

HOME STORY HANDBOOK

“Staging is about helping buyers
fall in love faster.”



WHY STAGE?

Buyers live on StreetEasy. They scroll Instagram. They watch HGTV and follow designers. They're educated and savvy, but they're also driven by feeling. They're not just comparing homes — they're comparing experiences.

Great photos garner clicks and increase traffic — they get people through the door. But great staging is the *closer*. It creates an emotional connection.

Buyers want to imagine their own lives in a space. Staging helps them do that — creating homes that invite connection and inspire imagination. It suggests floor plans for difficult rooms. It showcases assets and remedies deficits.

And it supports your realtor's strategy. Starter home? Pied-à-terre? Artist vibe or penthouse flair?

Thoughtful staging tells a story to match your home to the perfect buyer, quickly and at your best price.

STAGED HOMES ...

SELL UP TO 88% FASTER

Longer market time means extended carrying costs and potential price drops. And once your listing goes stale, it's hard to recover.

SELL UP TO 20% HIGHER

Beautifying your home increases its perceived value. Your list price ticks up, up, up!

HAVE AN AVERAGE ROI OF 350%

For every dollar you spend, you make \$350 — and the return improves the higher your price.

Stats from Business Insider, Realtor.com, and RESA's 2025 Market Study



VACANT STAGING

Empty homes are harder to sell — it's that simple!

Rooms feel smaller, darker, and colder. Furniture placement may be tough for buyers to imagine. And if a home has flaws, they're on full display. More important: it's harder for buyers to connect emotionally to the space.

Home Story remediates those challenges. But what comes next is a bit different. Beyond beautifying a home, we take care to understand the purpose and character of each room — and stage toward your realtor's vision for your likely buyer.

Not every living room can hold a supersized ivory sofa. Not every home is suited to abstract art. *We're here for all that!* But some homes require a different approach, a more transitional blend of furnishings, a more bespoke touch.

Realtors tell us: they know when a project has been Home Storied because there's a feeling when they walk through the door. No McStaging — just a sense of ease; the design fits the space.

We don't superimpose our look on your home. We find its narrative, then suit the staging to the story.

Home Story projects are distinct, but they have one quality in common: they seem like...home. Exactly where your buyer wants to be.

Please visit homestorydesign.com for a portfolio of Vacant Staging projects.

VACANT STAGING PROCESS



I ASSESS + STRATEGIZE

During a tour with your realtor, we evaluate your property, noting assets and challenges. We discuss ways to accentuate positives (high ceilings, great light, working fireplace) and remediate negatives (limited views, low light, broken medicine cabinet).

We learn your realtor's sales strategy and target audiences, and solve for tricky rooms and areas of concern. (Will we show a home office? A kids room? How will we handle the roof deck?)

If we identify any repair or renovation work, we'll confer with your realtor to decide which upgrades we recommend to advance your sale, and which ones can wait for the buyer.

II DESIGN + PLAN

After an initial tour, we'll schedule a second visit to measure the space with specific furnishings and arrangements in mind.

We'll refine the design story, mindful of the the vibe of the neighborhood, building architecture, the look and feel of the lobby, and views from the home (are there colors and tones outside we can carry inside?)

Then we'll create floor plans and pull together a final design. If there's work to be done, we'll coordinate with the contractor to select paint colors, floor finishes, and carpet as needed. And we'll order items we've identified for replacement: lighting, bathroom fixtures, cabinet knobs....

III REFRESH + REPAIR

The most common upgrades realtors recommend are painting, floor refinishing, and light fixture upgrades — along with small repairs. We'll get estimates from our team of pros, and you'll usually contract with them directly (we subcontract the minor jobs). If you have your own professional help, including building staff who can get the job done, we're happy to work with them, too.

If your realtor recommends an upgrade that involves a bit more work — replacement of a kitchen counter or bathroom vanity (requiring a plumber), for example — we work with building management to acquire permissions, then source materials and oversee delivery and installation.

IV INSTALL + STYLE

Working with building management and your super, we get insurance and an installation date lined up for our Home Story movers. We don't use an outside company, so we're sure things run smoothly and happily with building staff — we're all on the same team!

Once inventory is delivered, we arrange everything — positioning furniture and rugs, hanging art, installing textiles and accessories, and fussing over details until the big moment: Photography Day!

After that, it's in your realtor's capable hands.



BLENDED STAGING

Not many staging companies take on projects where the owners' belongings are *in situ*. But we do!

Staging vacant homes is exciting. But working with owner furnishings is the ultimate creative challenge — how to blend what's in place with just the right staging elements to create a home that looks curated, polished, and market-ready?

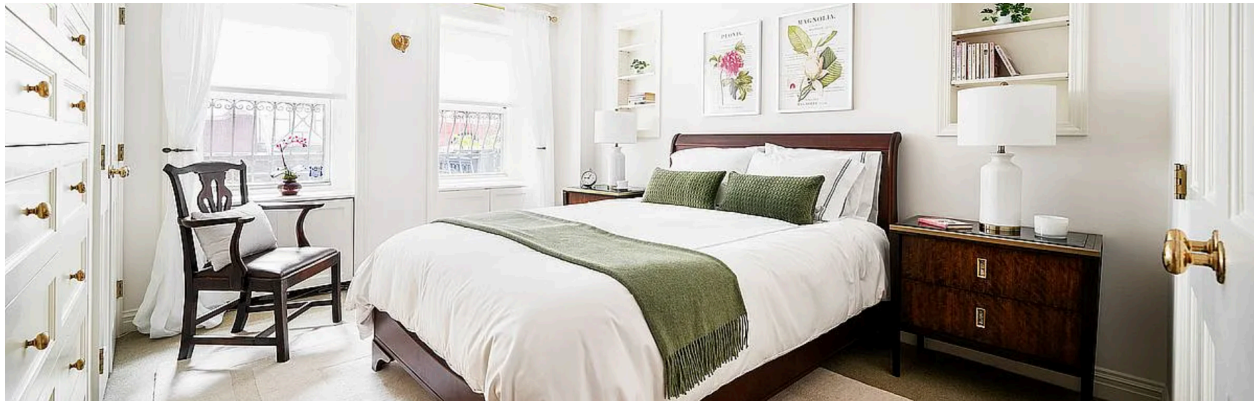
Some homes are already well-organized and decorated beautifully. Others need a bit more TLC. In both cases, staging transforms what's in place to create a home buyers will feel comfortable touring — and living in.

Even the most intrepid visitor can feel like a trespasser in an occupied home. The key to assuaging that feeling is to neutralize the space — then add the beauty and personality back in, strategically.

From pre-war duplexes on the Upper East Side to Tribeca lofts, we approach projects anthropologically. We help our clients excavate. We organize belongings, curate art and books, edit furniture. Then we supplement with just the right staging pieces to reanimate the home — now with a more open aspect that welcomes and inspires buyers.

Please visit homestorydesign.com for a portfolio of Blended Staging projects.

BLENDED STAGING PROCESS



I ASSESS + STRATEGIZE

We take a tour with your realtor (and you!) to get to know your home and discuss the sales strategy. We also determine your timeline, scope of work, and preferences.

- Which furnishings will stay in place?
- Which items may be stored or removed?
- Do you need help organizing?
- Will you need off-site storage?
- Are there estate items to auction?
- Does your home need painting or repairs?

If we identify any repair or renovation work, we'll help you decide which upgrades will advance your sale, and which ones can wait for the buyer.

II ORGANIZE + CURATE

Once we've determined your scope of work, we roll up our sleeves and get started with:

Organization — Sorting, packing, and tucking away ... with your help, or independently.

Curation — Determining which elements in your home will work best for staging, retaining as much as possible.

Storage — Storing edited items on site where possible, or advising on outside storage or removal services.

Sales — If you have estate items, we connect you with the appropriate auction houses.

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After that, it's in your realtor's capable hands.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



HOW MUCH DOES STAGING COST?

VACANT STAGING

Studio	8K - 12K
1 Bedroom	10K - 20K
2 Bedroom	15K - 25K
3 Bedroom	25K - 45K
4 Bedroom +	30K - 75K
Townhouse	40K - 100K +

Variables we factor into final pricing:

Square Footage

Larger homes require more inventory — more furniture and accessories — not to mention more designer and staff time to complete.

Price Point

Homes on the luxury market require a different type of inventory. A Classic Six on 75th and Park will be more expensive to stage than a 3-bedroom in Chelsea.

Challenging Features and Floor Plans

Unique architectural features, quirky rooms, or idiosyncratic floor plans may require special furniture or custom pieces.

BLENDED STAGING

Blended Staging costs vary considerably. A home that's already fairly tidy and well-appointed will be less expensive to stage than a similar home where decluttering, organization, storage and more significant inventory are required.

During an initial consultation, we'll walk you through every aspect of your Blended Stage, itemizing each element of your Scope of Work with associated pricing.

HOW LONG DO THE STAGING ITEMS REMAIN IN MY HOME?

We include three months of inventory rental in the opening price of your project — once we install, everything stays in place for three months at no extra charge. If you do end up needing extra time, a monthly rental fee applies. Ours is nominal and generous for the industry (starting at 5% of the initial price), with a sliding scale for homes that stay on the market longer than 8 months. We hate to pile on if you're already sweating market time.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE THE STAGING PROCESS?

Most staging projects take two weeks. The actual installation takes 3-5 days. But because we're managing multiple projects at the same time, we allow for overlapping schedules.

Timing can be affected by a few things: contractor delays, unforeseen building closures, extreme weather, and world events. (We're looking at you, COVID and blizzard of 2026.)

Snow-bound service entries and pandemics aside — you can expect two weeks for your home to be photo-ready, from the date we sign a contract. If we're following a contractor, the clock starts ticking when he or she clears out.



COULD I JUST BUY FURNITURE AND DO IT MYSELF?

You could! But even interior designers selling their homes ask us for help — because it's faster and less expensive in the long run to hire a stager. No wait times for furniture, no coordinating deliveries, no endless shopping for the small stuff. And once the property sells, everything disappears.

Also, there are "tricks of the trade" that are second nature to us. It's not just decorating. It's strategic.

We know some floor plans that work beautifully in real life may not support staging goals. We're on site for photography to adjust elements for the frame, then reset for showings. We have a variety of accessories, textiles, lamps, and artwork that support specific looks — which may take a lot of your time to source.

We hang curtains. Swap cabinet knobs. Hang art. Steam bedspreads. Replace bulbs, from chandeliers to high hats.

It's just a whole thing, staging. There's more to it than meets the eye. It's an art — and a *massive* coordination effort. At time when you'll be contending with other tasks around your sale, we lighten your To Do list.

And if your home needs any kind of renovation work — from a small paint job to a major install — we can take managing that off your plate.

If you can — stage it! You'll be so relieved you did.

WHAT ABOUT VIRTUAL STAGING?

If only virtual staging did the trick! But there's nothing like actual staging to make a buyer fall in love with your home. And the ROI is not even close.

Sure, it helps in some cases: You may have absolutely zero budget for improvements. Or your realtor may want to go live with your listing quickly while actual staging gets underway. Or it's a high seller's market and your home is a stunner.

For most homes, though, virtual staging alone is not ideal, for a couple of reasons:

Momentum

While virtual staging gets clicks online, the drop-off effect when people visit is significant. Rooms that looked amazing in your listing seem starkly different. The feeling of excitement and anticipation a buyer had evaporates. Momentum bumps to a halt — or goes into reverse. *Is this really the home we saw online?*

Bait + Switch

Virtual staging is meant to show what a room can look like with actual furniture — without having to install it. But the difference between what fits in a room in 2D and what fits in real life can be quite different.

We've seen so many virtually staged rooms packed with furniture that would never fit — or makes sense — in the actual rooms. The feeling of bait + switch when this happens is very real.

Takeaway?

At best, even very well done virtual staging may set a buyer up for disappointment. At worst, virtual staging that's unrealistic or inaccurate can make a buyer feel manipulated or deceived.

It's worth it to invest in real staging to fill your home with *actual* beauty and potential. The ROI is proven.

DO YOU HAVE CONTRACTORS WHO CAN PAINT AND DO REPAIRS?

Our Rolodex is full of contractors, painters, carpenters, upholsterers, landscapers, cleaners and other trade pros who help us get your home in tip top shape.

If it's a small-scale item, like replacing sconces in a dining room, we typically subcontract the work, including it in our scope and pricing. If the project has a few moving parts, it often works best for you to contract with the professional independently, while we liaise and oversee everything.

DO YOU HANDLE ESTATE PROPERTIES?

Absolutely. We take extra care with these projects — we understand you may be going through a difficult time. We help you thoughtfully sort and organize belongings, discerning which items may be helpful in staging, and connect you to services you may need: storage facilities, removal services, and auction houses.

Often, estate projects involve some level of renovation — painting, floor refinishing, and more. We have a long history of working with contractors, including in-house building staff, to rehabilitate all types of properties and projects — large and small.

These projects are close to our heart.



CAN I LIVE IN MY HOME WHILE IT'S STAGED?

Of course! With Blended Staging projects, this is fairly common. We stage with this reality in mind. We know you'll be living there, and we don't want you walking on eggshells. You may be concerned about damaging the staging items. Please don't worry. We factor in a bit of wear and tear.

We also leave "staging kits" for you and your realtor. After we get everything perfect for photography, we deconstruct some areas to get you "back to normal." We tuck staging linens and throw pillows into clear zippered bags for each room, where they can be re-set for showings. We box up kitchen props so your realtor can re-set them if needed. We gather toiletries in baskets you can tuck away before showings. Things like that. Where there's a will, there's a way!

WHAT HAPPENS ONCE I SELL MY HOME?

Once you're in contract, there's often a wait as your buyer gets board approval. Most realtors like to keep staging in place until the board gives a thumbs up. Others feel comfortable releasing the staging once the board schedules a buyer interview.

It's rare, but in the event of a buyer turn down, re-staging is more expensive than the nominal monthly rental cost to keep it in place. It's good insurance. But if budget is an issue, we de-stage upon request.

CAN I HIRE YOU TO DESIGN MY NEW HOME, ONCE MY CURRENT HOME SELLS?

Yes, yes, yes. We do this a lot — especially with Blended Staging clients. We get to know you well — your furnishings and accessories, your style and lifestyle — so it's natural to translate that knowledge into a design for your new home. We can help you merge what you own with new pieces, or work with what you have. We will source, install, and style. And we can run a reno if you need it.

The design process is different from the staging process, of course. But as with staging, we charge a flat fee for a defined scope of work, so there are no surprises — except how amazing your new home will look and feel!

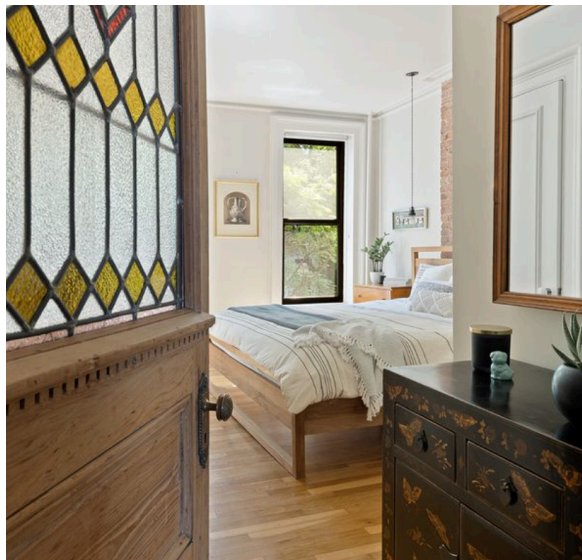
OUR STORY

Home Story was founded in 2002 by Heather York as an interior design firm. The company name is an homage to her background as a writer (which brought her to New York City as a Fulbright Scholar at Columbia). In 2020, when a realtor friend asked her to zhuzh up a property, she dove head first into the world of staging.

Today, she and her partner Serdar Gizer — whose experience as an industrial designer has taken him from Parsons to Calvin Klein — have a blast racing around Manhattan and Brooklyn, double-parking moving trucks, installing furniture, supervising contractors, hanging curtains, creating original artwork for properties, scouring bookstores for just the right coffee table stack, chasing after the perfect throw pillow, waking up early to grab flowers on 28th between 6th and 7th...and telling stories everywhere they go.

For more information and to view a Project Portfolio, please visit:

homestorydesign.com



TELL US YOUR STORY!

We want to hear all about your home, and you!

Contact us at:

hello@homestorydesign.com