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If you're thinking of making a move, or are just curious as to real estate trends in your area, please feel free to call at any time. It's always good to hear from you!

All the best,

*Barbara & Jerry*



Each office is independently owned and operated.

## WHAT'S THE FORECAST?

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) third quarter housing report projects that Canada's new and existing home markets will moderate through to the end of this year and into the next.

"Canada's housing markets are expected to moderate over the rest of 2012 and into 2013 after showing sustained activity levels, specifically in the multiples segment over the first half of 2012. Balanced market conditions in most local housing markets will result in a slowing in house price growth as well," said Mathieu Laberge, Deputy Chief Economist for CMHC.

On an annual basis, housing starts are expected to decrease from the point forecast of 207,200 units in 2012 to a point forecast of 193,100 units in 2013. The point forecast for sales of existing homes, however, shows a slight increase from 466,600 units in 2012 to 469,600 units in 2013.

The average Multiple Listing Service® price, according to the CMHC, is expected to be between \$351,300 and \$378,400 in 2012, compared to a price forecast of between \$358,000 and \$395,800 for 2013.

The Bank of Canada also issued a moderate forecast, with an

expectation that the Canadian economy will grow by 2.1 percent in 2012 and 2.3 percent in 2013, with a 2.5 percent growth expected in 2014.

Wondering how market conditions may have affected the value of your current home? Even if you're not planning to move at the moment, but are curious about market activity in your area, please remember that you're always welcome to call for a no-obligation real estate update.



CNSF

# LESS IS MORE

From young professionals snapping up condos downtown, to empty nesters looking to downsize, small-space living is catching on. And no wonder: the benefits are numerous, from lower mortgage payments to less time spent cleaning. Furnishing a smaller home can be a challenge, however. With that in mind, here are five space-saving furniture options.

## Multifunctional Ottomans

No longer just a place to prop your feet, ottomans have been enjoying a comeback as fashionable and flexible pieces of furniture. With lids that lift up to reveal hollow interiors, storage ottomans are great for stowing everything out of sight, from your media collection to your spare linens. Cube-style ottomans can be scattered throughout a room, doing double duty as extra seating or side tables wherever they're needed; bench-style ottomans are great in place of a coffee table or as seating at the foot of your bed.

## Wall-Mounted Desks

Whether you need your guest room to double as a home office or need a spot in the kitchen where the kids can do their homework while you supervise, wall-mounted desks are a revelation. Taking up no floor space and only a few feet of wall space, the work surface simply flips down when needed and folds away to free up living space. Don't underestimate the functionality of these desks: in addition to having compartments to store and organize accessories, some even have CPU holders and cord organizers.

## Convertible Coffee Tables

Do you have an occasional need for a larger work surface? Expandable coffee tables – which offer added surface area that either flips up, is inserted, or slides out – are just the ticket. Don't have room for a coffee table and dining table? Problem solved, with a convertible coffee table that's adjustable to dining height, with or without

an expandable surface area. Don't have room for a desk? Opt for a lift-top coffee table: the tabletop extends up and forward, providing a convenient surface for writing or using your laptop.

## Sectionals

Sectionals are great for modestly sized spaces, as pieces can be arranged in whatever configuration suits your needs, then rearranged when needs change. Have company coming over? Disperse pieces throughout the room to provide seating for your guests. Watching a movie? Push the pieces together and lay down on your couch. Also beneficial, many sectionals include a corner piece, allowing you to make the most efficient use of space. For even greater space savings, look for a sectional that offers under-seat storage.

## Small-Space Beds

Gone are the days of pullout couches that leave you feeling a phantom metal bar in your back for days. Today's options are much more sophisticated, comfortable, and varied in style. Choose from: loft beds, which utilize vertical space; trundle beds; sofa beds whose back and sides fold down to create sleeping surfaces; loveseats, chairs, ottomans, and even desks that convert to beds; and Murphy beds disguised as cabinetry (vertical or horizontal) or built into bookcases, that flip down or retract with the push of a button.





## HOLIDAY SALE

Savvy buyers know the holidays can be a great time to buy a home. Savvy sellers will heed the following advice on showing and selling their homes during the holiday season.

Consider foregoing your holiday decorating; if you do decorate, keep it simple. Too many decorations can make your home look cluttered, which is a buyer turn-off. Plus, you don't want decorations detracting from or hiding features that might help sell your home, like a fireplace or a great view.

Make sure your home is welcoming and comfortable for buyers – that is, brightly lit and at a comfortable temperature. Buyers don't like darkness, and at this time of year there's more of it, so lighten up. Also, if buyers are too cold, they won't want to spend much time in your home.

For many, the holidays are synonymous with certain smells. Help buyers emotionally connect with your home: trigger their nostalgia by simmering cinnamon sticks or apple cider on the stove or baking dough before showings; dabbing pine-needle essential oil on light bulbs; or lighting pumpkin-pie scented candles.

Work with a real estate sales representative, who can help you target the kind of motivated buyers who are out looking for a home during the holiday season, such as those staring down a deadline date due to a job transfer, for example.

Inform your sales representative of times that are off-limits for showings. While it's important that your home be available to buyers at their convenience, it's understandable that during the holidays there will be times your home can't be shown. Just keep those times to a minimum and communicate them to your sales representative upfront to avoid unnecessary rescheduling.



## PICTURE THIS

With the Internet now playing a major role in real estate, photos have become invaluable for sellers and buyers alike. But take note, buyers: you can't always judge a property by its listing photos (or lack thereof).

When a listing has no photos, the assumption is they've purposefully been left out because there's something wrong with the property. But that isn't necessarily the case: the listing may lack photos simply because the seller's real estate representative (or the seller themselves if the property is FSBO) didn't provide any. While that says something about the seller or their representation, it doesn't say anything about the home itself.

Where photos are included but unflattering – too dark, washed out, odd perspectives, out of focus – keep in mind that whoever took them may just lack an eye for photography or access to good equipment. Again, this is not necessarily a reflection of the home.

It's especially important to remember that pictures don't tell the whole story at this time of year, especially as we head into the winter months. Even if there's no snow where you currently live, properties in the area you're moving to may be blanketed in it, which doesn't make for very flattering or telling listing photos.

If you need some added incentive to help you avoid falling into the trap of judging homes by their listing photos, consider this. Listings with fewer photos tend to generate less interest, meaning there's less competition for them, and they sell for less money. So by giving these homes a chance (provided they meet your needs and are within your budget), you may just nab yourself a good deal on a good home.

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Outdoor lighting is one of the most effective and affordable ways to boost your home security. What better time to talk about that than now, as we head into the darkest months of the year?

Burglars prefer to operate under cover of darkness, so main entry points to your home – such as your front door, garage doors and backyard – should be brightly lit. Your garage and backyard are particularly attractive to criminals, as once inside, they're hidden from view. If you have a shed, it should be well lit too.

As for what type of lighting to use, consider that dusk-to-dawn security lights, which are activated by the amount of natural light available and on constantly throughout the night, are harder on your utility bill than, and don't offer the "surprise" element of, motion-activated lights.

Keep in mind too, that while solar-powered lights might be great for creating ambiance in your backyard, they can't be relied on to produce light sufficient enough for security purposes.

Pay attention to detection ranges, often listed on security lights as angles, such as 110, 150, 180 or 240 degrees. Think of these ranges as "safety zones" around your house, and consider them in relation to where lights will be mounted. For example, a 110- or 150-degree angle is fine if the light is to be wall-mounted, but if it's going on a lamp post, 240 degrees may be better.

Speaking of mounting your security lights, try to place them where they can't be easily reached; if disabling a light means taking extra time and drawing extra attention to the scene, burglars are less likely to attempt it.



## Terminology Tip

**Betterment** — An improvement to a property (not including regular maintenance and repairs) that contributes to an increase in the value of the property. Beneficial public work, such as the construction of a new sewer system, water mains or sidewalks in the area, would also be considered betterment.

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*Barbara & Jerry*

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