you feel your house has gotten away from you or you don't have the time to prep it yourself. If you go this route, you don't need to stage the entire house-just a few of the main rooms will do."

### Hiring an inspector - a new selling trend?

Some sellers opt to conduct a professional inspection prior to putting their house on the market. This will reveal any structural problems that need to be fixed, some of which, if not fixed or acknowledged, could be deal breakers. A recent client of O'Meara's conducted a pre-inspection, and when multiple offers led to a bidding situation, all bidders waived the inspection contingency. The result was a selling price at 11 percent over asking and a contract that was signed within 24 hours - no waiting time was needed to accommodate a buyer's inspection. Approximately \$800 delivers peace of mind regarding the condition of your house and the potential to go to contract faster.

### A prepared seller is a smart seller

With a competitive fall selling season approaching in the Rye/Harrison area, keep in mind that proper preparation puts your house at an advantage because it increases your chances to get the best buyer in the shortest amount of time. And typically, the faster the process, the better the price. As a result, the time you invest in prepping should really pay off. Ironically, a frequent comment that O'Meara hears from sellers once the prepping is completed is that their house never looked better and they wished they had taken these steps sooner! So what are you waiting for? Start prepping!

**Joan O'Meara, Associate Real Estate Broker for Coldwell Banker/Country Properties in Rye, has achieved over \$70 million in sales and is the winner of numerous awards including the Coldwell Banker International President's Elite award for being in the top 4 percent and she was ranked in the top 1 percent of Westchester County Coldwell Banker agents for 2003. She is a Westchester native and has lived in Rye for over 12 years.**

*Do you have a real estate question you would like to ask Joan O'Meara for a future column? If so, e-mail her at [jmomeara@coldwellbanker.com](mailto:jmomeara@coldwellbanker.com). Visit her website at [www.joanomeara.com](http://www.joanomeara.com).*