

The Art of Feng Shui

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Seeing the 'SOLD' sign on a property for sale is what any Realtor aspires for. Real estate broker Pamela Stutzman takes a non-traditional approach to making a sale.

It's called feng shui.

"I got so burned out on real estate but after discovering feng shui, it made me want to keep doing real estate. I discovered feng shui and real estate go hand in hand," Stutzman, who has more than 25 years of real estate and development experience, said.

Stutzman has started her own agency called Pamela Stutzman Realty. "I have the opportunity to create my own business expressing all of who I am. As my business is new, so far my real estate transactions have been with referrals from my previous clients or my previous clients and friends."

Although she invests more time and work, having her own business affords more room for creativity and personal flair. "I am having fun with bringing feng shui into the mix right up front in my advertising and workshops. More people are becoming aware of feng shui and it is more respected in the United States," Stutzman said.

So, what exactly is feng shui? The first challenge with feng shui is pronouncing it correctly (fuhng shwey).

After you break the word down, it comes to managing a space and applying sound housekeeping and placement tricks. Tricks, Stutzman says, come from ancient principles dating back more than 6,000 years ago to create harmony within one's environment.

Stutzman hopes to connect her clients to their dream space by understanding feng shui's concepts.

There are three basic principles that compose feng shui. First, everything in the world has energy called chi. Secondly, there is an underlying connection and the goal is to be aware of how we are connected. Lastly, everything is in the cycle of change and one must modify to remain in balance.

In some ways, the ideas behind feng shui are not new to real estate. Seller staging in a real estate market uses a series of changes to improve the appearance of a house. "You can make any house feel better, but what I'm doing with real estate is what I like to call 'feng shui bones.' I want people to see that the property is important and can influence what you want to look for," Stutzman said.

Stutzman's house in Highlands is her fourth in 11 years and it isn't the largest she has lived in but she is very content. She said a dream house does not have to be thousands of square feet but it is maximizing the most of your space and attaching meaning and significance to what is there.

The first step for Stutzman when working with a client is to assess the positive and negative aspects of a space to decipher if that property will be successful for that individual.

"I want to help other people identify what works for them. Sometimes it just is a matter of looking at things differently. When people see their house I want them to say, "Oh, that is mine, I'm going to pull in

there!”

When she is consulting with someone looking to buy a home, she takes him or her through an interview process, asking a series of questions to identify which areas to focus on. For example, the way a house sits on a property creates a presence, impacting how you live in that place and is generally a permanent attribute of the house, Stutzman said.

“The goal is to identify where you can be in the present so as you make changes you can really have fun with it,” Stutzman said.

The principle elements of feng shui, which derive from nature, are: wood, water, earth, metal and fire. Different attributes, like colors and shapes, correlate to each component.

“I have found that the best and quickest way to shift energy levels in a person’s life and affect change is with color,” Stutzman said. “A lot of people are scared of color. You can have a neutral palette and still incorporate explosions of color.”

Suggestions for incorporating color include a painting, chair, plant or bookshelf. Simply pick a color to balance the neutral tapestry. “Move color through the environment,” Stutzman said.

Some colors seem to be the natural representation. Red signifies fire and natural tones represent the earth component. Other elements may have associated colors that surprise you. Black signifies water and blue and green align with wood. Metal is depicted through whites and pastels.

Each element also has a shape association: triangles with fire, columns with wood, wavy flowing lines with water, squares or rectangles with earth and columns with metal.

Incorporating these elements and creating a balance can make a house feel good from the outside in and supports the occupants emotionally and physically Stutzman said.

“After a long day people sometimes think, if I could just get outside. Nature has a calming quality. It is getting your home to make you feel like that. The trick is to feel as good on the inside as the outside. Everyone understands when something feels good but they don’t necessarily know how to fix it,” Stutzman said.

She suggests recognizing the problem or solution and either changing what you can or carrying it through if it works. “If there is something going on in your life – identify, change, maintain or secure,” Stutzman said.

One of the tools of feng shui is a bagua template. The bagua template can overlay an area, showing a correlation between a particular space and aspect in your life. A bagua template can be placed over something as large as the plot of land you want to build on or as small as an individual desk.

There are nine areas of the bagua template. Each has a traditional name but over the years a shortened or dubbed form has created a new tagline. Areas include career, marriage, family, wealth or prosperity, unity, health, helpful people, offspring, inner knowledge and fame.

Each area incorporates an element. For example, the water element is usually important at the front of the house. Fire elements can evoke stress, and thus should not be the first thing that you see when you walk in your house. Try tucking fire elements in the back of the house Stutzman said.

Stutzman trained in 1998 under Terah Kathryn Collins who teaches at the Western School of Feng Shui based out of San Diego. Stutzman first heard Collins while attending a conference in Atlanta where Collins was speaking to 2,000 women. Stutzman vividly remembers how Collins talked about the need for furniture on wheels because of always wanting to rearrange belongings. She remembers Collins posing the question what is going on in which you feel like constantly changing the order?

For Stutzman, feng shui answered that question and she decided to pursue the study more. The training was a process that took several months for Stutzman to complete. Similar to a college course there were assignments, homework, reviews, case studies and tutorials.

She added two additional teachers, Professor Thomas Lin Yun of Berkley, Calif., and Karen Kingston.

Lin Yun is a 50-year grand master whose teachings Stutzman describes as esoteric, taking her deeper into the study.

Karen Kingston, who lives six months in Bali, and travels the other 6 months, wrote *Creating Sacred Space with Feng Shui*. In Kingston's book she talks about the art of space clearing and harnessing new energy, transporting it into your life.

In 2000 Stutzman traveled to Bali and studied with Kingston. "Bali's culture is one in which the people live Feng Shui. It is about being sacred in their space. They begin their day with clearing out the clutter. They bless each room. They live with sound and color," Stutzman said.

Cleaning, decluttering and rearranging can all be a part of removing clutter and negative energy. Stutzman said that removing distractions and negative energy builds segues into vibrancy, stimulation and space. "Our homes are really a reflection of what is going on. If you are chaotic inside you may want to declutter. If you are feeling asleep, you might have too much water in your environment and we might need to wake you up."

She suggests going through your house to see what you really attach and find meaning in. "You can't cure something that doesn't mean something to you. It just takes up space and fosters negative energy," Stutzman said.

When de-cluttering your house, Stutzman recommends asking yourself some basic questions to outline what is important to you. What are you tolerating? Stutzman said something like a dishwasher blocking a cabinet could turn frustration into pint up toleration. What drains your energy? Think about the potential blocks to eliminate those energy drains. What are 10 things that you are tolerating about your home? Eventually whatever your answer to this question is will wear you down.

"We honor where it comes from but if you can't fix it, remove the dysfunction and fix it correctly. Sometimes something needs to be completely reworked or redone to remove the frustration," Stutzman said.

The teachings of Lin Yun and Kingston combined to provide what Stutzman was searching for. "When I began my training, I checked into the various schools of feng shui and decided that I resonated best with the Western School of Feng Shui. It honors the essence of the traditional feng shui, but is more in line with our culture here in the United States," Stutzman said.

The year that Stutzman officially began her studies the term certification developed into the buzzword. "I am still a student of feng shui among my peers as a master of feng shui which is one that has studied with a master and worked with the energy for at least 20 years," Stutzman said.

Utilizing her experience and time working with life coaches, Stutzman has incorporated the philosophy of figuring out where you are today and where can you go.

Years ago Stutzman used to work with life coaches and says that she could go into a client's house that was working with a life coach and figure out what was going on based on the order of their house.

"I started identifying things. I could go in their homes and see how they were feeling and see things that were impacting their relationships and communication. I would write a report and give recommendations that would exactly match that of the life coach," Stutzman said.

Stutzman was living in Florida when her mother and dog died within two weeks of each other. Her mother had lived with her for five months while battling cancer. "I had never been around death before, much less my mother. After coming home from the funeral, my house was empty of my mother, my sister who had come to help me that summer, Hospice and my dog. It was my husband and me, and everything had changed. It was during the emptiness that I realized that my house needed changing, and the redecorating started!"

New wallpaper covered the walls and Stutzman shifted things around in the house. "I didn't know why I needed to do this, but I was passionate about changing everything. I now understand that my house needed to support me with the changes that I had made and was making."

Changing with your house is an important lesson she says she has learned. "There is energy in your home. Our lives are full of momentous times when things change and we need a way to express it. Feng Shui tries to get environment to support and transition these changes. We all go through cycles."

She is passionate about people feeling comfortable in their homes. As an expression of sympathy for those that lost their homes in New Orleans, Stutzman joined forces with a group of local women to assemble bead bracelets to hang on doorknobs. "We started beading after Katrina happened. Their homes were in devastation and we wanted to honor the families.

This past fall some of the group members took the bracelets to New Orleans "It was an expression that someone was thinking about them," Stutzman said. The group hopes to sell the bracelets, which Stutzman has hanging on her front door, as a fundraiser to rebuild homes in New Orleans.

Her workshops on Feng Shui are free and she invites the public to attend. Each workshop explores a different aspect. On Tuesday July 17, she will discuss what she calls the bones of Feng Shui, a personal exploration into how houses reflect individual lives and how changes can yield enhancements. In addition, participants will learn how to work with a Bagua Map. The workshop will take place at Soul Journey in Cashiers. On Aug. 21, the discussion will center on the placement of doors, thresholds and entryways.

