

IN FOCUS

Jennifer Winchell



Position: Jennifer Winchell, Associate Broker, GRI, e-Pro, and Realtor, John L. Scott Real Estate, Belltown. Winchell is a featured expert on HGTV's "My Home is Worth What?" and is a member of the Great Queen Anne Chamber of Commerce.

Many a realtor would give their eyeteeth to be a go-to, television expert about home improvement and real estate market conditions.

Queen Anne resident Jennifer Winchell, 32, made it through that very narrow gate.

Winchell, associate broker for John L. Scott, appears as the Seattle expert on HGTV's "My Home is Worth What?" as the program roves from city to city evaluating home remodel efforts.

"I love it," Winchell says of her television role. "It's a new experience and I'm still doing what I love."

Winchell says HGTV, looking for an on-camera expert in Seattle, contacted her through her web site. She went on to pass the audition.

No surprise there. Winchell is poised, knowledgeable and comes equipped with a sense of humor.

"When I'm with people I create a trust," she says. "I know what I'm doing. I'm honest."

For the uninitiated, "My Home is Worth What?" — a provocative question these days — takes the viewer into a newly remodeled home as the local expert evaluates what's been done and delivers a verdict.

Or, as HGTV's publicity puts it: "Go behind closed doors each week as three homeowners in three different parts of the country strategize on maximizing their home's value. After a professional assessment and evaluation from local market experts, they'll get to the bottom line on how well their efforts will pay off, with big surprises often awaiting the homeowner in the final number."

What's the biggest remodel mistake, from a selling standpoint?

Winchell laughs.

"Color is a big one. Buyers like to see themselves in it (a house for sale)." Winchell is further asked: What about the color purple? She laughs again,

knowingly, but doesn't go into details.

Winchell grew up in southern California and earned her masters degree in hotel and restaurant management from the University of Nevada at Los Vegas. After working for the Four Seasons in Newport Beach, Calif. she moved into real estate. That was seven years ago.

While her business takes her all over the city and the eastside — she's worked with first-time buyers and big-time Vulcan projects — she's asked about market conditions in three Seattle neighborhoods.

Queen Anne, Winchell says, fetches about a 5 to 10 percent higher asking/selling price than Magnolia. The lowest priced single-family residences on the market in Queen Anne she says, start in the high \$500,000 to low \$600,000 range. That's for a small, two-bedroom house, of which there are very few on the market. The same home in Magnolia, Winchell says, might start in the high \$400,000 range. At the same time, the equivalent house on Capitol Hill would start at the mid-\$500,000 point.

If part of Queen Anne's desirability is its closeness to downtown, Magnolia often attracts "a different buyer that wants to be not so close," Winchell says. Capitol Hill, where the condo market is very hot right now, puts out a "different vibe" than the other two neighborhoods.

"I think we are in a strong market," she adds. "We have the job economy and people moving in because of the job market in their 20s and 30s. They love the walk-ability."

And what about remodeling, besides avoiding the color purple?

"Results will equal the quality of the materials you use," she says of remodeling projects. Additionally, "Don't carpet over hardwood floors," she advises sellers. "Go for neutral colors."

The 2008 HGTV schedule isn't out yet. Winchell will post her scheduled TV appearances on her website www.SeattleHomeNetwork.com — when they're available.

In the meantime, yes, people do stop her on the street with the inevitable, "I saw you on TV!"

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