

GETTING READY TO SELL

Understand Market Conditions

The real estate market is in constant flux, not only as a whole but in particular areas as well. Knowing what is going on in the overall and local real estate markets will help you understand how these conditions can affect the sale of your home. We've designed the following chart to help give you an overview of the three significant market positions. When you meet with your agent, ask about the current state of the market.

1. Buyers' Market:

The supply of homes on the market exceeds demand.

Characteristics: High inventory of homes. Few buyers compared to availability. Homes usually stay on the market longer. Prices are stable or perhaps dropping.

Implications: Buyers spend more time looking for a home, and when they negotiate, they usually have more leverage.

2. Sellers' Market:

The number of potential buyers exceeds the supply of homes on the market.

Characteristics: There is a smaller inventory of homes with many buyers. Homes sell quickly. Prices usually increase.

Implications: Prices may be higher or perhaps climbing. Buying decisions must be made quickly. Conditional offers may be rejected.

3. Balanced Market:

The number of homes on the market is roughly equal to the demand.

Characteristics: Demand equals supply. Sellers accept reasonable offers. Homes sell within a reasonable time period. Prices generally remain stable.

Implications: There is less tension among buyers and sellers. There is a reasonable number of homes to choose from.

Do You Have All of the Necessary Documents Handy?

Gather the documents you'll need to sell your home.

- Mortgage documents: you may wish to meet with your loans officer to discuss transferring, discharging or paying out your mortgage. This is a good time to begin negotiations on the terms of your next mortgage.
- Property survey: be sure to inform your agent if there have been any changes to your property that could affect the accuracy of the survey.
- Your deed or transfer of title document.
- Tax assessment documents.
- Utility bills.
- Other claims relating to your home:
 - separation agreement or court order
 - will or probate documents
 - liens
 - unpaid judgments against you
 - unpaid taxes
 - unpaid utilities
 - pending litigation
- Pertinent condominium documents (if you live in this type of home).
- Maintenance history (include repair receipts).
- Items and information that will make your home more marketable:
 - photographs or videos of your home with the garden in bloom or your pool open and beautiful
 - conceptual ideas for upgrades or renovations that you have considered

Determine Your Asking Price

Before you put your home up for sale, you must set the price. And before you can do that, you must know what the house is worth. That doesn't mean what you paid for it, or how you upgraded it. Determining worth is simply finding out what someone would pay for it.

The steps in determining worth are:

1. Understanding market conditions
2. Getting the details about recent sales in your neighbourhood

Your agent has access to all of this information. Plus, he can objectively see the big picture and tell you what makes your home unique.

Once you've determined your home's worth, you and your agent will determine the asking price. Most often, the price of a home is set slightly higher than its worth, to give a little "bargaining space." Of course, if it is set too high, it may deter prospective buyers.

If you're in a rush to sell your home, setting the asking price a little lower than what your home is worth will attract a lot of attention. But beware, if the price sounds too good to be true, buyers may be skeptical. They may even offer less than the asking price anticipating problems with the home down the road.

You will have a legal relationship with your agent. When you complete the listing agreement, you are giving to your agent the authority to put your house on the market for a specified period. If your house is sold during that time, you will pay the agreed-to commission. What's more, if the house sells shortly after the specified period because of your agent's efforts, you are still obligated to pay the commission.

Should You Offer Any Additional Items? You may choose to include your appliances in the sale, or you may offer a redecorating allowance. You may also be able to offer creative financing. You may also consider purchasing a home warranty (covering major appliances and systems) to make the home more attractive.

Make Your House More "Sellable"

Is Your House in Any Condition to Be Put Under a Microscope?

That's what they say about first impressions. Now, take a look at your house as if you were a buyer. With a critical eye, examine your home from outside and inside. Bring along a pad of paper and take notes! Determine what can be solved by a simple cleaning and what needs professional attention and repair. Your list should also include problems that are immediately evident and underlying problems you know of, like a leaky basement.

Let's start with the exterior of your home. Think of what you would like to see when you're viewing a home, or better still what you wouldn't like to see -- cluttered yard, weeds crowding the garden, loose or dangling exterior features (like a broken door), paint peeling, broken fence, or an oil-stained, damaged driveway.

Get out your ladder and inspect the roof. Are the shingles in good shape, are the gutters in good condition and free of debris? You may wish to trim back any trees or shrubs that are leaning on your roof or drainage system.

Take a good, objective look at the outside. Would what you're facing invite you to explore further or make you ready to leave?

Simply having the lawn mowed or the driveway shoveled in the winter will make a better impression. Also, remove any "cutesy" lawn decorations that may have home viewers rolling their eyes. And trim any overgrown shrubs or hedges. If you have a sizable property, you may also wish to hire a professional to weed and feed your lawn.

Flowers are a very effective way of adding colour and warmth to your home. If you're selling during the spring, plant flowers to make the property colourful and inviting. A bouquet or two in your house also adds a nice touch.

The Next Step

You're in the home. Your five senses are alert. Is what you see clean and organized? Is there an odour? Old shoes? Stale cooking? Garbage? Pets? If there is, it could be a deterrent to potential purchases. Bake cookies or simmer potpourri before your home is shown to give your place a comforting smell. Also, clean your carpets and air out your home.

And speaking of carpets, cleaning them is fairly inexpensive. Without the grit, and with the carpet pile looking fresh, your home takes on a new appearance. While you're at it, take a broom around and brush your walls and light fixtures to remove any cobwebs.

Work your way from the ground up. Wash the walls or repaint soiled areas. Touch up chips or plaster nicks. If you've used severe designs or dark colours on your walls, you may wish to repaint your home so that has a more neutral move-in appearance. Also check the ceiling and plaster and repaint it white if necessary.

Clean and Shine

Put extra emphasis on your kitchen and bathroom. Replace moldy shower curtains and clean mold and mildew off of bathroom tiles. Caulk if necessary. Repair leaky faucets and replace cracked toilet seats. Ensure that the toilet flushes properly. Make certain that the drains are unclogged. Everything should sparkle -- faucets, floors, counters, mirrors. What can be cleaned, should be!

In the kitchen, clean the stove and refrigerator, organize the cupboards and wash the floor. Make certain your appliances work. Wipe the walls, touch-up paint or re-stick wall paper if necessary.

Clean the sink and ensure that it drains properly and the faucet doesn't leak. (When your home is shown, make sure there are no dirty dishes in the sink and don't forget to take out garbage out!)

Check All Floors and Stairs

Replace missing or damaged tiles. Is there any wood rot? Do the floors look clean? Does the wood need a good sanding and varnishing? Does the floor squeak? (There's a new device on the market that enables you to invisibly fix your squeaky floor right through the carpet. Ask your hardware retailer for details.)

Are your stairs creaky? Are the handrails loose? Are there any missing pieces?

Examine All Doors and Windows

That means all interior and exterior doors. Look for structural or surface damage. Do the doors need repainting? Do the hinges squeak? Are the door knobs worn - and do they work?

Are the windows drafty or are they properly caulked? Are they easy to open? Are they clean? It goes without saying that all window panes should be crystal clear and unbroken.

Take a Good Look At the Basement

If it is finished, make sure that it is as spotless as the rest of your home. If it is used as a storage area, eliminate the clutter and organize all boxes. (This will also help you with the move!) Check for any signs of dampness.

Have the Plumbing and Electricity Checked

Are there leaky pipes or electrical outlets that don't work? Have them repaired before you put your home on the market. Also, it's a good idea to replace any broken switch or outlet covers and match switches and covers to the room decor.

Make Sure the Furnace and Air Conditioner Work

Replace the furnace filter and have the furnace and air conditioner professionally serviced.

Don't Just Hide Clutter

Buyers will look everywhere -- into cabinets, under carpets, inside closets. (You think you had it bad with nosy relatives poking around!) Plus, a clean house gives the impression of being larger.

Home Inspection Checklist

Make notes on what needs minor clean up and what needs a major repair. Evaluate your home as if you were a potential buyer, so the key is to be honest with yourself!

Chances are you've bought a new home, or are in the process of looking for one. While you already have experience with the home-buying process, our comprehensive first-time buyers' guide has all the information, calculators, worksheets, checklists, calendars and tips you need.

Choosing the Right Agent

As your agent, I am a trained professional who knows all aspects of the real estate market. I will save you time, money and aggravation.

If you would like to sell your home quickly and for the best price possible, please feel free to give me a call. I will provide you with a free complimentary market evaluation (so you know what your home will sell for on today's market), and answer any other questions you have.

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This document is not intended to solicit properties already listed for sale with another broker.