

The Home Selling Process

1. Determine the value of your home - This can be done by hiring a real estate professional (agent, broker or appraiser) to go over past sales data within your neighborhood to determine what buyers are willing to pay within your area. It's important to get more than one price opinion, so you don't accidentally over or under estimate the value of your home. Homes listed for 10% more than what buyers are willing to pay get 40% less activity and showings than those that are priced correctly.
2. Prepare your home - Depending on your motivation, and your desire to get top dollar, this will be one of the most important steps to getting the results you demand. Buyers expect a fresh, clean and depersonalized house when envisioning their family dwelling. Spend a weekend (and \$200) painting the interior of the home; this by far offers the highest return for your investment. Follow the fresh coat with a thorough cleaning, and take down ALL family photos. Organize your belongings to make every room (and closets) appear as large as possible. Other high return investments:
 - a. Mulch the front, and add a few indigenous plants
 - b. Paint the exterior
 - c. Repair anything broken
3. Advertising and Marketing your Home - Once you feel your home is "ready," take high quality pictures, making each room appear as large as possible. The optimum number of photos your listing should have is between 20 - 25. Once you have great pictures, post them on as many listing sites as possible. If you have a great agent, he/she will take advantage of listing platforms that advertise your property across multiple websites throughout the country, and even internationally. Make sure you prioritize online marketing above anything else, since over 90% of home buyers shop online. If you have successfully priced your home, and advertised it well, you should have people scheduling showings in now time.
4. Receiving Offers and Negotiating a Deal - At some point after you've been diligently marketing your home, an eager buyer (or their agent) will call to tell you that they will be submitting you an offer. The obvious items to take in to consideration are the price, their escrow deposit and when they will close (usually 30 days after the offer is accepted), but make sure not to overlook any contingencies the offer may include. These items may be "subject to the sale of their current home," or financing methods other than a conventional mortgage or cash. Any offer subject to financing should be accompanied by a pre-qualification letter from an approved lender. Be sure to review their offer carefully

before getting locked in to a legal obligation. Your real estate agent or attorney will be able to guide you on acceptable terms.

5. Opening Escrow and Ordering Title Insurance - Once a sales contract has been signed by both buyer and seller, a title company or closing attorney must be chosen to coordinate the transaction. Once the buyer has deposited their escrow deposit with the title company, they will send you a receipt of escrow as proof. Your title officer will order title insurance and run a title and lien search on your property to ensure the buyer that no encumbrances or defects in the chain of title exist.
6. Provide the Buyer with all Legal Disclosures - Depending on your circumstances, a Seller's Property Disclosure may be required, which informs the buyer of all material defects that could affect the value of the home. Additional disclosures required are for homes built before 1978, in order to inform the buyer of a seller's awareness of the presence of lead based paint. Additionally, if you are selling a condominium, you must provide any prospective buyers the Declaration of Condominium, Articles of Incorporation, Association Bylaws, Rules and Financials, or the buyer has the right to walk away from the deal at any time before closing.
7. Inspections and Appraisals - Each sales contract has a specific "inspection period" defined where during that time a buyer has the opportunity to conduct their due-diligence on the home. Your agent or yourself will work with the buyer or buyer's agent when scheduling inspections and appraisals. Make sure your utilities are on! These are for the buyer's benefit, and are the buyer's responsibility to obtain. Keep in mind that most loans require an appraisal in order for it to be processed.
8. Negotiating Repair Items - Once the inspector delivers his/her inspection report to your prospective buyer, there may be more than one item within the report that raises a red flag. At this time, the buyer will present the items of questions to you, the seller, and most likely request that they be addressed, or a credit awarded at closing. An experienced real estate agent will know how to negotiate the best deal for you, the seller, so little to no out of pocket expenses are required prior to closing.
9. Stay on Top of Your Buyer's Lender - Each contract for purchase will have a defined "loan approval period," (usually 30 days), where a buyer works with their lender to secure financing. During this time period a loan is submitted to underwriting, and all pertinent financial information of the borrower is verified. You'll want to keep tabs on this process, and make sure the lender is making diligent efforts to allow for a closing within contractual guidelines.

10. Review and Sign the Closing Disclosure - 3 days prior to closing, it's required by federal law that a title agent or attorney issue a Closing Disclosure which defines all title, loan and broker charges associated with the sale of a property. Make sure to carefully review and ask your agent or title officer about any figures that you are uncertain of.

11. Review and Sign the Closing Documents - Your title officer will have scheduled a time for you, the seller, to review and sign all documents associated with the sale of your property. Make sure you bring your I.D. as this is required. Before signing any documents, make sure your title agent or attorney thoroughly explains the information and you have a full understanding. Your title agent will ensure proper recording of your property deed, reconveyance and deed of trust.