

# South Florida HOME

The Miami Herald   
www.miamiherald.com/real\_estate

RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE LISTINGS INSIDE



This two-story waterfront estate features seven bedrooms and six baths and is accented with lavish finishes.

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

## Mediterranean-style mansion features private beach

This stunning two-story waterfront estate, known as Twin Palms, is an elegant example of Mediterranean-inspired design. Located at 641 Ocean Blvd. in one of Florida's most exclusive private oceanfront communities, Golden Beach, it's the epitome of luxury living, priced at \$18,900,000.

Featuring seven bedrooms and six baths, the offering is amenity-rich and accented with lavish finishes. The state-of-the-art, gourmet-style kitchen is characterized by a brick ceiling, handsome wood cabinetry, a cooking island and stainless steel appliances. The living areas, including the formal dining room, are spacious and sunlit, offering expansive views of the water. Adding to the home's abundance of



features, it offers a home theater, twisting staircases and a fireplace. The master suite has his-and-hers baths, walk-in closets and a terrace that opens to breathtaking vistas of the beach below.

The home's exterior is a dream, with 108 feet of private beach. Adjacent to the pool is a covered outdoor kitchen and patio area, ideal for entertaining guests.

For more information, contact Pablo Alfaro at 305-613-1186.



The home's exterior has a large pool, covered outdoor kitchen and 108 feet of private beach.



Before: This dining room is bare and lifeless. After: An attractive table setting, colorful artwork on the walls, interesting accessories, and a mirror make the dining room look like a place to enjoy memorable meals. (Photo by Frances Gonzalez for Captiva Design)



Before staging (above), this bedroom looks dated and cluttered. After staging (right), chocolate-toned fabrics, beige paint on the walls, and new window treatments create warmth and a more contemporary look. (Photos courtesy of Captiva Design)



## Get jump on competition with home staging

BY JANA SOELDNER DANGER  
Special to South Florida Home

With far more houses on the market than there are qualified buyers, first impressions are more important than ever in selling a home. Staging, the process of spiffing up a home to look its very best before showing it to potential buyers, can go a long way toward making it outshine the competition. And by using some imagination, it can be done fairly inexpensively.

Good staging makes it easy for a potential buyer to visualize him- or herself living in the home, and not having to do a lot of work before

moving in. "There are three C's to staging," says Bridget King of Captiva Design, Interior Decorating, and Home Staging in Plantation. "They are 'Clutter-free,' 'Clean,' and 'Comfy.' Those are the attributes that attract homebuyers."

### VACANT OR OCCUPIED?

Some of the steps for staging a vacant home are different than for a home that is occupied. Others apply to both situations.

"One of the least expensive ways to fix up a home is with a fresh coat of paint," says Giselle Winter of The Design Squad, which has offices in South Beach and Delray Beach. "Use a neutral color that will appeal to a wide audience. Then add punches of color with accessories."

Can't afford to hire a professional painter? "Get your family together to do the painting," says Beverly Pepe of Accent Staging in Lake Worth.

### STAGING A VACANT HOME

Unless they have some help, many people may have trouble visualizing the possibilities a home

might have.

"Buyers need to be able to identify the purpose of a room," says Andy Quinones of Artistic Interiors by Andy Quinones in Fort Lauderdale. "In a larger home, they may not be able to do that if the rooms are empty. 'It's like having clothes on a mannequin at the store,'" Quinones continues. "You can visualize them better on your body than if they're just on a hanger. It's the same with rooms in a house."

It is possible to rent furniture to stage an empty house. But depending on how long the property will be on the market, it may be more economical to borrow or buy it. "Ask family members and friends to lend you pieces they might not be using," King says. "Craig's List is a great place to find very reasonably priced furniture, and at garage sales, people often just want to get rid of their stuff."

Check consignment shops. "You can usually get higher end, better-quality pieces for better prices there," Quinones says. "Then you



This residence offers upgraded interiors and open space with unhindered views of the Atlantic.

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

## Fisher Island property is priced to steal

This southeast corner three-bedroom, three-and-one-half-bath home with sandy hues has the most desirable floor plan on the island. This home offers open space with unhindered views of the Atlantic. Upgraded interiors include marble floors, elaborate crown moldings, spacious kitchen and a picturesque breakfast room. The master suite is a private sanctuary adjoined by a tranquil, ample terrace.

Fisher Island is a world-class, private island residential community and club where distinguished members can enjoy the lovely Vanderbilt mansion's main club, its charming oceanside private beach club and other intimate restaurants, its superb Mediterranean-inspired tennis center, its lovely circa-1925 cottages and guest suites, its elaborate deep-sea marinas, stunning championship golf course and spectacular Spa Internazionale.

This property is offered at \$2,499,000.

For a private showing, please contact William P.D. Pierce, P.A., sales associate at the Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate, Miami Beach office. Call him at 305-938-1737 and 954-648-3131 or visit [www.PerfectPropertyPurchases.com](http://www.PerfectPropertyPurchases.com).

This luxurious property is priced to steal, but only if the buyer closes before Dec. 31.



Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate



Fisher Island is a world-class private island residential community and club with an oceanside private beach club.



The master suite of this stunning Fisher Island residence is a private sanctuary adjoined by a tranquil, ample terrace.

# Paint helps give rooms, furniture an instant facelift

• STAGING FROM PAGE 1

can sell them with the house.”

If high ceilings make the house seem cold or barn-like, find ways to draw the eye downward. “Diminish vertical space with paint color,” Quinones says. “And make the area at eye level more interesting. You can use artwork that you find at stores like HomeGoods or at consignment shops.”

Think green. “Big plants work well to fill large spaces and warm up a room,” Winter says. “Real ones are less expensive than silk, but they require maintenance. If you’re living in a home, you might want to use real ones. If you’re not, silk is probably the best choice.”

Think green. “Big plants work well to fill large spaces and warm up a room,” Winter says. “Real ones are less expensive than silk, but they require maintenance. If you’re living in a home, you might want to use real ones. If you’re not, silk is probably the best choice.”



At right, a house that is vacant can be difficult for a buyer to picture living in. Above, after staging, a cozy seating group looks like a good place for conversation, and artwork on the walls and a tall green plant helps fill vertical space created by a high ceiling. (Photos courtesy of the Design Squad)



“Use them on sofas and chairs in the usual way, or as wall art, window coverings, or on tables,” Pepe says.

“Candles make great staging accessories,” King says. “They’re inexpensive, they can go anywhere in the house, and some also smell good.”

## THE BATHROOM

Bathrooms should look and smell clean and fresh. “If your floor is not looking great, you can buy vinyl flooring today that looks exactly like ceramic tile,” Pepe says. “Use large bath rugs, not small, puny ones.”

If the shower curtain is faded, worn, or mildewed, replace it. “A light, solid-colored shower curtain will brighten things up,” Pepe says. “Add some woven wicker baskets,” King says. “For a spa look, roll up towels and place them around the tub or on the vanity.”

“Ribbon, grass ropes, twine and raffia are great for tying around towels for that elegant look,” Pepe says.

## THE DINING ROOM

In the dining room, help buyers see themselves enjoying memorable meals. “Set the table,” King says. “It should look like a place where family and friends can break bread together.”

Remember that spray paint? “Spray a basket with silver paint, throw in some decorative balls, and you have an instant centerpiece,” Winter says.

Make the place settings neat and attractive with pretty dishes and cloth napkins. “You can make napkin rings out of raffia,” Pepe says.

## THE KITCHEN

Kitchens are one of the areas buyers scrutinize the most carefully. “If you can afford to do minor upgrades, the kitchen and bath are the places to do them,” Quinones says. “Appliances should match. If one is stainless steel, the others should be, too.”

“The kitchen should be spotlessly clean,” Pepe says.

“Keep counters empty except for a plant or a bowl of fruit,” Quinones says. “People need to see that there’s enough space for cooking and entertaining.”

“There should be no more than two or, at the most three, appliances on the counter,” King says. “Floors are usually neutral, so add color with a nice rug or mat in front of the sink. And remove photographs and children’s artwork from the refrigerator.”

Don’t forget one old but still useful trick: “If you are having an open house, you might do well to bake some cookies before buyers arrive,” Pepe says. “The smell of cookies will fill your home with a heartwarming aroma.”

## CONJURE APPEARANCES

Master the art of disguise.

“Lightweight backyard plastic tables can be used anywhere,” Pepe says via email. “Use tapestries, throws, scarves, and sarongs as table toppers. Cut a long tapestry in half to get twice the use out of it.”

Paint is not just for walls. It can give furniture new life, too. “There are some great spray paints on the market, and there are some great colors,” Winter says. “They’ll cover just about anything, including cheap laminate and plastic. Try a dark brown to make a piece look richer.”

The right lighting can make a big difference in the feel of a home. “Use lamps of all sizes,” Pepe says. People don’t want to live in dark houses.”

In a bedroom, an air mattress covered with an attractive spread or comforter is less expensive than a real mattress, but it can create an appearance that is just as good. Consider using fabric for a headboard.

“You can make draperies out of king-size sheets,” Pepe says. “Hang them like curtains, using clip-on rings, or just swing them up and over the rod, twisting and tying until they look right. Long

## HOME STAGING TIPS

- Give walls a fresh coat of paint in a neutral color. Conscript family members to help apply it
- Add punches of color with throw pillows and other accessories
- Keep the home spotlessly clean
- Banish unpleasant odors like pet smells or cigarette smoke
- Get rid of clutter and excess furniture
- Pack away personal collections & photos
- Closets should be clean and orderly
- Landscaping should be trimmed & neat
- Use mulch to create color outside.

lengths of fabric can be used the same way.”

A few attractive accessories can dress up a space. “Look through magazines to see what designers have done with accessories,” Quinones says. “They can give you a sense of color and scale. Then take the pictures with you to Home Goods or Target and find inexpensive things that are similar.”

While designers most often recommend neutral colors for walls, accessories can be different. “With accessories, you always want to use red, yellow, and green,” King advises. “They warm up a room.”

## AN OCCUPIED HOME

With an occupied home, the problem is often the presence of too many things.

The first step is to de-clutter. “People tend to put way too much into their spaces,” Winter says. “Less is definitely more.”

Physically remove items that don’t seem to fit with the redesign or staging concept.

“Have a garage sale or donate,” King says.

“Put away personal collections,” Quinones says. “Leave just the basics—a book on a table with a candlestick.”

Furniture should be the right scale. “If you have pieces that are too large, put them in storage,” Pepe says. “You might want to sell some pieces and purchase smaller ones.”

The solution may, however, be simple rearranging. “In the living room and family room, create a conversation pit,” King says. “People sometimes have their furniture spread too far apart.”

If the room has a feature like a window with a great view or a fireplace, consider using it as a focal point and group seating around it.

Are the sofas and chairs looking shabby or stained? “Buy some inexpensive slip covers for them in colors such as white, beige, or cream,” Pepe says.

“Tuck them in so they look fitted,” Winter says. “It will look like you have a brand new couch or chair.”

Then brighten them up. “Decorate with colorful pillows that can be purchased at Bed, Bath & Beyond, Tuesday Morning, Marshalls and T. J. Max for very little,” Pepe says.

Already have pillows? “If they look dated, you can buy or make new pillow covers,” King says.

Afghans can be problem-solvers.

## Improve your credit score in a bad economy

NAPS

In today’s economy, your credit score is more important than ever. Why? It’s simple math—a credit score that was good enough to get you a loan in the past might not pass muster in the current economic climate. It’s essentially a double whammy for consumers: While the unemployment rate climbs and people find it harder to pay their bills (which can decrease a person’s credit score), lenders are requiring higher credit scores than ever to obtain financing.

Remember, your credit score affects virtually every major financial transaction you make, from buying a house or car, to purchasing insurance or applying for a credit card. The score can influence what interest rate you receive or whether you are approved at all.

Everyone who ever borrowed money or used credit has a score that reflects how that credit was handled. It ranges from 300 (poor credit) to

850 (excellent credit), and is based on how much credit you have, how much money you owe and if you have made past payments on time.

“Today, a number of people who seek automotive financing have some blemishes on their credit records,” says Steve Bowman, chief credit officer at AmeriCredit, one of the nation’s leading independent automobile financing companies. “Any time you open a new credit card, apply for a loan or fail to make a payment on time, that information is reported to the credit bureaus and affects your score.”

Even during uncertain economic times, it’s never too late to improve your credit. When it comes to raising your credit score, the sooner you take action, the better. Here are some tips for understanding and improving your score:

- Make sure your credit report is accurate. Visit [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) to get one free credit report per year from each of the three credit

bureaus—TransUnion, Equifax and Experian. Report any errors immediately because they will affect your score.

- Pay your bills on time. If you have missed payments, get current on your bills and stay current. You can often ask your creditor to move the due date of your bills to a different time of the month.

- At least meet the minimum. If you can’t pay off the balances of your credit cards each month, meet the minimum monthly payments.

- Don’t hit all your credit limits. Some experts recommend you keep your balances at 50 percent of your credit limit or less.

- Close accounts you don’t use, except for some of your oldest accounts. When deciding which accounts to close, consider closing the accounts with annual fees or the highest interest rates first.

For more information, visit [www.america.com/creditinfo](http://www.america.com/creditinfo).