

## Home sellers get into the feng shui of things

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SAN FRANCISCO (CBS.MW) -- For centuries, home sellers hoping for a quick sale have buried a statue of St. Joseph, upside down, in their yards. As the patron saint of household needs, those with faith in Joseph could expect to be rewarded as buyers flocked in.

But today, West is meeting East when it comes to the spirituality of real estate transactions. So unless you've got Joseph in the proper quadrant of your ba-gua, your favorite saint may be working against your feng shui.

Feng shui, an Asian art, is essentially the act of living in harmony with your environment, says Suzee Miller, a feng shui master who teaches real estate agents how to practice the discipline.

"It's like gravity. You do not have to believe in feng shui for it to work. It represents both the visible and invisible forces in nature that are working in our environment," Miller told a packed meeting room at the National Association of Realtors annual convention here last weekend.

"It's been around for centuries ... but it just becoming the new paradigm in real estate. Realtors are embracing feng shui in home sales today," she said.

Realtors have sometimes been tagged as having a common religion -- the commission. But when it comes to feng shui, commissions indeed are driving the newfound interest.

"Feng shui is a remedy for hard-to-sell listings. The idea is to maximize the visual and emotional appeal of your listings," Miller said.

Miller said that houses where she has served as a feng shui consultant, no matter how long they had been on the market previously, sell within seven days after being done over. The longest one of her remade houses lingered was 30 days, she said.

"When properties are feng shui-ed, they become magnets for buyers," she said. "The house sends out a beacon that says 'buy me, buy me, buy me.'"

American twists on ancient art

Miller, who is a graduate of the Kirkland, Wash.-based Lotus Institute, the American Feng Shui Institute in Monterey Park, Calif., and Grand Master Yap Cheng Hai's Feng Shui Center of Excellence in Malaysia, says her art combines elements of classic feng shui with Western ideas. "It's not exclusively Asian anymore," she says.

Feng shui for real estate is based on a life-energy blueprint called the ba-gua, which is divided into eight square sectors around a square center. The ba-gua is laid over a residential lot, or a floor plan, based on where the front door to the property is located.

Each section represents a part of ch'i, the life force that exists in all animate and inanimate objects. Elements of fire, earth, metal, water and wood are also part of the analysis. And each sector also is marked by a distinct color pattern.

Running clockwise around the center square from the upper left, the sectors of the ba-gua Miller uses include:

1. Wealth and abundance, represented by the colors purple and gold
2. Fame and fortune, the color red

3. Partnership or marriage, pink and white
4. Creativity and children, gray or white
5. Friendly relations and travel, reflected in the rainbow of colors
6. Career, in black, deep blue or deep purple
7. Spirituality and knowledge, in soft blue
8. Health and family, green

"Ch'i isn't static. It's always flowing in and around your land and house," Miller says. Enhancing that flow, by knowing which areas of the house or yard need work, is the essence of feng shui. "Less is more in feng shui."

In any assessment, the land will take precedence over the house, which takes precedence over individual rooms, which in turn is more important than individual items within a room, such a desk. But all can be feng-shui-ed with the same ba-gua.

"If you take care of the land, the land will take care of your life," she said.

Feng shui is enhanced, for instance, by adding water elements -- a fountain or birdbath, say -- in the wealth section. Tiki torches or other fire elements would be most appropriate in the fame area, while pairs of things - even lawn chairs -- will boost the partnership arena.

Front door first

As for the house itself, feng shui put the front door front and center. And making that good first impression is something any real estate agent can relate to.

The best ways to boost your entry? Try a new charcoal or black welcome mat. That will bring in the proper water element, to bring good fortune. A red door is best, but only if your door faces south, southwest, northwest or west. If the red door isn't for you, good feng shui can be achieved with red potted plants.

Keeping windows clean and sparkling is another important way to increase ch'i. Here are more of Miller's "ch'i tools" that she says can be used to make an open house successful:

- Fresh or silk flowers
- Fruit bowls full of lemons, limes, oranges and red apples (citrus is a big ch'i enhancer)
- Tabletop fountains
- Soft music (no television)
- Jasmine, lavender, cinnamon or vanilla fragrance spays (cinnamon or vanilla if you want to turn a man on in particular)
- Chocolate candy in a crystal or brass dish
- A fire element near the front door (a lamp will do)

A lot of the feng shui tips are common sense to those in the real estate business. Clutter, for example, is as big a ch'i killer as deal squelcher, and any good agent will tell you to eliminate as much excess as possible before selling your home.

But there are plenty of elements to feng shui that aren't obvious, and the growing number of Realtors interested in the classes Miller conducts attest to its appeal.

"It's here to stay. It's not an occult culture. It's here to enhance your life. And if you don't have that today, your business is going to suffer," Miller said.