

Preparing Your Home for Sale Checklist

Nanaimo, British Columbia • By Alvin Tan • November 15, 2026

What should I do first?

Start with a property walkthrough before moving furniture out or booking renovations. Make one prioritized list of documents, repairs, cleaning and presentation tasks. Agree on a budget, assign each task an owner and work backwards from a realistic photo and listing date.

Sellers also asked

Should I empty the house first? Not automatically. Decide which furniture helps show room size, flow and purpose before removing it.

What if I have limited time? Prioritize safety and unresolved issues, then clean, declutter and finish the agreed high-impact tasks.

Do I need a major renovation? No blanket rule applies. Compare cost, delay and likely buyer concerns before committing.

Use pages 2-3 to plan the work. Page 4 answers practical questions and links to local resources.

Choose the work before you spend

A practical sequence to customize with your agent. These are planning suggestions, not a promise that every task is necessary or included in listing services.

1. Walk through and sort priorities

Tour the entrance, main rooms, storage areas and exterior together. Separate unresolved condition or safety concerns from cosmetic work. Record what needs a qualified professional; do not conceal problems with paint or staging.

2. Gather records while decisions are being made

Collect available permits/plans, renovation invoices, warranties, service records, property-tax information and past inspection reports. Flag missing records early rather than guessing about ages, dimensions or approvals. [1, 2]

3. Agree on repairs, furniture and spending

Keep useful, well-scaled furniture; remove excess rather than automatically emptying rooms. Get written quotes and agree who books, pays and signs off. Cleaning, staging, repairs and inspections can be separate costs. [1]

4. Finish messy work, then clean and photograph

Complete agreed repairs before the final clean. Confirm furniture placement, lighting and photo readiness before booking final media. Leave a buffer for contractor availability, drying times and weather.

Room-by-room finishing checks

- ☐ Entry and exterior: clear access, tidy the garden, remove clutter and check visible maintenance needs. Arrange safe professional work where needed.
- ☐ Living areas and bedrooms: create clear walking routes, reveal floor space, keep a clear room purpose and remove personal valuables.
- ☐ Kitchen and bathrooms: clean surfaces and fixtures, reduce countertop clutter and investigate leaks or persistent odours rather than masking them.
- ☐ Storage and utility areas: organize without hiding access to equipment, panels or inspection points.

Alvin's perspective: declutter is not the same as empty

In a seller consultation I recall, the owners had already removed their furniture. To me, the empty house felt less welcoming and risked looking like a rushed sale. We brought furniture back for staging and made a few improvements. In my experience, it sold faster and for more money. That is my account of one experience, not proof that staging alone caused the outcome or a promise of the same result for another home.

Assign owners, dependencies and sign-off

Start with the essential work. Add optional tasks only after agreeing on cost, timing and purpose.

Property: _____
Target photo date: _____ Target listing date: _____
Approved preparation budget: $_____ Buffer: $_____

Task / priority	Owner	Effort / cost	Must happen first	Due / sign-off
Walkthrough / priorities	Owner + agent	Agree together	Before booking work	
Gather records	Owner	Confirm lead time	Before factual claims	
Repairs / quotes	Assign	Written estimate	Scope + budget approved	
Furniture / staging	Assign	Confirm any fees	Presentation plan agreed	
Final clean / exterior	Assign	Hours + quote	Repairs completed	
Photography readiness	Owner + agent	Confirm booking	Cleaning + staging done	
Launch review	Owner + agent	Confirm together	Facts + photos reviewed	
Your extra task:				

Final launch check

- ☐ Agreed work complete, invoices and any outstanding issues reviewed.
- ☐ Photo/video appearance matches the property; facts and claims checked.
- ☐ Showing access, notice arrangements, pets and valuables planned.
- ☐ Seller and agent agree the property is ready and approve the launch plan.

Notes / next review date: _____

Make the plan fit your home

How long should preparation take?

There is no universal timeline. Work backwards from the proposed photo date, allowing for repairs, quotes, contractor availability and missing records. Change the launch date if essential work is not ready.

What if my budget is small?

Set a spending ceiling first. Prioritize unresolved issues and inexpensive improvements such as cleaning, decluttering and thoughtful furniture placement. Do not assume every renovation pays for itself.

Should I keep furniture in a vacant home?

Discuss key rooms before moving everything out. Furniture can help buyers understand scale and function, but the right plan depends on the property, cost and logistics.

Can I do repairs myself?

Handle only work you can complete safely and competently. Use qualified professionals for specialist work and confirm any approvals before starting.

What if building plans are missing?

For properties in the City of Nanaimo, check the City's current building-plan request process and access requirements. Requests can take several weeks, and older plans may not exist. Properties outside City limits need the relevant local authority. [2]

What should be agreed before photos?

Finish the agreed preparation, check room presentation and access, secure valuables, and confirm which factual details still need verification. Do not let the photo appointment rush unresolved decisions.

Useful sources and next steps

[1] Financial Consumer Agency of Canada: Selling a home (October 10, 2025). Supports cost categories and documents to gather.
[2] City of Nanaimo: Requesting Building Plans (July 28, 2026). Supports local access requirements, possible delays and missing older records.
Sources checked November 15, 2026. Preparation suggestions and the example are Alvin's guidance, not source-reported performance evidence.

Discuss your preparation plan: 778-762-0707 • alvin@alvintan.ca
Selling your Nanaimo home • Request a home evaluation

General planning information, not a home inspection, construction specification, legal advice or guarantee of price or time to sell. Confirm the property-specific scope and any third-party costs before authorizing work.