

The SRES® PROFESSIONAL

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COMING UP NEXT ISSUE: Organization: Home Affordability and Senior Housing

NOTE: Social distancing necessitates altering your real estate business activities, especially when working with clients who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

The information provided in this newsletter is for informational purposes only and shall not constitute a promotion, endorsement or approval of any of the products mentioned herein. Further, nothing contained in this newsletter is intended to or shall constitute medical advice. You should consult a healthcare professional before using any medical device or health product.



Do you know an outstanding SRES® Professional?

Don't miss your chance to honor an outstanding SRES® colleague by nominating them for the 2023 OSA Award. Past OSA winners are able to leverage the award to grow their business, share advice and insights in future *SRES® Professional* issues, and be recognized for their hard work. Are you an SRES® star yourself? Let us know!



Think about whom you would like to nominate for the Outstanding Service Award (OSA) recognizing exceptional service to seniors. You can even nominate yourself!

> Learn more at bit.ly/SRES-OSA.

MEMBER BENEFIT FOR YOU: Looking for content?

Check out your Member Benefits Center and find blog content and articles.

Did you know that SRES® designees have access to blogs focused on the senior market? If you need inspiration for your own marketing efforts, these blogs are a great place to start.

**Content for your marketing:
SRES® Consumer One-Sheets**

Want an easy way to add value for your senior clients? The SRES® Consumer One-Sheets cover a myriad of topics for you to access and give your clients through direct mail or email marketing campaigns. These one-sheets are written as if they came directly from

an SRES® designee as a way to communicate your subject-matter expertise and build trust with clients. Each *SRES® Professional* includes a new Consumer One-Sheet with a backlog of all past one-sheets accessible at sres.realtor/member-benefits-center/marketing-resources.

Add to your knowledge: Webinars

For news and updates on topics geared to agents and senior specialists, turn to the SRES® Webinars. Watch from leading professionals who can help you build your SRES® business: sres.realtor/member-benefits-center/ongoing-education.

Optimizing Space & Layout



How Knowing More Can Build Your Business:

As an SRES® designee, you are well aware of the features that many in the 55+ community look for in a new home. Single-story floor plans, wide walkways, accessible entries, and other components that allow clients to age in place are top priorities. But what should you do if homes that meet these typical senior-friendly criteria are not available? Your buyers desired community or price range can limit their options, leading to disappointment, frustration, and a house-hunting standstill, unless you know about creative home organization tactics that make the properties that are within grasp more livable.

Organization techniques can vastly improve home safety and function for older adults; in some cases, optimizing a less-than-perfect floor plan through home organization can get your clients exactly what they want. This issue of the *SRES® Professional* explores home organization techniques for aging adults and how you can use your organizational know-how to find your clients the right property for them.

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QUESTION: How can knowing about organization help you sell a home to your clients?

ANSWER: Home organization tactics can turn an “okay” house into an ideal home.



Here are three steps to use your organizational know-how to close sales.

1. Know what your client wants. Ask them about the home features that matter most to them and why. Understanding the reasons for the client’s priorities can help you offer creative solutions if their ideal is not readily available.

2. Offer creative solutions. Call out ways in which organization can make their new home more functional and how they can potentially overcome layout issues. Effectively organizing a closet can reduce bending. Storing kitchen appliances 3-5 feet off of the ground makes them easier to access. Extra lighting can be installed. Narrow spaces can be navigated more simply by keeping them free of furniture and clutter. For example, if clients are set on a single-story floor plan but want to live in an area where such houses are hard to find, searching a house with a master bedroom on the main floor might work for them—especially if you give them some ideas for how to make living with stairs easier for aging adults.

3. Give them a vision. As you talk about ways to use organization to optimize a space, describe the possibilities. What would your client be able to do if they lived here? Would putting a chair in the kitchen and one in the bathroom make daily tasks less draining? Would adding a drop-down rod to a closet make it easier to reach shirts? Would a cart with wheels in the laundry room simplify washing? Use organization ideas to create an image of your clients thriving in their new, optimized space.

What’s possible in this space?

Organization makes any space more functional. And knowing effective strategies to help retirement-age clients optimize a property can open up possibilities. Here are some favorite solutions that can transform an ordinary house into an ideal home for clients over 55:

1. Keeping space free and clear

Whether your clients are looking at a home with broad rooms and halls or narrow corners and walkways, keeping spaces free and clear of clutter makes any home safer and more livable for older clients.

a. Avoid clutter by taking care of paperwork. Replace stacks of bills and receipts with a filing cabinet or electronic filing system. Have a binder with important legal documents including birth certificates, home and car deeds, tax returns, and medical records. Consider making a list of current medications including dosages and usage instructions to display on the fridge. All of these tactics make life easier for your clients and free up floor and counter space—making any home safer and more livable.

b. Free up space by tossing unneeded items. More stuff means more work and more clutter, so encourage clients to keep only the objects they



need; making their space easier to live in and manage. Many objects that people may view as essentials might just be getting in the way. Do they still need to keep and store all of their holiday decorations and old books and movies, or can they keep their favorites? Replacing oversized furniture with less-bulky alternatives also frees up space and makes narrower areas easier to navigate. Is an entryway table serving a purpose, or is it making it harder to get through a tight walkway? Open up space and possibilities by reminding clients to keep only the objects that serve them.

c. Clear walkways by tucking away cords and appliances. Keeping floor space open and free from clutter greatly improves the functionality and safety of a space. Appliances should be strategically placed to avoid unnecessary congestion in walkways—keeping halls and other narrow spaces as clear as possible. Prioritize decluttering high-traffic areas, including pathways to the kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom. Cords and throw rugs should be secured in place to reduce home hazards. Appliances like washers, dryers, and refrigerators should fit the space and leave plenty of room for clients to use and walk around.

2. Navigating stairs

Many older clients prefer homes that are stair-free, but avoiding them altogether is often not an option. Their preferred area or budget might mean a home with stairs. Luckily for them and for you, there are organization solutions that make living with stairs as an older adult

easier and less of a concern. Looking at stair structure, installing proper lighting, and limiting trips up and down are all important steps in making stairs workable for aging adults.

a. Assess the functionality of the stairs in the space. Stairways are not created equally, and while helping clients find a home, consider the functionality of the stairs in each housing option. How deep or narrow are the steps? Are there handrails and/or banisters, and are they secure and easy to grasp? Is the stairway wide enough to install a lift or other accessibility aids if the clients need more assistance in the future? Considering these factors could determine whether a home will work for your senior client or if they should keep looking.

b. Install lighting to make stairs safer. Better lighting on stairways makes steps easier for seniors to see—reducing the risk of falls. Illuminating a stairway is often as simple as using a brighter bulb, but be sure to check the wattage limits on fixtures before suggesting this change to a client. Installing new fixtures may be necessary. Another option is to run lighting on the edges of the stairs, allowing clients to see each and every step with more clarity.

c. Create a system that limits trips up and down the stairs. One solution is to mount baskets on the wall at the top and bottom of the staircase. Throughout the day, your client puts items that need to go up or down the stairs in the basket. Then when they are already planning to make the climb, they take all of the items

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What's possible in this space?

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in the basket with them. This solution limits bending to pick up items on steps, potentially hazardous clutter on the floor, and unnecessary trips up and down the stairs.

3. Optimizing kitchens and closets

Kitchens and closet store a majority of daily-use items. Making the most out of the space and structure in these two areas has the potential to greatly improve the functionality of a home, especially for adults in the 55+ community. Getting rid of duplicates, installing accessible storage solutions, and making objects easy to reach can make daily living much easier for older adults, improving home functionality.

a. Toss unnecessary extras to free up space.

Over the years, people often collect more belongings than they actually need. Older adults who have transitioned into retirement are often some of the worst offenders. Encourage your clients to declutter their closets and kitchens by getting rid of repeat items: that extra pizza cutter or toaster, cookware they had for when they used to entertain, and a full wardrobe of professional attire are good starting points. Would it make sense to part with old work clothes or pass on their china set to their children? Parting with old clothes and cookware will free up space and make it easier for them to store and access the items they actually use.

b. Make the space stretch further. Cabinetry, shelving, and storage racks are game changers in closets and kitchens. Instead of just looking at size, point out to your clients the functionality of what is already installed, and know some creative solutions to improve the setup. Baskets and bins can make it easier to store items on shelves. Pull-out drawers with handles and closet doors with levers are easier for seniors to access. Counters that are a bit taller require less stooping and can ease

back pain, and shorter ones allow people to sit while cooking or cleaning. Installing drop-down rods can double closet space and make clothing easy to reach for clients in wheelchairs.

c. Keep daily-use items accessible. Being able to safely reach the items they use regularly is essential for older adults. As mobility often declines in later years, your clients may require creative solutions to keep objects handy. Storing often-used items 3-5 feet off of the ground is ideal for safe access as it limits the need to stretch or bend. Keeping a bin on the counter for medicines, reading glasses, a TV remote, and other every-day items keeps them contained and easy to find and carry. Buying a cart with wheels for their kitchen or closet allows clients to move food and laundry with greater ease and stability—reducing the risk of personal injury or dropping carried objects. 📄





Organizing Your Home: Tips from your SRES®

Increase your home's appeal for yourself or for buyers on the market with these organizational tips.

Decide what's working in your home and what's not.

Take stock of items in your home and how they are organized. What spaces work for you, and which ones feel overwhelming or inconvenient? Do you have too many items stored in a space that is too small? Go room by room and evaluate your closets and drawers. Ask yourself, "what do I like about this current organizational set-up? What should change?" Take notes.

Come up with a plan

After evaluating your current system, come up with a new plan. Get rid of items that you no longer need or have space to keep—remember, the fewer things you have, the less time and space you will need to keep them nice. After decluttering, organize your items using bins, shelves, racks, or other systems for separation. Your system will work best if the objects you use most are easy to access without bending or reaching.

Take a "step-by-step" approach

Avoid burnout by breaking up tasks and starting small. For example, you could start with a closet that you can reorganize in a day, or you could sort through old clothes to give to charity. Once you are done, take a break before moving on to the next project.

Ask for help

Some labor-intensive tasks are hard to do alone. When needed, do not be afraid to ask for help. Larger projects likely require the help of family, community members, or hired professionals. Talk with people in your network, including your SRES® professional, for recommendations for qualified professional organizers, cleaners, or movers in your area.

TIPS FOR GETTING RID OF EXCESS "THINGS"

1

Toss duplicate items:

if you have more sets of work clothes or measuring cups than you need, consider giving away what is extra.

2

Sort items into four piles:

one for things to keep, one for things to donate, one for things to throw away, and one for valuables to appraise and/or sell.

3

Pass on belongings:

if there are items you no longer need, or keepsakes you would like to go to a certain person, gift them personally now.

Count on an SRES® to guide you through the process of buying or selling your home, making the transaction less stressful and more successful.

The Seniors Real Estate Specialist® (SRES®) designation is awarded by the SRES® Council, a subsidiary of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR).

To learn more about SRES® and access various consumer resources, please visit seniorsresource.realtor.





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Be an Advocate and Guide for Buyers

Did you know that **49%** of all home buyers in 2022 were over the age of 55?*

*Source: NAR's 2022 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers

Show your clients you're serious about buyer representation with the Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR®) designation. The ABR® Designation Course, recently updated to with new research and information relevant to today's market, is being presented by the Center for REALTOR® Development in a live virtual format on March 28 and 29, 2023. **Don't delay: Early Bird rate ends February 28!**

> Learn more at bit.ly/ABRVirtual23