Photo tips that draw buyers to a home

(Compiled by: Sean Dercksen of www.jeanjacques.co.za)

Selling a home is all about "curb appeal." The first impression a property conveys to potential buyers as they pull up in front of it is vital. A house that looks unattractive reduces the chances of a sale as the buyers won't even take action by getting out the car.

These days, a property's "pix appeal," or attractiveness in photos posted in online listings, is equally important. With more and more buyers using the internet and other advertising mediums as their first form of reference, the quality of your pictures can be a deal clincher.

Follow these tips to create flattering photos of your property:

Lighten up every room, then shoot
For exterior shots, shoot in the middle of the day when the sun is shining & the sky is blue. For interior shots, turn on all the lights and use a flash. The flash adds in all of the correct colours and fills in the shadows, making the room look brighter. The more detail there is, the more your buyers will see.

More is better – information is power
Homebuyers want to see more than just the front of the house. Buyers also want to get a look at the living room, kitchen, dining room, family room, master bedroom/bathroom and the backyard. Include your residence's best features, such as a home theatre or an exercise room.
Most Multiple Listing Services allow many photos online. For condos & apartments include shots of amenities such as a pool, tennis court or gym as this showcases the entire development and all its amenities. If your home has a spectacular view, say of a beach, dam, mountains, park or golf course by all means post photos of it as well.

Get a clearer shot every time
Remove clutter from an area before photographing it. Clear counter space and remove fridge magnets, children's toys, dirty dishes and other distractions. For outside shots, put away garbage cans, lawn mowers, hose-pipes, rakes etc. and remove the car from the driveway, as this creates a visual of more space. Try not to include telephone poles, wires and other homes in the scene.

Give it your best shot
Quality counts when taking photos and cell-phone cameras don't cut it. A camera with a wide-angle lens is ideal, but "point & shoot" digital cameras also do the job. For a clear photo, place digital cameras on a tripod or something solid so the camera is steady when the shutter goes off. Set the camera on its highest resolution. If you decide to just use the photos online, you can always decrease the resolution.
Never use fewer than 72 dots per inch for online photos. If you don't have a tripod, bend your arms, using your chest as a stabiliser, to reduce movement. Stand with your legs apart, creating more stability and consider holding your breath as you take the shot. If the photo is an important one, you might want to take a couple of shots to ensure a successful result. You don't want to arrive back at the office to discover an out-of-focus shot.

Editing is easy if you start with quality
Improve a shot using basic photo-editing software. Crop out ceilings or unnecessary background and adjust the brightness or contrast. Taking the photo is the first step, editing is where you take an ordinary photo and make it extra-ordinary. A number of websites exist online, where you can find free value-adding information.