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## DWELLING ON DWELLINGS



### Color your house beautiful with the perfect paint job

By **Brad Boisvert**

According to some real estate experts, only one in 20 homebuyers will look at your house and see its potential down the road. The rest will see it for what it is right now. That's why it's so important that your house look its best when it goes on the market.

And when it comes to improving home cosmetics, painting may be the best way to make your house look better kept and more appealing - inside and out.

When choosing an exterior color, there are several things to consider, including:

- The things you can't paint - Choose a color range that complements the permanent colors on your home, such as shingled roofs, unpainted brickwork, and stone facades and foundations.
- Your neighbors' homes - Even if you're leaving town in a huff, you should be kind to your neighbors and repaint your home in a manner that "fits" with the neighborhood decor. And if you still feel like sticking it to the neighbors and going with a garish color, remember this: most homebuyers will want .to fit in rather than stand out from their new neighbors.
- Historical accuracy and integrity - If your house is an old one, you may be able to increase its appeal by maintaining its historical integrity and repainting in accordance to its pedigree. If it's registered, the local historic society may have a say (or at least demand one) in the colors you choose. For example, the Exeter Historic District Commission recommends color selection based on architectural style and the era in which the home was built. (See [www.exeternh.org/hdc/hdccolor.html](http://www.exeternh.org/hdc/hdccolor.html).)
- Your landscape - By painting your house to complement your landscape, tying in colors from your garden, trees, ponds, rock walls, etc., you'll create a seamless and pleasing setting and a charming curb appeal.

- The size and placement of your house - If you want to make your house look bigger to growing families, you should go with a light color. Light colors also can make a house appear closer to the front of the lot, which may appeal to gregarious types who don't like to do a lot of mowing.

If you want to make a tall house look shorter to appeal to retired couples, you should go with a darker color. Dark colors create the illusion that a home is smaller and set farther back.

- The general homebuyer preference - Finally, divorce yourself from personal preferences and try to ascertain what the buying public wants. Popular interior paint colors are like fashion trends and can quickly change. But for exteriors, the old standbys have been popular for centuries.

According to a national survey by Sears Weatherbeater Paints, more than a third of Americans would choose white as the primary color for their homes' exteriors. In order of preference according to Sears, the choices are white, gray, blue, tan and brown, cream, beige, green, yellow, and red.

As a seller, consider conservative and light colors. Light-colored paint can help maintain a bright clean appearance. Yet, New England may vary from the rest of the nation in its preferences. The New England landscape is graced with many darkly painted houses. Many of them are red - perhaps because in the days of yore, red paint was cheaper and appealed to New Englanders' frugality. Whereas light-colored paint reflects all wavelengths of sunlight and can help keep a house's interior cool in the summer, darker paint absorbs light waves and can help keep a home warmer in winter. So in New England, both light and dark paint choices may have appeal.

For insight and inspiration, visit the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities at [www.spnea.org](http://www.spnea.org). Or look up local homebuilders and see what color they're choosing to appeal to new homebuyers.

And while we're on the subject of exterior painting, don't neglect the smaller things. For example, make sure your mailbox is freshly painted. A freshly painted fence and a new coat of paint on the front door can do wonders for curb appeal.

For the most part, however, exterior painting is no small task. If you plan to do it yourself, you'll need to invest a multitude of hours scraping, sanding, priming, painting ... and probably cursing. If you elect to contract the job to a professional, you'll invest thousands of dollars. So the question still begs: is painting the outside of your house worth it?

It very well could be.

Chances are you'll get a quicker offer. And that could color you

a winner.