

HOME & GARDEN REAL ESTATE



Sandi Lanigan is an accredited staging professional in East Longmeadow.

Photo by
STAASI HEROPOULOS

STAGING TIPS

❑ **Clean and remove clutter:** Clean closets, counters, cabinets, doors, door handles, and wash windows

❑ **Depersonalize:** Remove family pictures, personal collections, accessories, items that make a home feel homey but also make it appear smaller

❑ **Walls:** Paint or update walls to neutral colors; remove wallpaper

❑ **Flooring:** Make sure flooring or rugs are in good shape; remove carpeting to reveal hardwood floors

❑ **Lighting:** Update lighting fixtures

STAGED TO SELL

By **STAASI HEROPOULOS**

It's no secret that homes for sale are spending months on the market and homeowners are under intense pressure to drop their asking price. But you may not have to lower the price if you lose the "attitude" because these days neutral is in and bland may be best.

"By removing your personality from the house, other people can visualize putting their personality into it," said Sandi Lanigan, an accredited

staging professional in East Longmeadow.

Lanigan will give a free presentation, "Staging Your Home For Sale," on Sept. 20 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center, 1160 Dickinson St., Springfield.

Lanigan is a professional interior designer who now specializes in "home staging," a tactic that makes homes more appealing to a broad base of buyers.

Lanigan works with a variety of realtors, meets with homeowners, and goes through

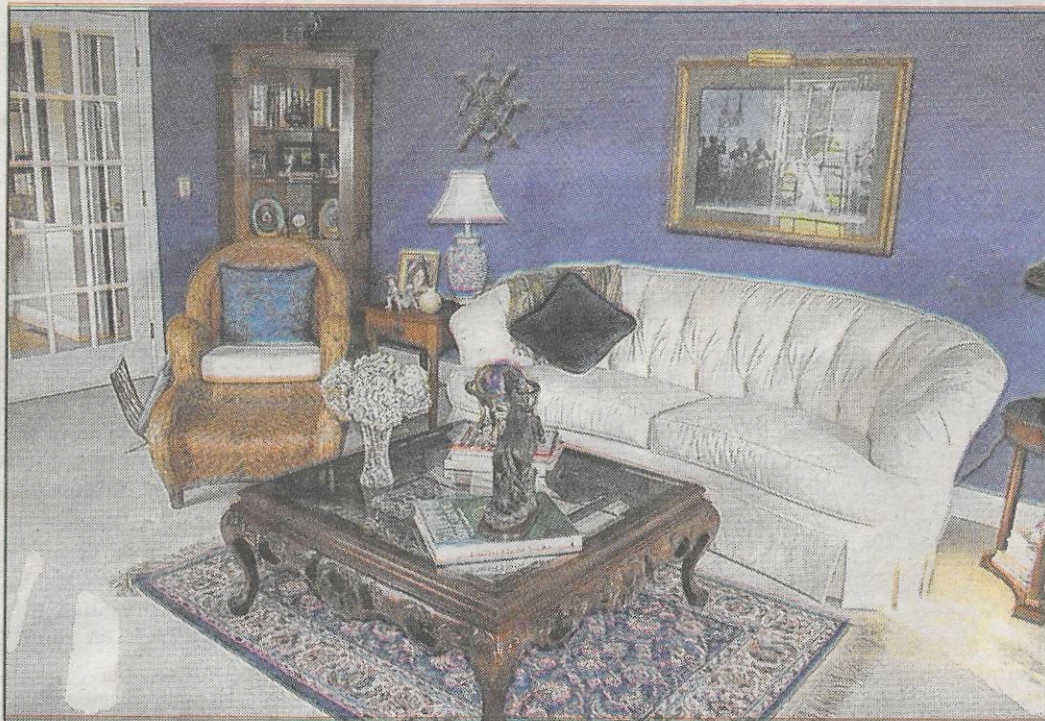
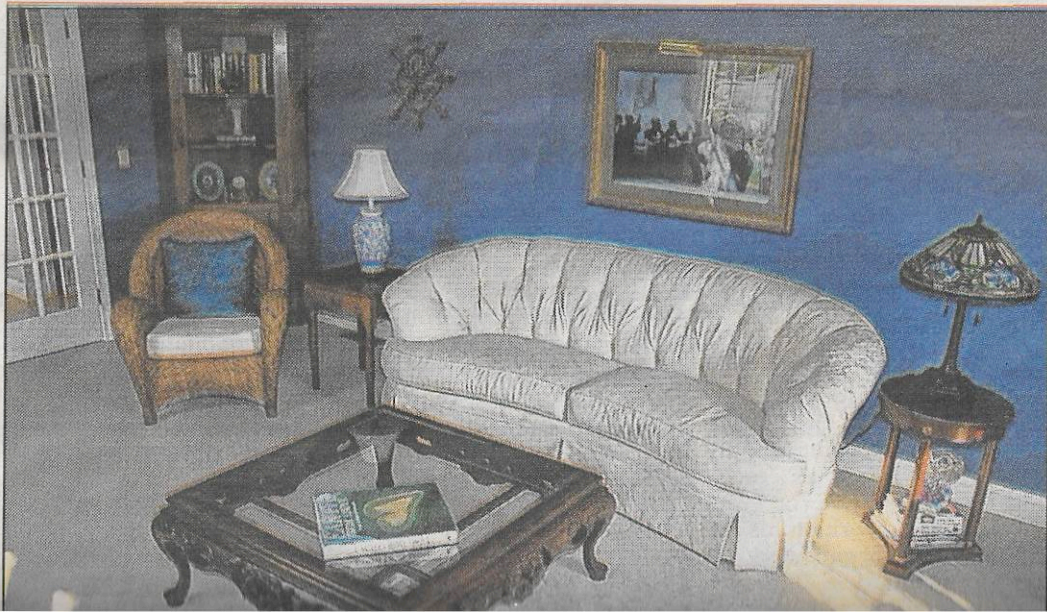
homes developing a plan to neatening, tightening and spruce-up the place for selling.

"We used to get into a car, drive around with a realtor and show up at the front door — and the realtor would say don't worry about the clutter and we can change the colors," said Lanigan.

But that's not happening anymore.

People are pressed for time, they're working one or two jobs, and they don't have time

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BEFORE**AFTER**

Home: Stage house for quicker sale

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to drive around looking at houses.

"Instead they're looking on the Internet and if they don't like the picture of a house for sale, they click away and you've lost a buyer," she said.

Lanigan also says people don't have the time, money or desire to update a home once they buy it.

"People buy at the top of their price range. They can't afford to get in there, paint everything, rip up carpeting and do all that. They're looking for houses that are move-in-ready."

When Lanigan goes into a home, she's looking for warning signs that while the house is welcoming to friends and family, the welcome mat is being pulled out on potential buyers.

"I go through every room and look for things that could turn a buyer off," she said.

Lanigan tells her clients to clean and remove clutter, replace old lighting fixtures, take down wall paper, paint over colorful walls with something more neutral, remove personal collections, family photos, and knickknacks.

"It could cost \$300 to \$500 to stage your home but you could avoid your first price reduction of \$5,000 or \$10,000," she said.

The home could also sell more quickly.

Lanigan usually spends two hours with a client and charges \$100 for her services.

Many homeowners invest a bit more money hiring a professional photographer to take pictures of their newly staged home and post them online.

And while many people may have spent most or all of their lives turning their house into a home, Lanigan often has to play the role of bad cop, recommending people turn their home back into a house.

"The buyer is only looking at the floors and the walls. That's what your home is to someone else," she said.

"A house is just a product on the shelf and there's a lot of other houses on display."

Registration is required for the free talk by calling (413) 739-4715 or e-mail bnadler@springfieldjcc.org

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In the **BEFORE** picture, a pillow is on the couch, a vase with flowers, some magazines and a statue are all on the coffee table, and the end table is full of clutter, including a family photo and knickknacks. In the staged room in the **AFTER** picture, clutter has been removed from the coffee and end tables and an area rug over the carpeting is gone.

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Sandi Lanigan

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