



Cherri Chalifour
Cell: 604.866.0303

Sandra Ennis
Cell: 604.785.9012

RE/MAX Treeland Realty
Each Office Is Independently Owned & Operated
101—6337 198 Street
Langley, BC V2Y 2E3

Thinking of Buying a Fixer-Upper? How to Do It Right

With proper due diligence and the right real estate agent, buying a fixer-upper can be a satisfying and lucrative experience. Buying a bad one, though, can lead to disaster. Here are some tips to help you avoid problems:

Location: A bad house in a desirable neighbourhood is almost guaranteed to pay big dividends for the savvy buyer. Here's where a good real estate agent - as a specialist in local neighbourhoods - can be worth his or her weight in gold.

Mass Appeal: You'll want to look for a home that appeals to the largest number of buyers. That means three or more bedrooms and more than one bathroom.

Sensible Layout: Look past the current floor plan and figure out how the home will work. Today's buyers look for openness and rooms that flow seamlessly.

Bang for Buck: Avoid costly makeovers like shoring up sagging foundations. Instead, think cosmetic fixes. Plaster and paint, new bathroom fixtures, and even a new roof and energy-saving windows are relatively inexpensive and can turn your ugly duckling into a beautiful swan.

Potential Problems: An investment in a good home inspector can save you thousands of dollars in the long run. You can try requesting a home inspection and a roof certification as part of the deal. Ask your real estate agent about any nearby landfills, reports of contamination and other conditions that could affect resale value. You may even want a structural engineer to examine the property as a condition of sale.

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How to Give Your Home a Light and Airy Feel

The properties of natural light are well-known. It expands your space, brightens dark corners and gives your home an airy feel. If you're selling your home - or even if you're not - try adopting some designer tricks to increase your home's natural wattage.

Paint is one of the least expensive and most effective ways of lightening up your home. Light colours reflect light and bounce it back, making a space look larger. And yes, painting your woodwork cream or white is allowed and does increase your light quotient.

Mirrors also bounce back natural light, but they should be used sparingly. Bring in the outdoors by hanging a mirror opposite a window.

Light-coloured gauzy curtains or plantation shutters also contribute to that airy look. Louvered blinds can be tipped to take advantage of the sunlight as it makes its way around the room. And don't forget that slipcovering your furniture in lighter-coloured fabrics is another easy way to lighten up.

If you're prepared to make structural changes, adding a skylight to a dark room is effective, but trimming back outdoor trees and shrubs that are filtering the light may do the trick for less money.

For open houses, turn on indoor and outdoor lights. Even during the day, inside lighting can make your dwelling feel homey, prevent harsh shadows from sunlight and brighten dark corners. Dust and vacuum well, as illuminated dust bunnies won't do anything for the appeal of your home.

13 Cheeses You Need to Know

Source: Eat Yourself Healthy in Reader's Digest Version

Do you have a wine and cheese party coming up? Why not wow guests with your high CQ (cheese quotient)? This primer hits all the right notes and throws in recipes as well. To really impress, check out Cheese No. 13, a medium-hard, nonrounded cheese from Cyprus that includes chopped mint.

More: <http://tinyurl.com/3qsrwk9>

