



THE STEEL CITY AGENT
AMANDA TIHEY | REALTOR®



A SELLER'S PREPARATION GUIDE


Home Prep & Staging Done Right.

Homes that are properly prepared and staged sell faster and for more money — period. This guide walks you through every step, room by room, so your home makes the best possible first impression.



Amanda Tihey

REALTOR® | Keller Williams Exclusive

 412-852-7776 | thesteelcityagent@gmail.com

SERVING
Southwestern Pennsylvania

First Impressions & Curb Appeal

Buyers form an opinion in the first 7 seconds. The outside of your home is the first — and sometimes only — chance to earn that click, that showing, that offer.

"Buyers decide how they feel about a home before they ever open the front door."

You only get one shot at curb appeal — and in today's market, that shot starts online. Your listing photos are the front door for 95% of buyers. Every exterior detail matters, from the lawn to the light fixtures. Here's where to focus first.

Exterior Must-Dos

- ✓ Power wash siding, driveway, sidewalks, and walkways
- ✓ Mow, edge, and fertilize the lawn — brown patches must go
- ✓ Trim all shrubs, hedges, and tree branches away from the house
- ✓ Add fresh mulch to all beds — 2–3 inches, clean edges
- ✓ Plant seasonal color near the entry (pots or beds)
- ✓ Paint or replace the front door if faded or dated
- ✓ Replace or polish all exterior hardware (handles, house numbers, lights)
- ✓ Clean all windows inside and out — they photograph beautifully
- ✓ Repair cracked driveway or walkway sections
- ✓ Store all garbage cans, hoses, tools, and toys out of sight

Common Curb Appeal Mistakes

- ✗ **Ignoring the gutters**
Clogged or sagging gutters signal neglect. Clean and re-hang them.
- ✗ **Dead or overgrown landscaping**
Remove dead plants entirely — don't try to revive them before photos.
- ✗ **Faded or peeling paint**
Spot-paint or repaint the trim and shutters — it's a high-ROI update.
- ✗ **Visible clutter in the garage**
Buyers WILL peek. Organize or rent a storage unit for the duration.
- ✗ **Leaving personal items out**
Kids' bikes, dog bowls, and seasonal décor reduce perceived value.
- ✗ **Missing porch lighting**
Twilight listing photos are popular — working exterior lights are essential.

7%

Average price increase from strong curb appeal vs. poor curb appeal

95%

Of buyers use online photos to decide which homes to tour

\$1,000–

\$3,000

Typical cost of professional landscaping that returns 3–5x at closing

Room-by-Room Staging Guide

Each room tells part of the story buyers are buying into. Here's how to make sure every space works in your favor.

Living Room

Highest Impact

- ✓ Remove at least 50% of your furniture — spacious sells
- ✓ Create a clear traffic flow path through the room
- ✓ Neutralize bold paint colors (greige, warm white, soft gray)
- ✓ Replace dated light fixtures — this is a high-ROI swap
- ✓ Add a simple area rug to define the seating area
- ✓ Fresh throw pillows and a blanket = instant refresh

Kitchen

Highest Impact

- ✓ Clear ALL countertops — one small décor item max
- ✓ Deep clean inside cabinets, drawers, and appliances
- ✓ Paint or re-face dated cabinet doors if budget allows
- ✓ Update hardware — knobs and pulls for under \$200
- ✓ Re-caulk the sink and backsplash if discolored
- ✓ Add a simple bowl of fruit or herbs for a lifestyle touch

Primary Bedroom

High Impact

- ✓ Invest in a crisp, hotel-style white bedding set
- ✓ Remove personal photos, medications, and clutter
- ✓ Nightstands should be matching or complementary
- ✓ Clear dressers completely — buyers WILL open drawers
- ✓ Ensure the closet looks 50% empty and organized
- ✓ Soft, warm lighting makes this room feel like a retreat

Bathrooms

High Impact

- ✓ Re-caulk around the tub, shower, and vanity if discolored
- ✓ Replace toilet seat if stained or dated
- ✓ Clean grout lines — a bleach pen is your best friend
- ✓ Replace towel bars and toilet paper holder if dated
- ✓ Display fresh white towels, rolled or folded neatly
- ✓ Remove all personal items from counters and shower

Dining Room

Medium Impact

- ✓ Set the table simply — neutral placemats, no dishes
- ✓ Ensure the light fixture is centered over the table
- ✓ Remove extra chairs that crowd the room
- ✓ Add a simple centerpiece — flowers, candles, or a bowl
- ✓ Clean and polish wood furniture — condition if dried out
- ✓ Remove buffets or hutches that make the room feel small

Basement / Bonus Rooms

Opportunity Room

- ✓ Define a purpose — home office, gym, media room, playroom
- ✓ Clean concrete floors or add inexpensive area rugs
- ✓ Maximize lighting — add floor lamps if windows are limited
- ✓ Remove stored items to show true square footage
- ✓ Repair any signs of moisture, cracking, or staining
- ✓ Label utility areas clearly — buyers appreciate transparency



Repairs, Updates & ROI

Not every repair is worth doing — and not every update pays off. Here's how to spend your pre-listing budget wisely so you net the most at closing.

What to Fix vs. What to Skip

✓ High-ROI Updates (Do These)

Fresh Interior Paint ~100%+ ROI

Neutral tones throughout — warm whites and soft grays. One of the single highest-return prep items.

New Carpet or Cleaned Flooring ~100% ROI

Professionally clean existing carpet. Replace only if stained, worn, or pet-damaged.

Updated Lighting Fixtures ~90–150% ROI

Swap dated brass or builder-grade for modern matte black or brushed nickel. Under \$100/fixture.

Cabinet Hardware Replacement ~100–200% ROI

One of the cheapest, biggest-impact updates in kitchens and bathrooms.

Professional Deep Clean ~150%+ ROI

A spotlessly clean home signals cared-for. Worth every dollar. Don't skip this.

Landscaping & Mulch ~100–300% ROI

Fresh mulch, edging, and seasonal plants dramatically improve photos and walk-up impression.

✗ Low-ROI Updates (Skip These)

Full Kitchen Remodel

Sellers recover 60–70% on average. Buyers want to choose their own finishes.

Bathroom Addition

Major structural project with long timelines — rarely recovers full cost in resale.

New Roof (unless required)

If functional and not at end-of-life, offer a credit instead of replacing before listing.

Luxury Landscaping

Elaborate hardscaping or pools add minimal value in most Pittsburgh price points.

New HVAC (unless failed)

If functional, disclose age and offer a home warranty instead.

Always Fix Before Listing

- Leaking faucets, pipes, or roof
- Broken windows, screens, or locks
- GFCI outlets in kitchens and bathrooms
- Missing or inoperative smoke detectors
- Pest damage or active infestations
- Structural cracks or water intrusion evidence

Pre-Listing Timeline

6–8 Weeks Out

- Hire Amanda for a pre-listing walkthrough
- Get contractor quotes on priority repairs
- Schedule a pre-listing inspection (optional but smart)
- Declutter and start donating or storing excess

4–5 Weeks Out

- Complete all major repairs
- Paint interior in neutral tones
- Replace flooring if needed
- Address exterior issues — gutters, landscaping, driveway

2–3 Weeks Out

- Deep clean the entire home
- Stage each room per this guide
- Update fixtures, hardware, and lighting
- Organize and clean closets, garage, basement

1 Week Out

- Professional photography appointment
- Video walkthrough and drone (if applicable)
- Final touch-ups and cleaning
- Listing goes live — showings begin

READY TO PREPARE YOUR HOME?

Let's Get Your Home Market Ready.

Amanda provides every seller with a personalized home preparation walkthrough — completely free. She'll tell you exactly what to do, what to skip, and what will make the biggest difference for your specific home and price point.

Contact Amanda Directly



CELL / TEXT

412-852-7776



OFFICE

412-682-0120



EMAIL

thesteelcityagent@gmail.com



WEBSITE

TheSteelCityAgent.Com



FACEBOOK

Amanda Tihey



INSTAGRAM

@thesteelcityagent



TIKTOK

@thesteelcityagent

Amanda's Pre-Listing Walkthrough Includes:

- ✓ A room-by-room assessment with specific action items
- ✓ An honest ranking of what will move the needle vs. what won't
- ✓ Vendor and contractor recommendations for any repairs needed
- ✓ Staging tips tailored to your home's layout and price point
- ✓ A customized prep timeline to fit your schedule
- ✓ A professional photography plan to maximize your listing



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Moving you from where you are now... to where you want to be!™

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