

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

TO SELLING YOUR HOME





LISTING AGENT INTERVIEW

Once you've decided to sell your home, your very first step should be to find an experienced, full-time, professional listing agent to help guide you through the home selling process. (According to the National Association of Realtors 2015 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers, agent-assisted homes sell for up to 18% more than For Sale By Owners, and choosing the right listing agent can, and will, have a tremendous impact on your home selling experience and your bottom line!)

When comparing listing agents, we feel that it is important to choose the agent that will do the most to market and sell your home, NOT the agent who tells you your home is worth the most, NOT the agent whose office is right down the street, and NOT the agent who has been in business the longest. (There are many agents who trade on their name recognition, but when you pull back the curtain, they do very little to make your home stand-out!)

Once you've chosen your listing agent, it's time to prepare your home for photography and get it ready for the market.

It's important to remember that there is a difference between decorating and staging your home to sell. Decorating is making your home match your personal taste and style, whereas staging your home for sale is neutralizing the decor so that it appeals to as many buyers as possible.

Listing Agent Interview Questions:

- Are you a full-time agent?
- Do you specialize in listings, or do you handle both buyers and sellers?
- What is your Average Days On Market?
- What is your Average List-To-Sale Price Ratio?
- Do you offer free homestaging?
- Do you have an incentive program for buyer agents that sell your listings?
- How do you keep buyers from renegotiating the price after their home inspection?
- Who photographs your listings?
- How would you market my home directly to buyer agents?
- How do you get your listings to stand out online?
- How much do you spend on advertising per month?
- How are showing appointments handled in your office?
- How do you handle calls from buyers looking for information on my home?
- Do you use a brochure box with flyers in front of my property and what sort of marketing materials do you place inside my home for buyers to take with them? (Did they bring samples)
- Would you hold an Open House?
- How is showing feedback conveyed to me?
- Do you provide simple-to-read offer review sheets that break down the terms of any offer you receive as well as a calculation of how much you would net from that offer?
- Do you offer any sort of after-sale benefits to your clients?

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR PHOTOGRAPHY



EXTERIOR OF HOUSE

- Cut, edge and trim the lawn
- Weed flower beds, prune trees or shrubs, and add fresh mulch where needed
- Move cars away from front and/or rear of house and close garage doors
- Move trash cans/recycling bins inside or away from house
- Hide hoses that are normally coiled up on the ground or on a portable cart
- Remove newspapers from driveway and sweep leaves
- Open deck furniture umbrellas, remove grill covers, and put any deck cushions on furniture
- Hide toys and sporting equipment in garage or storage containers
- Have roof cleaned to remove any black streaks on the shingles
- Clean and rinse gutters

INTERIOR OF HOUSE

- Turn on all interior lights - Make sure any burned out light bulbs have been replaced
- Clean vertical surfaces that reflect light, such as mirrors, refrigerators, windows, television screens, etc.
- Steam clean carpets and vacuum just before the photographer arrives
- Hide all pet beds, toys, bowls, etc. in a closet or storage container
- Open blinds and curtains
- Remove items other than non-religious framed art or décor hanging from walls
- Keep in mind that items being moved from room to room will show in photos of other rooms, so hide items in closets/storage areas that will not be photographed

KITCHEN

- Clear off countertops
- Remove hanging dish towels and small area rugs
- Hide garbage can along with pet food bowls, mats, and other items

BEDROOMS

- Make beds and be sure the mattress or any objects under the bed are not showing
- Hide all personal items such as books, phones, remotes, etc. (Tip: You can hide them under the pillows!)
- We suggest that personalized décor be removed from children's rooms so their names and pictures don't show in the photos which will go on the Internet

FOYER

- Make it look as large as possible by removing shoes, coats, throw rugs, etc.

DINING AREAS

- If dining area is small, remove extra leaves from tables to make the room look larger
- Show off the woodwork on the table by removing tablecloths and/or placemats
- Remove extra dining chairs from the room so it doesn't look overcrowded and smaller than it really is

LIVING AREAS

- Keep the floors as clear as possible to emphasize the beauty of any wood floors
- Make sure all televisions and computer monitors are turned off, and if portable, hide from view
- Clear surfaces such as end tables and coffee tables of items that are not decorative, and hide all magazines, books, remotes, tissue boxes, etc.

BATHROOMS/POWDER ROOMS

- Wash all mirrors - Even the smallest splatter mark is magnified in photos
- Hide the trash can, toilet brush, bath mats, and plunger
- Remove family bath and hand towels (Tip: Don't forget to remove the robe hanging on the back of the door) - Hang clean, decorative/nice towels
- Remove all toiletries from the counter and the shower/tub area, such as shampoo bottles, razors, toothbrushes, etc.
- Make sure the toilet paper roll isn't empty or hanging down off the roll

ACTIVE LISTING STAGE



Best Practices For Showing Your Home

- If at all possible, you should try to leave before every showing. (At a minimum, you should step outside when the buyers arrive)
- Set the thermostat to a comfortable level
- Leave the lights on
- Open all interior doors (except for closets/pantry)
- Pull back curtains and shades
- Open the blinds
- Make the beds
- Leave the kitchen sink clean
- Take out the kitchen garbage
- Leave toilet lids down
- Close shower curtains

Once an offer has been received and ratified (defined as the moment the last party to initial/sign has delivered the final changes to the other party), you are officially under contract and headed towards settlement.

CONTRACT TO CLOSE

TITLE REVIEW: The buyer's title company will send you a questionnaire to fill out, along with an authorization form allowing them to order a pay-off statement from your mortgage company. These forms should be filled out and returned ASAP, as the title company must review the chain of title to your property and will need enough time to address any issues that arise from their title search. (If you can provide a copy of the title insurance policy you were issued when you purchased the property, you should provide a copy of that to the buyer's title company as well.)

HOA/CONDO DOCUMENT ORDER: If your property is part of a Home Owner's Association or Condominium Association, your buyer has a right to receive what is called a re-sale packet. This package will contain a new set of rules and regulations for the community, a copy of the community budget, and a statement saying that you are current with your dues, and that there are no outstanding violations with the property. Since your

buyer will have a 5 or 7 day right of rescission once you provide these documents, it is important that they are ordered right away.

HOME INSPECTION:

Most sales are contingent on the buyer paying to have your home inspected by a licensed home inspector (usually completed within 2 weeks of contract ratification). Once they have performed this inspection, they will usually send an addendum requesting you to address any concerns they might have with the results of the home inspection. Once you receive



this inspection request, you will usually have 5 days to respond with what you would and would not be willing to address. (The buyer will then have 2 days to decide if they still wish to purchase the home.)* It is almost inevitable, that the home inspector will find something that needs to be addressed (even on homes that have been preinspected). All repairs should be performed by a licensed contractor with itemized receipts provided prior to settlement.

** As-Is Sales and Property Inspection Addendums containing a walk-way clause are different in that the buyer usually has the right to declare the contract null & void without giving you the option to address their concerns, if they are not satisfied with the inspection results.*

TERMITE INSPECTION: The boiler plate Maryland Association of Realtors contract specifically states that the sale is subject to a clean termite certificate. Some lenders require that the termite certificate is issued within 30 days of settlement, so this inspection may fall outside the buyer's allocated window for their other inspections (structural/mechanical, chimney, radon, etc.) The M.A.R. Contract specifically states that if wood-destroying insects are found, you are contractually obligated to have the house treated, and to have any wood insect damage repaired, as long as the cost to treat and repair the damage does not exceed 2% of the sale price.

APPRAISAL: Your buyer's lender will require an independent appraisal of the property. If the appraised value comes in at or above the sale price, the buyer's loan can move forward. If the appraised value comes in below the sale price, 1 of 4 things can/will happen: 1. The buyer can make up the difference between the appraised value and the contract price with additional cash at settlement, 2. The seller can lower the sale price to the appraised value, 3. The buyer and seller can negotiate a lower sale price, with the buyer agreeing to bring additional funds to cover the difference between the appraised value and the new sales price, or 4. The buyer can declare the contract null & void.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO PREPARE THE HOUSE FOR AN APPRAISAL THE SAME WAY YOU WOULD FOR A SHOWING!

FINAL WALKTHROUGH: Prior to settlement, the buyer has a right to do a final walkthrough. This is usually done the day before settlement, or the morning of. At this time, the buyer will confirm that the house is vacant, clear of trash/debris and in the same condition as it was in when the contract was ratified.

Preparing Your Home For Inspection

- Clean gutters/downspouts
- Make sure all light bulbs are in working order
- Change furnace filter(s)
- Move stored items away from walls in garage and basement storage areas
- Leave fan and fireplace remotes out and in working order
- Have the septic system pumped and leave receipts for the buyer
- If your home is on a well, place a towel over the kitchen sink faucet the night before your inspection to remind you not to use it the day of your inspection. (Water quality samples must be taken from the kitchen sink, and that sample must be the first draw from the sink that day.)



Tips For A Smooth Walkthrough

- Call your utility provider a few days prior to settlement in order to cancel service (Make sure that service stays on through the day of settlement, as you are required to have power/gas on for the buyer's walkthrough)*
- Mow the lawn one more time (if it needs it)
- Wipe down all counters/appliances
- Vacuum/mop all flooring
- Clean all bathrooms
- Check all tubs, toilets and sinks for last minute leaks
- Check all appliances to confirm they are still in working order.
- Don't forget stored items in the attic or under the deck
- Leave all keys, garage door remotes, and manuals on the kitchen counter



** If your house has a propane or oil tank, and your service provider automatically comes out to fill your tanks, make sure you cancel your service well in advance of closing. The tanks must have enough fuel in them to test the appliances/systems that use them at your final walkthrough, but you do NOT get reimbursed for any fuel left in the tanks.*

SETTLEMENT: At settlement, you will need to provide two forms of ID. You will review your closing disclosure with a title attorney, sign a deed transferring the property to the buyer along with a few other forms, and either receive a cashier's check or provide wiring instructions for your proceeds.



Notes



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