

Home invitations beckon

The Sunday afternoon open house has evolved into a powerful marketing tool for residential real estate. In the past, the tradition of having a home open on Sunday from 2-4 p.m. was a means for real estate agents to placate the seller, recruit potential homebuyers, return phone calls, or watch television.

Things have changed. Armed with the capability to preview the properties on the internet, buyers are now able to eliminate properties, and are therefore more qualified prospects. They have viewed the interior photos as well as those of the yard. Most have located it on a map and even performed their own comparative market analysis.

Consequently, more properties are being sold at open houses, even if the home has been listed for several weeks or months.

Due to the fact that the attendees of open houses are more qualified, it is of utmost importance that the house shows as well as it appears in the photos on the internet.

At this stage in its development, computers are not able to emit odors. Consequently, every house seen on the internet smells exactly like the home of the net surfing buyer. If the house has a certain air about it, say kitty litter, the buyer is less likely to buy. The same goes for cigarette smoke. And, as fashionable as cigars are, the house should not reek of yesterday's poker game.

While there are great advantages to open houses, even upper end homes (\$500,000 to \$1 million), caution must be used when opening a home to the public. On rare occasions, there have been belongings taken.

Prescription drugs have become the piece de resistance of thieves. Medications required for pain or sleep are their favorites. But anything in a prescription bottle should be secured.

While drugs top the list, jewelry

COMMENTARY



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and firearms run a close second and third. If the looter has a good day, beware of a bejeweled, sleepy, pain-free criminal with a gun. Any item, of value, be it monetary or sentimental, should be stored in a safe place. By the way, between the mattresses or under the socks in the top drawer does not constitute a safe place.

These Alexander Monday wannabes can be clever and often work in teams, using one to distract the agent while the others execute the heist. Even having two agents monitor the home does not always work.

An open house host of Christmas past had a home open over the holidays several years ago. The homeowner instructed the agent to remain in the living room as a valuable gift was beneath the Christmas tree.

The agent was aware of a possible security situation and stationed her partner on the second floor. Approximately one hour into the open house, a visitor noted to the agent that the kitchen was in disarray. After securing the premises, the agent approached the kitchen and found it had been completely ransacked. Every cabinet drawer and door was open and their contents strewn upon the counters.

Safety should also be a concern. The pot handle for the boiling pot-pourri looks like the handle of a badminton racket to a three year old. Swimming pools are viewed a

great asset for some buyers and an open invitation for a dip for most tykes. Attorneys used the term "attractive nuisance". The subpoena will arrive shortly. Homeowners must protect themselves.

Another issue is privacy. On the first open houses, the neighbors are coming in. Be they friend or foe, they will be in attendance. The Gladys Kravitz types have never met a threshold they did not like.

They'll survey degrees, awards, pictures, maybe even dive into a photo album or two. Don't put drawer, closet, or medicine cabinet past them. They will learn where the homeowner purchases their clothes, view their dirty laundry, and even know what ails them.

Open houses in Nashville hold great entertainment value. The Country Music Hall of Fame, as great as it is, has nothing on open houses in Nashville. And the sports museum is not even close.

The houses have gold records, platinum records, BMI, ASCAP, SESAC awards as well as Emmys, Grammys, maybe even an OSCAR™ or two. Those who have been rewarded these awards should remove them from display during open houses. The thieves attention will be piqued and the buying prospects will remember how many gold records were on the wall rather than what type carpet was on the floor.

Any negative situation resulting from an open house can be easily prevented, and it can sell a property in a slow market.

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This Sunday he is holding open the house of Elvis. No, not Graceland.

Joe Elvis, Government Cheese drummer and radio personality. Stop by and steal some stuff.

Elvis won't care.