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Homes Sold in the bay area



\$1,005,910 **1390 Gulf Blvd., #1290**
3 bedrooms, 2 baths

Clearwater: Directly on the white sugary sands of Sand Key in Clearwater Beach, Gulf-front 12th floor condo at the sun-sational Clearwater Sand Key Club condos. The Sand Key Club is an impeccably maintained complex directly on the Gulf with views of the Gulf of Mexico and the Intracoastal Waterway. This 1,842 sq.ft. home was listed for \$999,900.

Premier Sotheby's International Realty / Rich Rippetoe



\$325,000 **6219 Palma del Mar Blvd. S., #305**
1 bedrooms, 1½ baths

St. Petersburg: Beautifully updated in 2021, this condo on the third floor has tropical views and a glimpse of Boca Ciega Bay. Located on an island in the popular Isla del Sol Palma del Mar neighborhood. This 780 sq.ft. home was listed at \$325,000.

RE/MAX Preferred St. Petersburg / Zach Sherf



\$379,000 **11230 Paradise Point Way**
3 bedrooms, 2 baths

New Port Richey: Enjoy maintenance-free living in the beautiful gated 55+ golfing community of Summertree. Great room with cathedral ceilings, split bedroom plan, kitchen with breakfast room, formal dining room, pantry and ceramic tile floor; master bedroom with tray ceiling, walk-in closet and shower bath. Large family room, two-car garage. This 1,936 sq.ft. home was listed for \$379,000.

Coldwell Banker F.I. Grey & Son / Charles Ulatowski



\$657,000 **4241 Balington Drive**
5 bedrooms, 3 baths

Valrico: Buckhorn Preserve, no backyard neighbors, private fenced yard, and high-grade security system valued at

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Photo courtesy of Potthast Design

Aqua and light blues are the cool, neutral colors that accent this elegant kitchen design by Chelsea Potthast, principal interior designer of Tampa Bay's Potthast Design. Of all the rooms in a home going to market, Potthast believes kitchens and bathrooms matter most to buyers.

Is upgrading a home before selling needed in the current market?

New challenges make the question trickier, but area pros think it still pays off



BY NICK STUBBS
Times Total Media
Correspondent

Not too long ago, the wisdom of updating and improving homes before putting them on the market was commonplace. Most pros advised that when done wisely, it paid off.

But now the housing market is red hot, and the low supply of homes means quicker sales and much less competition among sellers. Why upgrade when material prices are up, and supply is down? There are long delays to get some appliances; labor shortages are common and many contractors are backlogged. With these factors all in play, why not skip the upgrades and take advantage of the strong homes market?



Photo courtesy of Coco Design Group

Bathrooms are one room homebuyers pay a lot of attention to, and this elegant makeover in a Plaza Harbour Island condo by Tampa's Coco Design Group is a winner. Custom cabinetry and neutral colors add up to universal appeal.

There is wisdom to going either route, said Karen Vogel, a real estate agent with Coastal Properties Group. As someone who recently upgraded her own home (she's not selling, just making what she hopes will be her forever home to her liking), she recognizes the value it brings, but she also understands when a seller opts to forgo putting

the time and money into a home now.

With rising interest rates and homes beginning to move a little more slowly than they did earlier in the year, Vogel had a seller recently who was worried that spending time and money on improvements would mean missing out on the current sellers' market.

"He worried he would

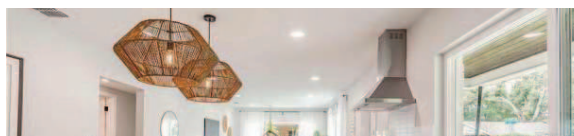
miss it," she said. "He had things he wanted to do to improve his home, but he decided to let it ride with what he had."

Vogel said there are currently plenty of out-of-state buyers who see Florida values as so good, they figure they will have enough funds left over to remodel and still end up with a lot more home for less than they could have gotten back in their home states.

Vogel isn't sure how much longer sellers will be able to rely on such intense competition among buyers.

See Upgrades on 2H

This kitchen shows



Upgrades from 1H

Already she's seeing more buyers are taking more time to think about things, which just three months ago automatically meant losing a home to another buyer. Going forward, she said a nicely upgraded home might give sellers an advantage going into the second half of the 2022 market.

"(Buyers are) a little more cautious now," said Vogel.

The key is upgrading smartly, said Vogel. Updating kitchens and baths remain the projects that add the most value to a home, she said. In her case, embarking on upgrading now meant some legwork on her part in sourcing materials.

When her high-end cabinets were not available and she turned up her nose at the lesser-quality cabinets her contractor could get, she went shopping locally and found wood cabinets with the features she wanted at an affordable price. The refrigerator she wanted was on backorder, so she found one in stock at a local store.

"I found that some of the more high-end appliances are available now, so you will spend more, but you can get them," she said, adding that it is important now to research pricing and contractor availability before embarking on any project. "It does add value, but you have to be smart right now."

Craig Bjurquist, owner/broker of Bremer-Bjurquist Realtors, Inc., recognizes that while material supply, pricing and labor are issues to consider, the value of smart improvements to an outdated kitchen or tired bathrooms can pay dividends when selling.

"I think it still behooves you to spend some money," said Bjurquist, adding that spending wisely is the key.

He noted that house flippers understand this well, carefully selecting materials that are neutral, look good and are priced to ensure a good return on investment.

Bjurquist said he often recommends sellers correct problems so a home doesn't turn off buyers. He had a challenge once to sell a house that had orange kitchen countertops and



Photo courtesy of Potthast Design

This elegant bathroom makeover by Potthast Design would make any homebuyer's jaw drop. Upgrades like this to high-end homes set them apart from the competition.

green cabinets.

"There might be someone who likes that, but it's not likely," he said.

Bjurquist recommends



Photo courtesy of Potthast Design

For Chelsea Potthast, principal interior designer of Tampa Bay's Potthast Design, a clean, bright appearance with the color elements provided by accessories makes for a kitchen with appeal.



BEFORE

Photo courtesy of Keysha Jillian



AFTER

Photo courtesy of Keysha Jillian

This Temple Terrace home's kitchen received the golden touch of Keysha Jillian, the designer-owner of K. Jillian Designs of Tampa and the picture of the finished project says it all.



Photo courtesy of Potthast Design

Sellers looking to upgrade could count on a remodel like this one by Potthast Design to impress buyers, but Chelsea Potthast, principal interior designer for the Tampa Bay design firm, recommends spending wisely to maximize profits. There is a difference between a home you are keeping and one you are selling, she says.

walls in smaller homes should be painted with light colors to make them seem larger. He likes plain white ceilings, and neutral-colored floors.

"You don't want anything offensive," he said.

Chelsea Potthast, principal interior designer of Tampa Bay's Potthast Design, agrees. Sellers looking to impress the widest range of buyers need to stick to "timeless" materials and colors. Kitchen and bathroom upgrades pay off best, she noted, and despite supply chain issues and high prices for materials, she thinks sellers can profit handsomely today.

Potthast said improvements help the selling price of any home, but homes near or above \$1 million particularly benefit, as many buyers want a home

that doesn't need anything. That's particularly so for buyers of second homes or vacation retreats.

She did a job for a client who was looking to sell their Clearwater home for \$1.6 million, but decided to renovate, spending \$350,000, an investment that yielded a \$125,000 return on investment when it sold.

"You will make your money back out of it, especially if you are careful with your spending," Potthast said.

That said, she recognizes that the Tampa Bay market remains hot for sellers, and if the decision is to sell, "you can go either way."

"If you are selling a home, it's going to sell now," Potthast said. "But you will do better, particularly on a higher-end home, if you upgrade."

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