



The Steps to Effectively Marketing and Selling Your Home

How's Your Home Look from the Street?

Paying attention to cosmetics can mean money in your pocket.

- Cut and edge the lawn.
- Fertilize the grass.
- Plant flowers; yellow is a very inviting color.
- Place potted plants strategically.
- Trim the shrubbery to below the windows.
- Clean the gutters.
- Clean the siding; make sure it's moss-free.
- Fill cracks in the sidewalk, foundation and patio.
- Does the driveway need resurfacing?
- Clean the windows and replace cracked or broken panes.
- Freshen the paint as needed.
- Pay special attention to spruce up the front door and entry area.
- Remove clutter, trash and hide your tools.
- Make sure house numbers are visible.

What Will Potential Buyers Think of the Interior?

A great first impression can mean a faster sale at a higher price

- Remove clutter aggressively.
- Store extra furniture.
- Remove valuables.
- Do the small repairs you've been putting off, like fixing leaky faucets.
- Clean, clean, clean: Dust, vacuum, bleach dingy grout, replace caulk, wax the floors.
- Freshen towels, renew bedspreads and replace worn rugs.
- Touch up surfaces.
- Freshen window treatments.
- Eliminate cooking or pet odors.

Gather Your Documents

- Deed.
- Property tax statement.
- Mortgage documents.
- Other documents related to assessments, liens or other special circumstances.
- If applicable, documents associated with a homeowner's or condo-owner's association, including bylaws.

Using a Real Estate Broker vs. Selling Your Home Yourself

Some people successfully sell their homes themselves. In good sellers markets, roughly 20% of those who start alone complete the process. Conversely, about 70% to 80% of the people who intend to sell their homes themselves ultimately engage a real estate broker.

If you decide to try to sell your home yourself, you'll need to be prepared to determine a fair price, develop and execute a marketing program, create, produce and distribute advertising materials such as signs and flyers, acquire the forms you'll need, answer phone calls, show your home to serious buyers and casual, curious

shoppers alike, negotiate with buyers, evaluate their offers, determine your legal obligations to buyers in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, prepare disclosures, coordinate inspections, make certain all the paperwork is properly completed, and assure that your interests are well represented and guarded generally.

About the first time a stranger shows up without notice and wants to tour your home, when you're busy or need to leave, you may begin to seriously wonder whether a real estate broker isn't a very attractive alternative, after all.

The Benefits of Retaining a Real Estate Broker

Here's what a real estate broker can do to help you sell your home faster, at a better price.

- Market your home to buyers. The most valuable marketing you can do to sell your home is to put it in front of the marketplace. The marketplace, for all intents and purposes, *is* the multiple listing system: the community of agents of buyers and sellers and the buyers and sellers themselves.
- Create marketing materials with compelling words and photography.
- Reach buyers who live out-of-town; out-of-towners use realtors.
- Guide you in wisely price your home.
- Help you to protect yourself from legal entanglements.
- Present your home to buyers through open houses and personal showings.
- Qualify buyers.
- Negotiate dispassionately in your best interest.
- Market and advertise in a strategically and tactically sensible way.
- Make certain all necessary disclosures and paperwork are filled out properly.
- Buffer you from the inherent inconveniences of selling, freeing your time for more important things like job and family.
- Secure the safety of your family.
- Review and assess offers and prepare an acceptance or counter-offers.
- Keep the closing process moving.
- Prepare estimates of closing costs and net proceeds.
- Manage and hasten the closing process on your behalf.

Showing Your Home

Keep the house in good shape and ready to show and plan to disappear quickly before a showing. Turn on lights strategically. Turn on relaxed music. Pay attention to scents, possibly depositing a little vanilla or scented oils on warm light bulbs.

Then, it's time to go. Buyers will likely feel uncomfortable if you're there; and you don't want buyers to feel uncomfortable in your and potentially their home.

If the baby is asleep, you're in the middle of dinner or some other circumstance means you simply can't leave, welcome buyers, make them feel at home and assure them that you'll stay out of the way.

Be cognizant of security. It's a good idea to insist that buyers be accompanied by their agents. Buyer's agents likely will have performed preliminary qualification and screening. Additionally, a buyer's agent will accompany potential buyers with an eye on security. Problems in this area occur infrequently; but it's smart to take basic precautions.

Negotiation

The details of negotiations between a seller and a buyer will be different for every transaction. The essential standard here is to put everything, absolutely everything in writing with signatures of both the buyer and seller.

If at this or any other point during the selling of your home, you have questions regarding contractual or other legal matters, you should seek the advice of an attorney.

Post Acceptance

After you and your buyer agree on the terms of the sale, you'll be involved with inspections, possibly repairs or maintenance and even additional negotiation. A timeline, a schedule, a calendar of events will

significantly improve the efficiency of the process at this stage of the sale. Put a plan together and stick to it to avoid unnecessary frustrations and irritations.

Final Walk Through

Final walk through gives the buyer the opportunity before settlement and closing to inspect your home, to test appliances, check repairs and to confirm that the home is in the expected condition.

Settlement and Closing

The key to a smooth, efficient, irritation-free closing is to talk with both the loan processor and closing agent a few days before closing to confirm details of the closing. Expect to receive copies of closing documents in advance to check them for errors.

Check to make sure that both parties have submitted identical information regarding the transaction. As the seller, you want to verify that the selling price and the amount held in escrow are correct.

You also want to verify correct spelling of the names of all individuals that are in title to the property.

Be sure that the closing agent knows of any typos or other errors that may have occurred during the application process. Considering that information is submitted to current mortgagee, future mortgagee, title insurance company and other entities, it's easy to understand the ease with which errors might occur.

As the seller, you'll want to confirm, to the best of your abilities, that documents from past closings were recorded with accurate names and addresses.

Make sure the closing agent knows when you made your last payment to your current lender in order to calculate an accurate prorating.

If you intend that a third party such as an attorney or a family member review the closing papers in advance, make sure the loan processor and closing agent are aware of your intention several days ahead of closing. Some closing documents are date sensitive and need to be signed on the designated date.

You have a right to a private closing. If you intend to exercise that right, be sure to inform the closing agent of your intention several days ahead of closing.

Try to avoid closing at the end of the month. Closing agents, lenders, all the parties involved with home financing tend to be busier at the end of a month, enhancing the opportunity for error in document preparation.

Any funds you'll need at closing will need to be guaranteed funds. As a rule, if the instrument requires your signature, it's likely not acceptable at closing. You might have to go to the bank for a cashier's check or to wire funds directly to the closing agent. The closing agent will advise you on this matter.

Know where the closing will be held. The closing agent is your best source for closing location verification.

Bring a valid driver's license or other picture ID to closing for proper notarization.

Plan to schedule your closing during business hours. If you or the closing agent needs to contact any party associated with the transaction, that's easier to accomplish during business hours.

Congratulations, your home is sold and the transaction closed.