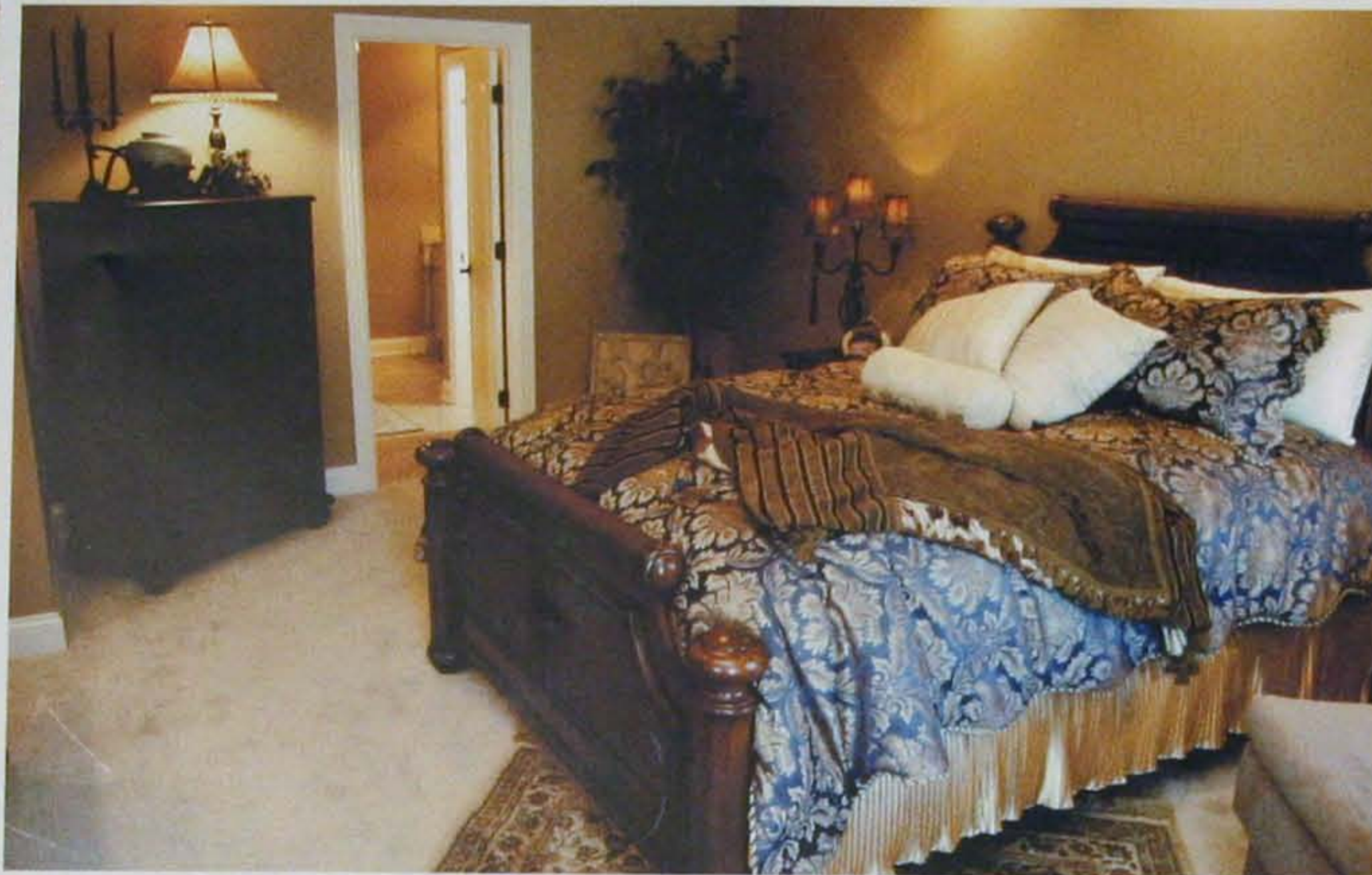


personal space



That first impression is the most important, but once inside, a buyer needs to feel comfortable.



Curb appeal & comfort sell homes

By Matt Weafer

Selling a house is tricky. A buyer needs to be able to picture his family living in the home and that's difficult when it's filled with another family's stuff.

Paula Hedden and Benny Clark of Homes by Benny Clark said one of the most important aspects of a home for sale is curb appeal.

"More than 90 percent of home buyers will drive past a home and not even go inside," Clark said.

So fixing the home to immediately catch attention and create a good first impression is paramount.

Clark recounted one instance with a seller whose home sat on the market for more than a year.

Then the seller sought Clark's assistance. Clark put a finish on the bricks, trimmed hedges and put down fresh mulch. The house sold one week later.

In Clark's Lake Forest model home at 4568 Lake Forest Drive, he designed two brick arches over the front porch, and then painted the door black to stand out from white and sand colored bricks, and to match the black shutters. The dramatic architecture and simple landscaping create attractive curb appeal.

That first impression is the most important, Clark said.

But once inside, a buyer needs to feel comfortable.

Hedden said sellers must de-personalize the homes and remove clutter.

If a house has beautiful hardwood or tile floor in the foyer,

a potential buyer won't notice if there's a pile of shoes lined up against the wall, Hedden said.

On the same note, a key selling point for buyers is closet space. Clean out junk stored on top shelves and move it to the garage

or off site to let the true size of the closet show.

The biggest struggle for some families, Clark said, is the emotion they've attached to decorations and wall paper. A lot of memories are stored in the walls of homes, but when selling, a family must be prepared to strip down the home and paint over them.

When painting, Hedden said, stick with neutral colors. Some buyers may not be able to see past the red kitchen or pink bedrooms.

Take down family photos and replace them with more eclectic

pieces of art. At the model home, wooden sculptures decorate the family room on the first floor. A giant carved fish sits behind the armchair, while a smiling Buddha stands by the stairs.

Lighting draws attention to different aspects of the home. In the Lake Forest model, a lamp sits on the kitchen counter. The light not only acts as an accent, it also draws attention to the depth of the counter and the fine granite counter tops.

Swatches of greenery accompany the accent lamps through the home. Hedden said a touch of greenery can add color and coziness.

During open house events, turn on all lights in the house, Hedden said. And in bedrooms install 40-watt bulbs to create a more relaxing environment.

Comfort is essential in helping potential buyers feel welcome.

Also, set the table, but not with the expensive china, Hedden said. Using your everyday plates and cups works as long as they look nice.

To further establish that cozy atmosphere during an open house, Clark suggested finding a nice scented candle. At the Lake Forest model home, a Hot Maple Tottie candle burned on the island in the kitchen and the home smelled like Grandma just baked a delectable desert.

Hedden also said that if you have the time before an open house, bake a batch of cookies or bread and that aroma will fill the home with the essence of comfort.

In bathrooms, Clark never installs tissue holders or towel racks. He sets a bowl with rolls

of tissue paper near the toilet and Hedden rolls or folds towels and then wraps a bow around them and sets them on the vanity or the edge of the tub.

In the first floor bathroom of the model home, Hedden set a small, artificial potted plant with long limbs on a shelf inside the tub. Sunlight through the window above the shower bathed the tub and the plant.

And during an open house, Clark said print out a flier with a photo and facts about the house. That way potential buyers don't have to depend on their memory when considering a home.

If you have an idea for a local home to feature in this section, contact Beck Glenn at (270) 691-7233 or bglenn@messenger-inquirer.com.

