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The Dark Side of Good Home Staging

A nicely staged home can do wonders for turning casual lookers into serious buyers. For the seller, it's often a worthy investment. But when you're representing buyers, a staged home could draw attention away from a home's negative features, says [a new report](#) from the National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents (NAEBA).

In a recent NAEBA member survey on home staging, 82 percent of the practitioners who responded said that buyers are likely to get distracted from important issues when viewing a staged home. And 51 percent said that staged homes often cover up real defects, including structural damage.

"Staging has taken the residential real estate industry by storm," the report says. "It has been the major focus of television programs and has been a dominant topic in real estate trade publications. However, up to this point, virtually all the shows and articles have been directed toward the seller's benefits."

Jon Boyd, NAEBA president and a principal of Home Buyers Agent in Ann Arbor, Mich., says the report aims to make buyers more cautious when they're viewing staged homes.

"They need to be aware that staging does have a substantial psychological impact," Boyd says. "The person who buys a house once every seven to 10 years can easily be misled. Buyers also need to realize that staging does not impact home values after the home is sold."

However, staging professionals say they're trained to show off a home's assets, not cover up defects. In general, staging aims to help buyers to imagine themselves living in the home. It typically includes

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removing clutter and personal memorabilia, using neutral colors on walls and floors, and doing a detailed cleaning of the home. Sometimes new furniture or props also will be used to demonstrate how a space might be used.

"Disclosure is the name of the game," says Barb Schwartz, founder of [StagedHomes.com](#). "If anything, home staging allows buyers to actually see the property. We would never put a picture over a hole in the wall or a rug over a patch of defective floor," she says, referring to scenarios mentioned in NAEBA's report.

However, Boyd says buyers still need to be on guard. If they get too emotionally attached to how the home looks when it's staged, they can end up overpaying.

"The biggest concern for home buyers is that the staging effects can make a home seem more appealing to the eye," the report says. "Once you own the home, the staging furniture will no longer be there, the cut flowers go away, and often you need to repaint your new home."

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