FREE HAMPTON ROADS SELLER GUIDE

Hampton Roads Seller Preparation Guide

6

PREPARATION PHASES

from the first plan through closing

A practical plan for preparing your property, paperwork, presentation, and timeline before listing in Virginia.

A strong sale begins before the sign goes in the yard. The work is not about making every room perfect. It is about identifying what matters, organizing the information buyers will need, presenting the property honestly and well, and making deliberate decisions before the pace of a live listing takes over.

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2026

Prepared by Twylla Charity, Licensed Virginia Real Estate Agent

YOUR PREPARATION PLAN

Start with the sale, not the staging.

A polished launch is the result of organized decisions. Work through these six phases in order, then return to the checklists as the listing date approaches.

01

Define the sale

Start with the outcome the sale must support, not a list price pulled out of context.

02

Build the property file

Gather ownership, condition, improvement, and association information before a buyer or settlement provider asks for it.

03

Triage repairs

Address risk and visible neglect first, then evaluate cosmetic work through the lens of likely return and market position.

04

Prepare room by room

Create a consistent feeling of space, care, light, and function from the curb through the utility areas.

05

Plan the launch

Coordinate pricing, photography, access, security, and the first days on market as one release plan.

06

Prepare for offers and closing

Decide how offers will be compared and what must remain organized once the property is under contract.

PHASE 1 OF 6

Define the sale

01

Start with the outcome the sale must support, not a list price pulled out of context.

WHAT TO PREPARE

- Choose the ideal listing window and the latest acceptable closing or possession date.
- Identify every owner and decision-maker, then confirm how title is held before timing becomes urgent.
- Estimate the mortgage payoff, likely selling expenses, moving costs, and the cash you need from the sale.
- Plan where you will live next, how the purchase or lease will be funded, and whether the transactions must be coordinated.
- Name your priorities for price, timing, certainty, repairs, and convenience so future tradeoffs can be evaluated clearly.

PREPARATION PRINCIPLE

A good sale strategy is built around the next chapter the property needs to fund or make possible.

PHASE 2 OF 6

Build the property file

Gather ownership, condition, improvement, and association information before a buyer or settlement provider asks for it.

WHAT TO PREPARE

- Collect the names shown on the deed, mortgage and equity-line information, survey, title policy, and any estate, trust, divorce, bankruptcy, or probate documents that may affect the sale.
- Organize permits, invoices, warranties, service records, utility information, and dates for major improvements or replacements.
- Locate HOA or condominium contacts and confirm how to request the current Virginia resale certificate when applicable.
- Document solar agreements, leases, liens, insurance claims, code or zoning notices, septic information, and other property-specific obligations.
- Use the current Virginia disclosure forms and ask which affirmative disclosures apply to the property.

PREPARATION PRINCIPLE

Organized records reduce avoidable delay, but they do not replace the current forms or professional advice required for the transaction.

PHASE 3 OF 6

Triage repairs

03

Address risk and visible neglect first, then evaluate cosmetic work through the lens of likely return and market position.

WHAT TO PREPARE

- Prioritize active leaks, moisture, unsafe conditions, damaged steps or rails, electrical concerns, pests, and failing systems.
- Repair obvious deferred maintenance that could make buyers wonder what else has been ignored.
- Get written estimates for larger items before deciding whether to repair, credit, disclose, or price around them.
- Avoid over-improving for personal taste. Paint, lighting, flooring, hardware, and landscaping should support the overall positioning plan.
- Keep invoices, permits, warranties, and before-and-after records for completed work.

PREPARATION PRINCIPLE

The goal is not to erase every imperfection. It is to remove preventable distractions and make the property easier to evaluate.

Prepare room by room

Create a consistent feeling of space, care, light, and function from the curb through the utility areas.

WHAT TO PREPARE

- Edit each room so its purpose is immediately clear and pathways feel open.
- Remove excess furniture, personal collections, countertop clutter, visible cords, and crowded storage.
- Clean from eye level down and up, including glass, baseboards, vents, fixtures, appliances, grout, and corners.
- Neutralize strong pet, smoke, moisture, cooking, and fragrance odors at the source rather than masking them.
- Replace failed bulbs, use consistent light temperature, open window coverings, and correct small alignment issues buyers notice in photos.

PREPARATION PRINCIPLE

Presentation should help buyers understand the home, not make the property feel staged beyond recognition.

PHASE 5 OF 6

Plan the launch

05

Coordinate pricing, photography, access, security, and the first days on market as one release plan.

WHAT TO PREPARE

- Review recent comparable sales, active competition, condition, location, and likely buyer response before choosing a list price.
- Complete cleaning, repairs, landscaping, and room editing before professional photography whenever possible.
- Remove medications, financial papers, valuables, firearms, spare keys, identity documents, and sensitive family information.
- Choose a showing plan for occupants, pets, alarms, parking, notice, and property access.
- Confirm which items convey, which are excluded, and what marketing claims can be supported by records or reliable sources.

PREPARATION PRINCIPLE

The first impression is created by the entire launch, not by one photograph or one number.

PHASE 6 OF 6

Prepare for offers and closing

Decide how offers will be compared and what must remain organized once the property is under contract.

WHAT TO PREPARE

- Evaluate price together with financing, appraisal, inspection, requested assistance, contingencies, closing date, possession, and overall certainty.
- Keep the property accessible and maintained while inspections, appraisal, repairs, and the buyer's final walk-through are pending.
- Track contract deadlines, document delivery, repair commitments, title questions, lender requests, and settlement instructions.
- Confirm wiring or payoff instructions through trusted contact information before sending sensitive information or funds.
- Plan movers, utilities, keys, remotes, manuals, cleaning, and the condition required for possession.

PREPARATION PRINCIPLE

The best offer is the one that supports your priorities and can realistically reach closing.

ROOM BY ROOM

Make every area easy to understand

01

Curb, entry, and exterior

- Trim and edge landscaping
- Clear gutters, walks, porch, and siding
- Repair peeling paint, loose rails, and damaged screens
- Make the entry light, lock, door, and house numbers work cleanly

02

Kitchen and living spaces

- Clear most counters and open surfaces
- Clean appliances, cabinets, fixtures, and windows
- Remove excess furniture and visible cords
- Create one clear purpose for every room

03

Bedrooms and bathrooms

- Reduce closets so storage feels usable
- Use simple bedding and clear nightstands
- Repair caulk, grout, drips, and running toilets
- Remove personal care items and replace worn linens

04

Utility, storage, and garage

- Provide safe access to major systems
- Label useful manuals and warranties
- Remove chemicals, hazards, and overloaded shelving
- Show the practical storage capacity, not the volume of belongings

Gather once. Use throughout the sale.

Not every item will apply. Identify missing information while there is still time to locate it.

- Photo identification and the exact names of all owners
- Mortgage, equity line, lien, and payoff contact information
- Survey, title policy, deed, and property tax information
- Permits, invoices, warranties, and major improvement dates
- HVAC, roof, plumbing, electrical, septic, and pest service records
- HOA or condominium contact and resale certificate process
- Solar, security, propane, equipment, or other lease agreements
- Insurance claims, code notices, zoning matters, and known reports
- Receipts and records that may help a tax professional calculate basis

KEEP THE RECORDS, NOT JUST THE REPAIRS

Invoices, permits, warranties, dates, and professional reports can make completed work easier to explain and future questions easier to answer.

REPAIR DECISION FRAMEWORK

Give each issue a deliberate path

Fix now

Safety, active damage, preventable deterioration, or a small repair with outsized visual impact.

Get a quote

A larger issue where a written scope and cost will improve the decision.

Disclose and position

A known condition that will remain, handled through current disclosures, price, and negotiation strategy.

Leave alone

A preference-driven upgrade unlikely to improve the sale enough to justify its cost or delay.

A SIMPLE RULE

Prioritize safety, active damage, and visible neglect. Then judge cosmetic work by the property's position, the likely buyer, the available time, and the expected return.

A PRACTICAL STARTING TIMELINE

Four weeks to a thoughtful launch

Some properties need more time and some need less. This sequence keeps the work focused when four weeks is available.

01

Four weeks out

- Define goals, ownership, and next-home plan
- Build the property file
- Walk the property and prioritize repairs
- Begin decluttering and schedule vendors

02

Three weeks out

- Complete priority repairs
- Order association documents when advised
- Edit furniture, closets, storage, and exterior
- Review preliminary pricing and launch strategy

03

Two weeks out

- Deep clean and finish cosmetic work
- Confirm inclusions, exclusions, and access plan
- Prepare disclosure information and records
- Schedule photography and marketing milestones

04

Final week

- Complete the photo-ready reset
- Secure valuables, documents, medications, and keys
- Confirm list price, showing instructions, and launch date
- Prepare a simple daily showing routine

OFFICIAL RESOURCES

Use current forms and guidance

Requirements and forms can change. Confirm the details that apply to the property using current official sources and qualified professionals.

01 Virginia DPOR, Residential Property Disclosures
https://www.dpor.virginia.gov/Consumers/Residential_Property_Disclosures

02 Virginia DPOR, Common Interest Community Association Disclosures
https://www.dpor.virginia.gov/CIC-Board/Disclosure_Notices

03 U.S. EPA, Real Estate Disclosures About Potential Lead Hazards
https://www.epa.gov/lead/real-estate-disclosures-about-potential-lead-hazards

04 IRS Publication 523, Selling Your Home
https://www.irs.gov/publications/p523

05 Virginia DPOR, Real Estate Board
https://www.dpor.virginia.gov/Boards/Real-Estate

This guide provides general educational information and is not legal, tax, inspection, engineering, environmental, contractor, settlement, or investment advice. Forms, laws, association requirements, costs, and market conditions may change. Property-specific decisions should be made using the current contract and forms, reliable property records, and guidance from the appropriate licensed or qualified professionals. Twylla Charity is a licensed Virginia real estate agent affiliated with 1st Class Real Estate Flagship.