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DESIGNERS BOOST HOME SALES BY PUTTING
THE BEST FEATURES IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Blair Hamaty of Setting the Space decorated the model home at The Residences at Black Rock in Hingham with unique statement pieces such as a barn door coffee table.

By Jennifer H. McInerney | Photography by Chris Bernstein



quickly, so they opted to have Plimpton stage their home prior to its debut on the market.

"They'd been in the house for six years and it was very well lived-in. It needed to be de-cluttered and refreshed," Plimpton says. In four days, she transformed the Stepuras' home: removing excess furnishings, rearranging the space with rented furniture, applying new wall colors, adding carefully selected accessories.

"We listed the property on a Saturday, had an open house on Sunday and, by Monday evening, we had three offers," Mary Stepura relates. "The house looked stunning. I loved the way Lisa mixed patterns in the same color families and layered textures to create rooms that were very tastefully done."

"YOU NEVER GET A SECOND CHANCE TO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION, SO IT'S IMPORTANT TO GET IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME."

result in a lower purchase price.

The total cost of staging a home is typically less than an initial price reduction, adds Lisa Plimpton, principal of Hull-based Plimpton Design. Plimpton, who started her career as an interior designer, became a professional home stager about five years ago, though she estimates she's essentially been staging homes for 20 years.

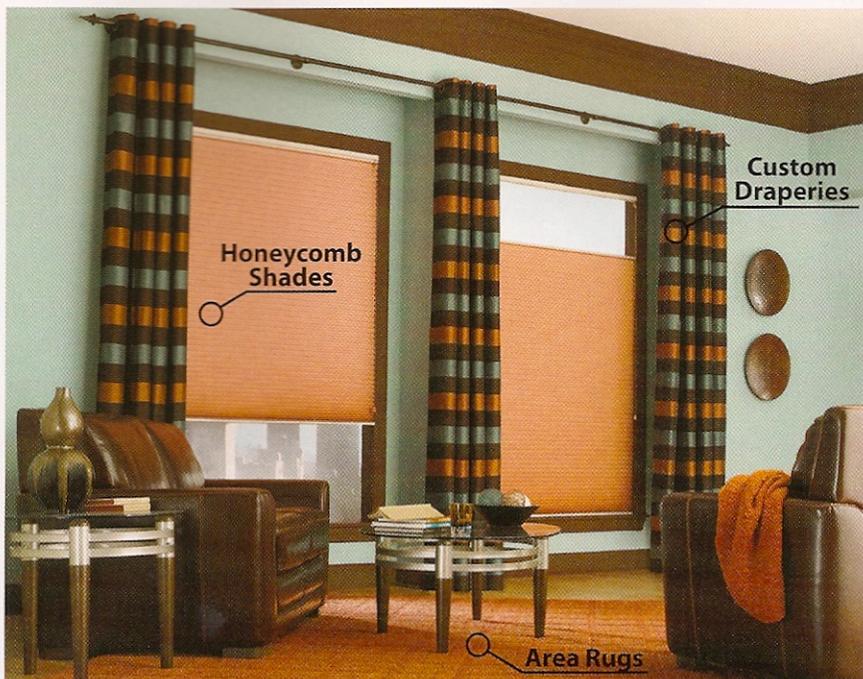
"Staging is definitely worth the investment," she says. "You never get a second chance to make a good first impression, so it's important to get it right the first time."

That's exactly what Mary and Gene Stepura of Norwell wanted to do, and

Lisa Plimpton of Hull-based Plimpton Design has been staging homes on the South Shore for 20 years and enjoys helping clients refresh the look of their home.



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"Even homes that languish on the market for years can be successfully staged and have received multiple offers," Hamaty adds.

"A couple in Braintree had an immaculate home, but it looked like it was stuck in the 1940s," Hamaty recounts. He and his team set to work reimagining the three bathrooms, which had pink tile, blue tile, and green tile, respectively. Throughout the rest of the house, they added neutral paint colors, updated the mirrors, lighting, and fixtures, and replaced the furniture with more contemporary pieces.

"It sold in a week," Hamaty reports.

While these are certainly shining examples, they are by no means exceptions. Every day, Setting the Space and Plimpton Design receive calls from realtors and homeowners seeking their expertise. Still, it's not always a smooth process.

"Some people are reluctant," Plimpton notes. "They're still emotionally involved in their home. They haven't wrapped their heads around the fact that it's not a home

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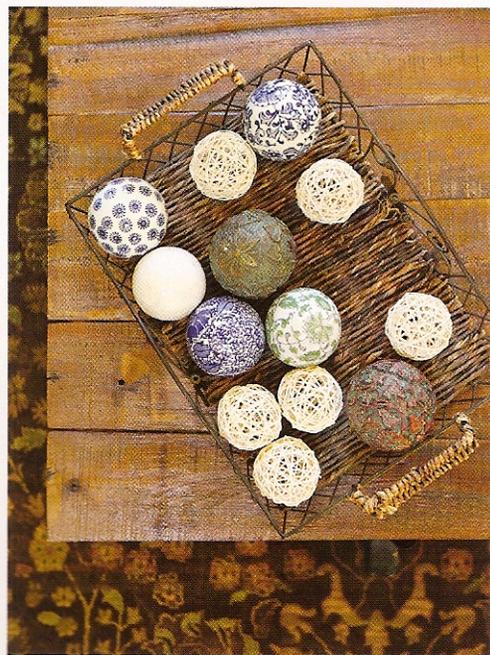
Lisa Plimpton helps homeowners reduce clutter, repaint when necessary, and rearrange spaces using rented furniture so potential buyers can imagine living in the space.

any more; it's a house on the market. Other people are prepared to let go and are ready to sell."

"As a stager, I have to be part-psychologist," Hamaty acknowledges with a smile. "I meet with the homeowners and I ask them, 'Are you putting your house on the market?' And the answer is, obviously, 'Yes.' So I say, 'Then that means you're moving out.' At that point, they're able to detach themselves emotionally from the property and they're willing to listen to what I have to say to help them sell it, which is their goal."

Both Plimpton Design and Setting the Space offer an array of services to make the home-selling process less harrowing: packing and storage, wallpaper-removal, paint color and fabric selection, furniture and accessories rental, and more.

IN NEARLY EVERY INSTANCE, STAGED HOMES SELL FASTER AND AT A HIGHER PRICE THAN NON-STAGED HOMES



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But perhaps their most valued asset is their uncanny ability to breathe new life into spaces that have endured many past lives.

"When you live in a house for a long time, you can't see it any other way. It takes a fresh eye to make the changes that will result in a sale," Plimpton contends.

Home stagers can point out problems that have become part of the homeowners' everyday existence, whether the exterior needs to be repainted, a stone wall needs to be repaired, the driveway needs to be paved, or the floors need to be refinished. All told, they can help deliver a move-in-ready lifestyle for the next homeowner.

"Ultimately, what differentiates one house from the other 15 a buyer has seen is how easy it's going to be for them to move right in," Hamaty observes. "In this economy, buyers don't have extra time or money to spend on fixing up a house."

For Hamaty and Plimpton, staging works so well that it has, on occasion, elicited unintended results: some sellers have taken their homes off the market and decided to stay (much to the dismay of their real estate agent), and some buyers have loved the staging so much, they've purchased the whole package, right down to the throw pillows and artwork on the walls.

"Staging works every time," Hamaty concludes. **SSL**



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