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Adjectives Get Evicted

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"I have a wonderful apartment on Central Park West that has park views," she said, referring to a two-bedroom prewar co-op apartment currently listed at \$4.15 million. "I was so tired of using the words 'park views' that I decided to write 'park vistas.' But it didn't show up on any keyword search. People would type in 'two-bedroom Central Park views' and ours didn't come up."

On the Internet, photos speak as loudly, if not louder, than words. These have changed, too; these days they project investment-worthiness.

"There are no more obsessive-compulsive close-ups of faucets and toilets," said Mr. Ehrmann. "Now you're shooting the size of the space — the long shot, not the close-up. You have to be able to convey some sense of value."

Pretty pictures aside, how does a seller know if advertising is working? Mr. Purcell says that an ad that prompts 5 to 10 phone calls is effective in the current market.

But some buyers wonder whether brokers may be spinning the degree of spinning going on.

"I haven't noticed that advertising has really changed," said Alison Blackman Dunham, 50, a freelance writer and online advice columnist who lives in Brooklyn Heights. She and her husband, John, are shopping for a [Manhattan](#) apartment with a view of the Hudson River for under \$1 million.

"I'm absolutely seeing 'all the luxury-you-deserve' and 'high-end-living' kind of stuff," she said. "If anything, I've noticed that that's what they're pushing, the marble bathrooms and elegant lifestyles. And it's not a turnoff to me. I don't feel apologetic or gleeful about what's happening in today's world. I've worked hard in my life to get to the point where I can even afford to consider moving, and if I want to live like a pasha, no one's going to make me feel guilty that I'm not more frugal."

While she has noticed more announcements about price reductions and deals to be had,

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she said these come-ons were lost on her: “There’s a reason why the price is so low—you may be next to a dump or on the first floor.”

Asked to describe an ideal ad, she gave this advice:

“Tell me the number of square feet and whether that includes the balcony or the bathroom. Tell me if there’s an issue, like if it’s on the first floor or next to a place where they’re grinding up glass for recycling or if the maintenance is high. I want to know how long it’s been on the market.

“Show me real pictures,” she implored. “Do not show me a picture of the neighborhood or somebody with a Cartier bag. I do not want to see the lobby or the health club. I want to see close-up pictures of the apartment so I can see its warts — if you’re next to a playground, there’s some mother who will love it, but it’s not for me.”

Ms. Kory delivered a sympathetic but firm response to Ms. Dunham’s suggestions.

She explained that in order to avoid lawsuits by buyers, brokerages allow their agents to advertise co-op square footage only if it can be backed up in writing by an expert source like an appraiser, co-op board or architect. (Condo measurements taken from the offering plan are permitted.)

As to Ms. Dunham’s call for warts-and-all transparency in advertising?

“Her point is well taken,” Ms. Kory said, “but our job as brokers is to get people through the door, and our responsibility when advertising is to the seller. What seller would like you to say the apartment is on the first floor, across from a playground, and needs work? We don’t want her frustrated by seeing a playground, but on the other hand, she might fall in love with the apartment and end up buying it because it meets her needs in every other way.”

Well, maybe. But there’s also a risk of aggravating the playground-adverse buyer who expects straight talk from advertisements.

Ms. Dunham, a k a Advice Sister Alison, had more to say about that: “Don’t use all caps, which is like screaming at me and just connotes cheap and annoying and gives me a feeling I won’t like the broker,” she advised. “And I don’t like things that flash at me or take a long time to load.”

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