

Complete Guide to Home Selling

Easy guide to the home selling process,
updates and staging, and answers to the
Seller's most common questions

This guide presented courtesy of...

Erica Guelinas
Century 21 Circle
Call/Text: 219-765-2062
HSByErica@gmail.com
www.HomeSalesByErica.com



ERICA GUELINAS
HOME SALES BY ERICA
CENTURY 21 CIRCLE

Thanks for contacting me!

My job is to represent your real estate interests as a client. To know the facts. To know the market. I pledge my loyalty, integrity and effort to you. As your agent, the following are the commitments I make to you as we work together:

- ▶ I will provide you with reliable information and solid advice to help you make informed decisions.
- ▶ I will use our experience in negotiation skills to obtain the best price for your home.
- ▶ I will respect the confidential nature of the information you share with us.
- ▶ I will work on your behalf until you are completely satisfied.
- ▶ I will communicate with you regularly, in the manner you prefer, to assess and update the progress of selling your home.
- ▶ I will make sure the process from contract to closing runs smoothly, and keep it as stress-free for you as possible.
- ▶ I will provide you with the level of service that is deserving of your referral to your friends and colleagues.

If at any time now, or in the future, you have any questions about the home selling process, the lending process, a particular home or anything else, please feel free to call, text or email me - I'm happy to help!

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Selling Your Home

There are a lot of pieces to the decision to sell your home, and it's easy to be uncertain about when it's time to sell. Although the real estate market can factor into it, the best reasons are one that effect you, your family, and your lifestyle:

- ▶ Your Home is Too Small - Family, hobbies and business change over time, and your home cannot always change with it. You may need more space for your stuff, and need to upgrade.
- ▶ Your Home is Too Big - Your life might change in the opposite way - having too much space! Once kids grow up, interests change or habits simplify, you may find yourself with too much house to clean and enjoy
- ▶ Your Need Different Outdoor Space - Some people are looking for nice acreage away from it all, and some are looking to downsize their yard and their yardwork. Either one is a good reason to consider a sale.
- ▶ Your Home's Layout - You may find out that the home you're in doesn't work for your lifestyle. A house that was perfect for small children may not work for older ones who need privacy, or all of those stairs may not work for your knees anymore.
- ▶ You'd Like an Upgrade - Your current house may be perfectly fine, but looks dated. Upgrades can be done, but they can be very expensive depending on what you'd like. It may be a better

investment to buy a new home instead of remodeling the one you're in now.

- ▶ You Need a New Location - Changes in workplace, schools and activities may put your current home too far away. A different location can save you time and money, get you out of the car, and let you enjoy more time doing what you enjoy.

Contacting your agent about the possibility of selling your home is a good first step, and they will be able to tell you about your local market, your home's position in the market, and what you can get for your home in that market. Deciding to sell is a big decision, and there is a lot of information you need to have to make a good decision - your agent can get you that information, discuss your options and help you figure out a plan, for now or the future, that works best for you and your family.

10 Ways to Save Sellers Time and Money

- ▶ Turn Lights on for all showings - your house will appear bright and fresh.
- ▶ Paint any areas that are peeling - Before the appraiser notices and before the buyer tries to negotiate.
- ▶ Have furnace and air conditioner checked, serviced and cleaned prior to the inspection.
- ▶ Have carpets cleaned for a faster sale.
- ▶ Price your home at or just 1% below market to bring you a quicker sale without negotiating.
- ▶ Keep agent informed of any showings lasting over 30 minutes.

- ▶ Declutter – what you can live without, pack.
- ▶ Box and stack items in storage and garage on a wall in garage.
- ▶ Change light bulbs to the highest wattage acceptable to the fixture.
- ▶ Negotiate quickly and remember your first offer is most likely your best offer.

A Seller's Biggest Challenge – The Price!

Pricing is the most important part of a sale!

If you've ever sold a home, you know the worst part – the waiting game. You sign the papers, your Agent lists the home, and you....wait. Wait for showings, wait for offers, wait for responses. It's annoying and stressful. It leaves you wondering – what's the holdup? My house is awesome! 99% of the time, the answer is The Price.

Agents and Sellers agree that the most stressful part of the entire process is setting a price for your home. Clients fire Agents (and Agents have “fired” clients) over the price more often than you think. Putting a dollar amount on something so close to the heart is very difficult, but it's very important. Starting at a reasonable price is important because of:

Timing – Agents who are looking for homes for Buyers check the new listings every day, often with an automatic search that hits their Inbox every morning. Once your home hits the Listing Service, agents are going to see it right away. Generally, most activity on a listing is in the first two weeks – after that it slows down to an occasional showing and even more occasional offer. As time goes on, Agents have seen your house a million times on the Listing Service, and any excitement for their clients has faded away. Subsequent offers come in much lower because Buyers think you're desperate to sell after being listed for so long.

Negotiation – A lot of Sellers think that they should price much higher than the market price so they have room to negotiate. You should have some padding in your price, but too much room is trouble. What happens

is that a Buyer knows it's overpriced, so their offer comes in much lower than it would if it had been priced well. It's a psychological game – the Buyer thinks the Seller is trying to trick them, so they respond with a trick of their own, and everyone is unhappy with the offer.

Price Drops – Another Seller tactic is to start high, with the idea that they can drop the price later, hoping to capture a Buyer who's not familiar with the market. The problem is that any smart Buyer with a good agent will know the market prices, and it's almost impossible to get an offer at that price. And then, you have to drop your price. This looks terrible to Buyers – the assumption is that something is wrong with the property physically. The property may be perfect inside, but a price drop is a signal of trouble to a Buyer.

So, how to avoid a bad price?

There are two big pitfalls to avoid when pricing your home – one is taken care of by a good agent, and one you can do yourself.

Look at the Comps – “Comps” are comparable properties, and your agent can get data for sales in the area of your home. The first thing your agent should do on a listing appointment is talk to you about comps. They are readily available to your agent, and can be run on a crazy level of detail. Sometimes, comps are hard to come by for some homes – they may be truly unique or in an area where not a lot of homes are sold – but in general, numerous comps can be had for your house. A good agent will spend the time before your appointment reviewing all of the comps available, and narrowing them down to the most accurate for your home. If your agent does not have good comps for you, get rid of them and find another agent right away. Understanding comps is a basic part of being a real estate agent, and if they don't understand them or are unwilling to put in the work, they're not a good agent.

Check your Emotions – This is the hardest part of selling your home – all the paperwork and house cleaning and appointments are nothing compared to separating the emotional attachment to your home from the

reality of the market. Not only is this the place you've lived your life and had fun and been comforted, it's a part of your identity. This skews a Seller's opinion of the home, and understandably so. In addition, after having been with them for so long, little problems with the home become invisible to you – you don't even notice the crooked light post the former owner installed (and you never quite got around to fixing) but a Buyer will. Emotion attachment to your home can be hard to conquer, so make sure you discuss the price with your agent, and keep an open mind and eye to the reality of the market and your home.

Ultimately, you set the price of your home, but make sure you look at your options. A well-priced home sells quickly, and a good agent can give you the market information you need to make a good choice. No one wins when a home is sitting on the market forever, and it's a huge source of stress on a family. You may think that you can outsmart the market, but you really can't. Avoid overpricing your home – it's worth it in the end.

Determining the Value of Your Home

In a neighborhood of similar homes, why is one worth more than another? That's the question that's teased buyers and sellers for ages, but the answer is simple: Every home is different!

When a home is sold, a willing seller and a willing buyer have just announced to the world the value of that home. From there, other similar homes are benchmarked, but other factors come into play. The most important factors are:

Location

The closer a home is to jobs, parks, transportation, schools and community services, the more desirable it is

Size

Square footage impacts home value because they're built using more materials and mean more living space. Larger lots sizes mean more privacy.

Bedrooms and Baths

Over time, the average home has grown larger. Decades ago, household members shared bedrooms and baths without complaint, but today, families want more privacy. The median home purchased today is a three bedroom, two bath home.

Features and Finishes

Features such as outdoor gazebos and spa baths make a home more luxurious. A home finished with hardwood floors and granite countertops is going to cost more than a home with carpet and laminate countertops.

Condition

The closer a home is to new construction, the more it will retain its value. It's perceived as more modern, up to date and perhaps safer. Homes that are not updated or are in poor repair sell for less. It's a good idea for homeowners to keep their homes updated and in top repair.

Curb Appeal

From the street, the home looks clean, fresh and inviting. Fresh landscaping and flowers don't change the size or location of a home, but they certainly add charm.

When two homes are identical in the same neighborhood, a higher price may come down to something as simple as bathroom hardware, paint colors or the overall taste of the homeowner.

What is Market Value?

A Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) is an impartial evaluation of market activity in order to estimate a property's potential selling price. For some homeowners, the CMA does not provide the answer they want.

Here's a guide to determining the market value of your home:

The market value is NOT:

- ▶ What you paid for it
- ▶ What you have put into it
- ▶ What you need out of it
- ▶ What it is appraised for
- ▶ What your neighbor's home sold for

The TRUE Market Value of your home is:

- ▶ Based on today's market
- ▶ Based on today's competition
- ▶ Based on today's financing
- ▶ Based on today's economic conditions
- ▶ Based on the Buyer's perception of property condition

As a Seller, you control:

- ▶ The price you ask
- ▶ The condition of your property
- ▶ Access to the property

As a Seller you do not control:

- ▶ Market conditions
- ▶ The motivation of your competition
- ▶ Value

Market Value is determined by the worth an individual buyer places on your property in today's market.

Getting Your House Ready to Sell

A crucial part of marketing any product is the presentation of the product. Corporations and retail businesses understand this concept and pay millions of dollars each year to advertising and marketing consultants to get the best advice possible. The same is true for houses. In order to effectively compete with other sellers, homeowners must present their homes to the marketplace in an attractive, desirable condition. When you bought your home, you probably comparison shopped. Buyers are still doing that today. Regardless of how many properties are on the market, available buyers will always seek the best priced property that is in the best condition.

You are not just selling a house. You are selling a shelter, lifestyle, and dreams. People always want the best for themselves, and your home should represent the buyer's answer to this goal. Put yourself in the buyer's shoes! Remember, they arrive at your front door wanting to find the right home. Don't make them search somewhere else for it. If you have done your homework, every room in your home will create a desire for the buyer to stay. Complete all your repairs, improvements, and enhancements prior to your first showing. Remember, your best showings come early in the listing period. Be ready!

If you're selling your home, you have to look at your home with a stranger's eye. It can be weird and uncomfortable, because you've lived there for so long, and you've probably overlooked some things for a long time. Cracks in the drywall, the wine stain in the carpet, the giant creepy

spiderweb in the corner of the mud room – you’ll see a ton of stuff to do, and it may seem overwhelming at first. Clean up is easy, but when you start talking about actual money, it gets complicated fast as you add up the costs and look at the value of your home on the market. Here are some tips on what is cost-effective and brings Buyers in the door:

The Systems

These are not sexy, exciting things, but they are very, very important. A bath or kitchen remodel seems great, even if expensive, because you’ll end up with that glass tile you’ve always wanted and it will all be new and fancy. But, if your roof leaks or the furnace is on it’s last legs, Buyers won’t even see the new copper fixtures in the master bath. Pay attention to the HVAC, plumbing, roofing and electrical first, and if any problems are found, get them fixed. Not only are they a potential safety hazard, Buyers are wary of buying a home that needs so much maintenance. Some problems can be solved with a wrench and a new filter, but some may need a professional repair. Make sure you get a licensed professional for these kinds of repairs – a Buyer can be also be turned off by repairs made by Uncle Joe, and may ask for receipts or certifications. Fixing a problem with your systems always adds value, since the value of your home with a leaky roof or old fuse box is much lower than the market value of a similar home with no system problems.

Painting

Seems basic, but painting can be one of the most cost-effective updates you can make. A good can of paint costs \$35, but adds tremendous value, making a home feel fresh and clean to Buyers. Before you paint, take care of any old nail holes or paint chips with a little Spackle, and make sure to primer any dark paint surfaces. Also, tape any trim in the room – a messy line of paint on every door frame makes the entire house look sloppy, and makes Buyers wonder about how the Seller took care of the rest of the house. Some advise using only neutral colors of white or beige, but don’t

be afraid to use a little color – light yellows and blues can make a smaller house seem airy, and a deeper tan or green can set off a nice modern home with cathedral ceilings. Just stay away from super saturated colors like Navy Blue and Adobe reds, and if you have a kid's room with bright red paint and a clown mural, paint over it – even if the Buyers have kids, something so personal makes it hard for them to see their little princess in that room. Spend some time oiling hinges and cleaning light fixtures, and all new cover plates on the lightswitches and outlets will add to the new, clean look of the rooms.

Kitchen

Kitchens can be enormously expensive to update, and rarely do you get what you've invested in it back at the time of sale. Unless your kitchen has old plywood cabinets and Harvest Gold appliances, an inexpensive update may be enough to make it attractive to Buyers without losing a lot of money. Start with paint, and from there, replace the faucets and clean and oil all of the drawer slides and door hinges. If your cabinets are in good shape, consider replacing boring hardware with something more snazzy. A little more expensive, but consider adding new pendant lighting over an island, or a tiled backsplash over the counter tops. Many times, a trip to the local discount store like Restore can uncover just enough glass tile for your project or a brand new high end faucet – a quick weekend updating the kitchen can pay off, even if you don't replace all the cabinets or the flooring.

Bathrooms

Much the same as kitchens, but with more plumbing to worry about. First, make sure you clean the bathrooms – behind every toilet, under every sink, wipe out the drawers and clean out the shower door track. If your grout is dirty, take the time to clean it well, and remove and re-caulk the bathtub, shower, sink, or anywhere else there is a caulk line. If you have hard water, make sure to get every trace of rust off the tub and sink, and replace

shower heads if they're dirty or have calcium deposits. Bathroom upgrades can be expensive because of tile, and if your tile is good looking, I'd make sure it's clean and leave it alone. Again, clean drawer slides and oil hinges, and if your medicine cabinet is old and dirty, consider a replacement. Lighting upgrades and faucet replacement are other good options for the bathroom, and you can consider the same kind of cabinet hardware and backsplash upgrades as the kitchen. Again, check with a local Restore for good deals on fixtures, tile and lighting.

Basement

If your home has a basement, spend some time down there, assessing it as a Buyer would. Finished or not, there should never be a musty smell or any visible mold or dampness. If you have a musty smell or water issues, have a basement contractor come out for a free estimate – it may be something small, but it may be something expensive. Either way, a damp basement is almost always a deal killer for Buyers, and it will impact your home's value a great deal. Once that is taken care of, you can decide how to present the basement. Do your deep cleaning, take care of any discoloration on the walls with paint, and seal any cracks in the floor. Then, you probably want to stop – while a full finished basement is great and adds value, it doesn't usually add much, and almost never pays for itself. Most buyers are completely okay with an unfinished basement – if you give them a dry, clean surface to work with, they can finish it as they choose once they've lived there awhile.

Exterior Issues

There are big, expensive things and small, cheap things you can do to fix up the outside of your home for Buyers, and they can pay off through enhancing the curb appeal. Curb appeal is sometimes the most important thing to spend your money on, since if the outside is lousy, they will never see the great improvements you've made inside. On the less expensive end, look at your landscaping and take care of problem areas – make sure

you trim the bushes outside the window (unless you have those giant bushes in the front of the house – just cut those down entirely and get some nice box hedges), and in the Spring, plant some annuals around the sidewalks and driveway. One of the biggest impacts for the least money can be two simple planters on the sides of your front steps. Put grass seed down on thin areas, and repair any exterior lighting or cracks in the sidewalk. On the more expensive side, look at your siding – if it's old and losing it's color, think about replacing it. Not only will it make your house look much better, but you will be adding energy efficiency to the home. Another big ticket item that can pay off is your garage door. If it's dented, discolored, crooked or just ugly, replace it with a new door – not only will it look better, it will be safer, which will help with Buyers who are getting financing with an FHA loan. Another nice, relatively cheap upgrade is a patio or deck. If your yard is fit for one, install a small deck or patio space that will make the yard look more welcoming and fun.

Extra Spaces

In terms of adding on, think carefully about spending the money to add on to your home, or finish unused space like an attic or mud room. Big, expensive room additions rarely return a very good percentage of your investment, and depending on what and where you're adding it to, you may run into expensive problems like land grading and HVAC additions. If you have an easy to renovate area, it may be worth it – some insulation, drywall, paint and flooring can be cheap and easy, but an attic that needs a stairway and a separate furnace will not return your money except in very limited circumstances. If you have potential space to finish, empty it out and clean it well, but you may be better off leaving it unfinished so the Buyer to pay for the upgrade.

Bad Upgrades

Home offices – I'm not even sure what this would entail – a built in desk and shelves? Either way, skip this one – the return on your investment is

terrible, and sometimes negative if the Buyer needs that room for a bedroom.

Whole House Generator – These get pricey very quickly, and rarely does a Buyer care about generators.

Sun Room – Enclosing your front porch is a bad idea, even if you end up with more interior space. Exterior space is important as well, and an enclosed porch often ends up looking big and ugly from the outside.

Family Room – Not a terrible thing, but the return on the money you spend is not that great, especially if it's a new addition as opposed to a unfinished existing room. Most homes already have a good living room, and while an extra family room is great, it just doesn't add that much value.

There's lots to think about in terms of upgrading your home for sale, and since it's about money, it's good to be smart about it. Your Real Estate Agent can help you with this – they can look at comps and see what you're competing against. If every home on your block has a nice deck, you may want to think harder about that investment versus a kitchen upgrade or basement remodel. Just remember that you're not going to be enjoying that space, so focus on the money. Getting more out of a sale means you can add or upgrade your new home, not theirs.

Getting Your Home Ready for Showings

Today's buyer wants a home that is in "move in" condition, and they will walk away from a home that does not "show well" or is in poor condition just as fast as they will walk away from an overpriced property. There is a saying in the real estate industry that "you never get a second chance at the buyer of a lifetime." Here is a comprehensive checklist of items to get ready for that buyer:

Exterior

Landscaping:

- ▶ Plan ahead and plant grass seed where needed as the lawn can be a real turnoff or a “turn on.”
- ▶ It’s a good idea to prune away any trees that distract from the view of your home. Pruning low limbs on trees can make a major difference.
- ▶ Clean up everything. Make sure that any debris or broken fence parts, bricks, yard lights and mail boxes are in good repair.
- ▶ Remove any dead or dying shrubs, and replace them with fresh ones.
- ▶ Put new mulch in the flowerbeds, around shrubbery and the base of trees.
- ▶ Make sure that all walkways are cleaned and in good repair.
- ▶ Make sure that all exterior lighting works properly.
- ▶ Keep your lawn cut and neatly trimmed.
- ▶ Use large pots of flowers or green plants on the deck or the front porch. Hanging plants can also create a favorable impression.

- ▶ Repair cracks and damages in the driveway - in some instances it’s a good idea to have an asphalt driveway resealed before showing.
- ▶ If your home is going to be marketed during the winter months when ice could be a problem it’s important that you keep driveways and walkways cleaned and safe.

Exterior of the building:

- ▶ Repair and replace any broken or rotted trim and siding.
- ▶ Paint everything that needs painting. Most people prefer to buy a home that is in good repair and ready to move in. A home which needs to be painted is a real turnoff, especially if there are other homes from which to choose.
- ▶ Replace any missing shingles from the roof.
- ▶ Clean, repair, and replace any gutters and downspouts that are defective.
- ▶ Invest in a new doormat.

- ▶ Check all screens and storm windows to make sure they are in good repair.
- ▶ Consider “power washing” the exterior and the walkways, decks, driveways, etc. if they are very dirty or show signs of mold or moss.
- ▶ Have the windows and windowsills cleaned inside and out.
- ▶ Paint everything that is in question.

Interior of the Home

- ▶ Clean all the carpets and replace those that are worn or stained beyond cleaning.
- ▶ Remove any dated items such as wallpaper, carpets, light fixtures, etc.
- ▶ Repair any dings in the trim or cabinets. Hardware stores have a variety of new products that can make this job easy and fun.
- ▶ Replace any hardware like doorstops, hinges, doorknobs, shower rods, faucets and switch guards that have become worn, discolored or damaged.
- ▶ Make sure that all light fixtures are clean and in working order.
- ▶ Repair and/or replace any plumbing fixtures that are defective.

Decluttering Your Home

- ▶ It’s important that all clutter be removed from every room and every closet.
- ▶ Remove all of the boxes and clothes from the closets that are not going to be needed during the showing process.
- ▶ It may be a good idea to rent a storage space to store all of the items that are in the way. Don’t store them in the attic or garage as they still are a problem.
- ▶ Pack up all of your collectables to both protect them and to give the rooms a more spacious feeling and appearance.
- ▶ Leave just enough accessories to give the home a personal touch but

not so many that they become a distraction.

- ▶ Use light to make the home appear more spacious.
- ▶ Take time to open the drapes and blinds.
- ▶ Make sure that all the lights throughout the house are on before a showing.

Room-by-Room Staging Hints

The Front Entry—This is the area that forms the first impression of the house and it really needs your attention.

- ▶ Make sure that the entry is in as near-perfect condition as possible.
- ▶ The front door should be freshly painted.
- ▶ If the doorknob and locks are not bright and shiny, they need to be replaced.
- ▶ Well-placed and carefully chosen mirrors and rugs add to the appearance of any foyer or entry area.
- ▶ Remove any off-season clothing or other items from the entry hall closet that can be stored elsewhere.
- ▶ Remove any musty odor by adding a bag of cedar chips or some other fresh scent.
- ▶ Put a fresh coat of paint in the entry closet to brighten it.
- ▶ Water container plants/flowers. Replace if necessary.
- ▶ Dust entry table or shelves.

The Living Room/Family Room

- ▶ Dust surfaces (including TV screen).
- ▶ Straighten coffee table, bookshelves, and other areas.
- ▶ Stow away newspapers, magazines, books, games, toys and videos.
- ▶ Vacuum rugs or mop floor.
- ▶ Vacuum upholstered furniture; wipe down leather or vinyl.
- ▶ Sweep fireplace.
- ▶ Wipe down ceiling fan blades.
- ▶ Water container plants/flowers. Replace if necessary.

The Kitchen

- ▶ Mop or vacuum floor.
- ▶ Clean appliances.
- ▶ Avoid clutter! Clear items from countertops and cabinets.
- ▶ Wipe countertops and cabinets.
- ▶ Clean sink.
- ▶ Stow away kitchen sponge and dish towels.
- ▶ Open windows or run fan to remove cooking odors.
- ▶ Clean off the top of the refrigerator.

The Dining Room

- ▶ Visually imagine a large dining area.
- ▶ Remove extra “company” chairs.
- ▶ Take one or two leaves out of the dining table.
- ▶ Add fresh or silk flowers as a centerpiece on your dining table.

The Home Office

- ▶ Dust surfaces, including computer screen.
- ▶ Stow away files, preferably “off site.”
- ▶ Mop floor or vacuum rugs.
- ▶ Polish cabinets and woodwork.
- ▶ Straighten desk and bookshelves.
- ▶ Give away anything you do not use or is no longer needed.

The Bedrooms

- ▶ Large master bedrooms are extremely popular today. Make your bedroom appear larger by painting the room a light color if possible.
- ▶ Remove one of the dressing tables or bureaus if the room is crowded.
- ▶ Get rid of the clutter.
- ▶ Decorate the private bath of the master to coordinate with the bedroom.

- ▶ Imagine you are in the “Bed and Breakfast” business.
- ▶ Make closets look spacious by removing and storing all out of season clothing.
- ▶ Remove any items from the floor area.
- ▶ Lighted closets look bigger, are more attractive and allow buyers to inspect the interiors—there are many battery-operated lights on the market.
- ▶ Remove any unusual or personal wall hangings such as posters and store them until your home is sold.

The Bathrooms

- ▶ Empty wastebaskets.
- ▶ Remove laundry.
- ▶ Put out fresh towels.
- ▶ Clear off countertop and store all personal care products.
- ▶ Dispose of old prescriptions and polish the shelves in the medicine cabinet.
- ▶ Repair leaking faucets.
- ▶ Clean off mineral deposits with vinegar or a commercial cleaner.
- ▶ Replace old shower curtains.
- ▶ Clean and repair caulking.
- ▶ Display perfumed guest soap and add a plant for freshness.

The Basement

- ▶ Sweep stairs.
- ▶ Clear clutter blocking access to furnace, electrical box or laundry room.

The Garage

This is a very important part of a home for most buyers. It is important that it be cleaned and organized just as you would the other rooms in the house.

- ▶ A fresh coat of paint on the walls and the floor can make a huge difference.
- ▶ Remove any stains or paint on the floor and repair any cracks or damages.
- ▶ Remove any items that are not going to be used during the time that the house is going to be marketed.
- ▶ Clutter and trash left in the garage destroys the one main thing most people are looking for in a garage—space. Make it look spacious!
- ▶ Leave the car in the driveway or the roadside to give the appearance of spaciousness.
- ▶ If the garage is dark, add more light. A well-lit and well-organized garage appears to be larger and thus adds value to the home.

One of the most important steps in the selling process is staging your home. Each room should be inviting, fresh, clutter-free and clean. Less is better when it comes to pictures, knickknacks and mementos. Pack away extras before even starting the cleaning process and arrange furniture in a way that makes each room appear as large as possible. You are selling your house and potential prospects need to be able to picture their furnishings in your property. If you need help with this process, talk to your agent.

It can seem daunting, but most of this is done only one time, and the rest can be taken care of with a plastic bin for each room - when you have a showing, just put personal everyday items in the bin, put on the cover and slide it into a corner or a closet.

If you'd like to, you can sell your house "as-is", meaning that you will make no repairs. Just be aware that this can severely impact the value of your house, and make it unavailable to buyers who are using FHA, VA or USDA financing. Talk to your agent for more details on these programs, and how the condition of your home can disqualify it from these programs.

How to Sell Your Home and Buy Another at the Same Time

Being a move-up buyer can be tough in today's market. Although deals are closing rapidly, there's no guarantee that your new dream home will close at the same time as your old dream home. Selling and buying at the same time is a delicate dance, but it is doable. There are a few ways to pursue this plan:

- ▶ **Sell first, then buy.** This is perhaps the safest plan, but it calls for multiple moves. In this scenario, you list your home and complete the transaction before purchasing another home. When you sell your home, you put the bulk of your belongings in storage and live in a temporary rental or, if possible, with a family member or friend. The advantage of this method is that you know exactly how much you can spend on a new home, and you don't have to worry about temporary financing. Also, without another home waiting in the wings, you'll be less tempted to drop the price or to take the first offer that is below the asking price. The disadvantage is that it is a disruptive experience, and you could be displaced for a while if you are home-shopping for a long time.
- ▶ **Buy first, then sell.** This strategy minimizes disruption. You can move into your new place at your leisure and then take time to prepare your home for sale. The major disadvantage is that, depending on how fast your old home sells, you could be shouldering the burden of two mortgages for some time. You are also responsible for maintenance and security on the vacant home. This scenario works best if your first home is already paid off. A variation of this plan is to buy a new home with the plan to rent out the old one for a year. This buys you some time with money coming in, but being a landlord comes with its own stresses and responsibilities. You may also need to repair or renovate the home after it has served as a rental.

- ▶ **Buy and sell simultaneously.** To execute this plan, you need to prepare for all contingencies and to know that if your timing is off, you will face one of the two scenarios listed above. What you would do is put your home on the market, and start looking at new homes. Your agent will be able to submit an offer on a new home, making it “contingent” on selling your home, meaning you will not move forward on buying the home until you have accepted an offer on yours. The deal will stand until you have an accepted offer on your sale, then you would move forward with the purchase of the new home.

Obviously, this is not a great situation for the Seller or the Buyer, but it is not uncommon. The biggest danger for you as the Buyer is that your offer can be bumped out of place by a different buyer who is not contingent, and you have no recourse - you lose the house. It's not a great situation for the seller either since they have to wait to close your sale, but for a seller any offer is a possibility for them to sell their home. It can be tricky, but your agent will be able to guide you through the process.

There is no right answer in choosing any of these scenarios. Your agent may be able to advise which is best, depending on the local market. However, much depends on your financial stability, as well as your tolerance for risk or disruption.

The Listing Contract

When you are ready to put your home on the market, there will be several decisions you have to make in addition to the asking price. These terms will be spelled out in your Listing Contract, and your agent will be able to advise which terms will work best for your situation.

Personal Property

Almost every home sale will involve two kinds of property - real property which is the home, the land and anything attached to it (also called “Fixtures”), and personal property, which is everything else that may be included. An easy way to determine which property in the home is real versus personal is whether or not it takes a tool to remove it from the home. So, a picture hanging on the wall is personal property, since you can just pick it up and carry it away, and the nail in the wall is a fixture, since you need a tool to remove the nail.

Before you list your home, discuss with your agent what will stay and what will be removed. Appliances are the most common personal property to be included - you don't have to leave your appliances, but it's often a good idea. Your new place will probably include the appliances, and not including them can impact your asking price. Fixtures include light fixtures, curtain rods, TV mounts and fireplace inserts. Make sure you list any fixtures that you want to take with you, so there will not be a misunderstanding with the buyer down the road. If you do not say that a fixture will stay, it must be left in the home at closing, or the buyer has the

right to take action against you for breach of contract. Also, if you plan on switching out any fixtures, make sure you do it before showings start, so there can be no confusion about what is staying and what is going.

Home Warranties

A home warranty can be offered by a home seller to a buyer, and can act as an extra selling point in your favor. In addition, if the seller orders a home warranty, it will generally cover the house during the listing period prior to closing, which benefits the seller as well. Your agent can present you with home warranty options, and discuss the advantages a home warranty can bring to your listing.

Title Work

A major part of what you are selling is not just the home itself, but a guarantee that the home and the land is not encumbered by any unpaid liens, bad deed records or easements. You will provide this guarantee to the buyers by providing Title Work. Your agent will give you recommendations for a title company, and that company will do all the work to investigate and identify any title problems, and can also help with clearing up any problems that pop up.

Date of Possession

The listing contract will also contain the terms regarding when your buyer will get the keys and can move into the home. Generally, it is a good idea to have the date of possession be negotiable, but if for some reason you need a set time frame for moving, you can indicate it in the listing contract up front.

Real Estate Commissions

Nearly nine out of ten real estate agents work on commission, and are paid only when a house sale closes. Except for the legal profession, real estate agents are the only fiduciaries and agents who work this way.

To simplify how commissions are paid, the real estate industry customarily allows all sales commissions to be paid out of the seller's proceeds, according to the terms of the listing agreement. This can add up to a big cost to a seller, but that commission does not just end up in the pocket of your agent - it is distributed between at least four different parties.

When your home is listed in the Multiple Listing Service, the terms of the commissions to Buyers' agents is disclosed, so they will bring their buyers to the listing. Without offering to pay the Buyers' agents, you will not see a lot of buyers with any interest in your house.

The commission paid by the Seller is split four ways:

- ▶ Listing Agent—This amount pays the Listing Agent for the various services they provide for you, including costs of travel, time spent preparing the listing, working with the Seller and buyers to set appointments, negotiate purchases and closing the transaction, working with their brokerage, inspections, county offices, title companies and other professionals, and for their personal marketing costs for your home.
- ▶ Listing Broker—This amount reimburses the Listing Agent's brokerage for their share of the costs of listing your home, including nationwide marketing, web services, office staff and supplies, insurance liability, legal services and other advertising and professional services provided by the brokerage company.
- ▶ Buyer's Agent—This amount reimburses the Buyer's agent for providing services to their client, including their marketing costs, contract negotiations, working with inspectors, lenders and title companies, and other costs of bringing a transaction to a close
- ▶ Buyer's Broker—This amount goes to the Buyer's Agent brokerage, for services similar to those provides for the Listing brokerage, but on

the buyer's behalf, including insurance, legal liability and other professional services.

Commissions are negotiable, just as any other terms of the listing contract.

Please be cautious about paying too low of a commission, for two reasons:

- ▶ The Buyer's agent will share in that commission, so if their share is too low, they will not bring buyers to see your home
- ▶ If an agent offers you a very low commission, question them closely about their marketing - commissions have to be split four ways, and every dollar counts, so if it is too low, your agent will have to compromise on something - that something will be the marketing of your home and the time they spend working with you and your sale. If your agent is not making a good effort due to limited commission, you will miss out on good buyers and a good sales price.

Generally, in terms of commissions, the old saying is true - you get what you pay for. A full service agent will cost more, but they will market your home well, be available to you for questions and negotiations throughout the listing and sale, and will be able to get you a premium price for your home, equaling more money in your pocket. At the beginning of a listing, a commission may seem high, but will generally bring you a higher sales price and make up for itself in the end.

The Home Selling Process

Once the listing contract is complete, you will be on the market and ready for showings and a great offer. It is often a waiting game, but it is a clear process. Here is what to expect when you list your home for sale.

Showings

Your home is now on the market, and buyers will want to see the home and request showings. These showings will be requested by an agent - if you are approached by a buyer directly, refer them to your agent. You do not want to welcome strangers into your home, and an agent can pre-qualify them to determine how serious they are about buying without putting you or your possessions at risk.

When a showing is requested, you will be contacted by the agent or the agent's office with the date and time. You can decline a showing if it does not work for your schedule, but it is in your best interest to be very flexible with showing times. Buyers work different schedules and may need to see the home in the evenings or on weekends, and you don't want to miss a potential buyer because your favorite show is on that night. All buyers will be accompanied by an agent, so there will not be strangers wandering around your house alone.

Most agents will provide feedback after a showing, and you can discuss the feedback with your agent. Some feedback is too general to be helpful, and some can't be helped - if a buyer doesn't like the location or the style, there's not much you can do about that. Other feedback can give you

valuable clues about how your home appears to buyers, and you can make decisions about the price, updating items and preparing the house for showings.

In addition to keeping the house clean and clutter free for showings, you will want to safe guard any valuables - jewelry, firearms and medication can be targets of theft. Take them with you if you can, and if you have to leave them in the home, make sure they are put away - buyers look in closets, but not drawers, and under a mattress can be an excellent hiding place for small items.

If you have pets, please take them out of the house for showings. Pets can turn off buyers if the they do not like animals, and even if the buyer is a animal lover, they may not like strange animals. If you cannot take the pet out of the home, put them in a secure place, as out of the way as possible - barking dogs make it very hard for a buyer to concentrate and appreciate your home, and one loose in the backyard means the buyer will not be able to walk around the space. Most showings do not take long, and having pets out of the home make showings much more pleasant for a buyer - and increases the possibility of a good offer.

Negotiating an Offer

When your home is listed, you will get the magic call from your agent - you have an offer! It may be a great offer, it may be a terrible offer, or it may be a bunch of offers. There are several terms you see in an offer, and all of them are generally negotiable.

The Price

Obviously, this is the big one. When presenting your offer, your agent will be able to advise you on the price the buyer has offered, using updated comparable sales and the current active listings, which are your competition. Keep an open mind when reviewing the price and the market conditions - it may be a lower offer, but may have other positives.

Your agent will also be able to present you with a “Net Sheet”, which is the math behind the offer. Using the price, it will break down the various costs to you, including commissions, title work, tax credits and any other extras the buyer has requested. It is an estimate, but it should be very close to the bottom line number you will pocket at the end. Because the money is usually the most important part of the transaction, the Net Sheet should be as accurate as possible, and your agent should be able to give you additional Net Sheets for possible counter offers as well.

The Financing

This is another important part of the offer. How a buyer proposes to pay for your home can lead to important decisions on your part:

- ▶ Cash - this is usually the best kind of buyer since there is no chance of a loan not being approved, but it can lead to complications for you since they often want to close the sale and take possession much sooner. Make sure you can move out of the house within their deadline.
- ▶ Conventional - this is a mortgage loan that is not guaranteed by a government entity. The only difference to you as the seller is that you will not have to worry about the FHA/VA/USDA appraisal checklist.
- ▶ FHA/VA/USDA - this is a mortgage loan that is guaranteed by a government entity. Your home will be subject to the appraisal checklist used by the government, and if it does not pass, you must make the repair or lose the buyer. The appraisal checklist is not too terrible for most homes, but there are some items that can be an issue - talk to your agent about your home being eligible for these types of financing.
- ▶ Other Financing - your buyer may propose other kinds of non-traditional financing, which may or may not work for your purposes, like a sales contract or owner financing. Your agent can explain any

unusual financing terms to you, and you can determine if it is a good fit.

The Title Work

The offer will also contain the buyer's terms for ordering and paying for title work. Unless it is a cash buyer, there will be two types of title work needed - the owner's title policy and the lender's title policy. Traditionally, the buyer will pay for the lender policy since it's their loan, and you will pay for the owner's policy since it's your home. Your agent can explain any options you have and will order the title work for you.

The Home Inspection

This can be a very tricky part of the deal. If the buyer has requested a home inspection (which they almost always do), it is in your best interest to agree - if you say no, your buyer will think there is something very wrong, and will walk away. The offer will have a timeframe for inspections, and inspections will be at buyer's expense unless otherwise noted.

Once the offer is accepted, the buyer will move forward with their inspection, and once it is completed, may present you with a list of items they would like you to fix. Inspections issues can be a common deal breaker, so make sure you listen to their request with an open mind. Repair requests are negotiable and buyers cannot legally break a deal unless they find a major defect - but you can't make someone buy a house, and the buyer has the option to walk away and forfeit their earnest money deposit. You may also need to make certain repairs in order to qualify for the buyer's financing - if they can't get the loan, they can't buy your house. Work closely with your agent on inspections to understand your options and the impact your decisions can make on the deal.

Survey/Home Warranty

A lot survey or home warranty may be requested by the buyer. You have the option to agree to provide them or not, and your agent can advise you of the costs of these extras.

Possession

The buyers will be asking for a specific time for getting possession of the property, either by date or by a certain number of days after getting the loan approval. If you cannot grant possession on the day they request, work with the buyers to see if you can have a couple of days to move out, or if it's a longer timeframe, if you can pay the buyer for the additional days you need possession after closing.

There may be various other items in an offer, and your agent will walk you through them and present you with a full picture of the offer. If it works for you, great - you have a deal! If not, identify the most important terms for you and how they differ from the buyer's offer, and have your agent prepare a counter-offer with those terms. Remember that an offer has two sides - you and the buyer - and you will need to compromise on some items. If you need to counter the buyer on one term, it's usually good to give in on another in order to get to a deal. Keep in mind that both of you want the same thing - a good transaction with a minimum of stress.

If you are priced well, you may have a multiple offer situation, where you receive more than one offer at a time. Talk to your agent about each offer, and make sure you understand why one offer may be better than another before you accept one.

After You Have a Deal

After a deal is in place with a buyer, you will be doing a lot of waiting while the buyer works with their lender. There are several things you will have to do as a seller, and your agent will be keeping track of the process.

The Appraisal

If you buyer is getting a mortgage loan, their lender will want to have an appraisal done. The appraiser will visit your home to do an interior investigation of condition and value, and will use that to put together an appraised value for the lender. The appraisal is nowhere near as detailed as the home inspection. The only real danger for the seller is an appraisal

that does not meet or exceed the sales price. If that does happen, the buyer cannot get the loan to buy your house. There are options in case of a low appraisal, including dropping the sales price and/or asking the buyer to bring more cash to the closing.

Underwriting

On the buyer's side, they will be working with their lender to get their mortgage approved. Once the appraisal is in, their loan file will go to underwriting, a special department at the bank which approves the loan. There can be delays in underwriting while the bank requests additional documents from the buyer, and you may be asked to sign an amendment or addendum. Your agent will work with the lender to keep track of the process and explain any additional terms to you.

Closing

This is it - the end of the transaction. Your agent will get a "clear to close" from the lender, and you can proceed with the closing. A closing date will be set, and the title company will use numbers from your agent, the buyer's agent and the lender to put together what called a "settlement statement" or "HUD statement". This is all the math of the transaction, including all debits and credits for the buyer and seller, and will be the final calculation of what ends up in your pocket. You will have a chance to review the settlement statement prior to closing, and ask questions about any amounts you're not sure of.

At the closing, as a seller you will have many fewer documents to sign than the buyer - generally, you will sign a deed, a sales disclosure statement and various title company documents. If you are receiving proceeds from your sale, you will get your check at the end of the closing.

The process of going from an offer to a closing has many different parts, but they are usually easy to follow and understand. For a buyer who is taking out a mortgage, the process usually takes 45-60 days, and a cash deal can be much shorter than that. Make sure you ask any and all questions of your agent throughout the process - it is important that you understand everything in order to have a smooth and satisfying transaction.

What to Look for When Marketing Your Home

Deciding on a Real Estate Agent can be overwhelming. The biggest consideration is your relationship with them, but almost as important is how they are going to market your home. They have one job – selling your home – and the best way to get a good buyer at a fair price is to make sure they are spreading the word far and wide, and attracting eyeballs to your house. Once a potential Buyer gets inside, it depends on how they feel in the home. But if they never make it in the door, you never have a chance to sell to them.

When interviewing an Agent, ask specifically about their marketing plan for your home. They should offer at least the following marketing tools:

Traditional Marketing Tools

- ▶ A Good Entry in the MLS – Agents who are working with Buyers are spending most of their time on the MLS looking for homes. This is the main group you want to connect with. If you have an agent who writes lousy descriptions, you’re going to have a lower rate of response. Good descriptions are a great way to sell a house to an agent, and therefore their buyer. Ask to see other listings prepared by your agent – you’re looking for strong description, lots of detail and an emphasis on good aspects of the home. “3 Bedroom Ranch on large lot with new windows” is a lousy description, and an indication of an agent that’s not engaged with a home. Also try to avoid agents that use a lot of capital letters (“GREAT STARTER HOME”) and/or non-letter characters (“L@@K!!! Why pay rent!!????!!!)

- ▶ Excellent Photos of your Home – Both Agent and Buyers are looking for pictures. Lots of pictures. Since there are a lot of options in our area, pictures are used almost exclusively to reject a possible home. Ask your agent what types of pictures they usually take, and what pictures they would take of your house. You’re looking for an agent with a good eye – not necessarily a good photographer, but someone who can identify and capture the uniqueness of your home. Sometimes a small thing like a nice stairway can be the star of a photo, and be exciting enough to draw Buyers to your home. Again, ask to see an agent’s prior listings – look for the number of pictures, the types of pictures they took (exciting or just meh) and what quality the photos are.
- ▶ A For Sale Sign – Sometimes the smallest thing can be very important – in this case, a For Sale sign in your yard. This is the easiest and cheapest marketing tool, but one with great impact. Everyone driving by can see that your house is for sale. They can tell their friends, they may have a relative who’s wanting to move to your neighborhood, or they may be interested themselves. This is marketing directly to the Buyer, who can then tell their Agent they want to see your house. Some neighborhoods have HOA guidelines that prohibit For Sale signs – if yours does, check with the HOA to see if they will allow a sign hung in the window, or allow a small flyer box on your mailbox or your property.

Digital Marketing Tools

- ▶ Your Agent’s Website – Every agent should have a good website, either through their brokerage or a website of their own. This is important – a lot of buyers just go to Google and search something like “NW Indiana homes for sale” and go to the first website that pops up, or search an address that they saw on your sign. Search for your agent’s name and see what appears – you’ll see websites like Zillow and Trulia, but you should also be able to find a an agent website for them. Click through, and see how their website is set up. It should be easy to read and easy to navigate, and there should be at

least three things on there – a way to search listings, contact information for your agent (both phone and email) and a basic contact form for a Buyer to fill out for more information.

- ▶ A Virtual Tour – Technology had progressed to the point that a virtual tour should be a basic part of every marketing plan, for even the most old-fashioned Agent. Younger buyers search for homes almost exclusively on the internet, and you want your home to stand out from all of the other homes that just display static pictures. Virtual tours can be an excellent tool for marketing, and gives your agent another venue for promoting your home. In addition, MLS listings are limited in terms of picture and word count, so a virtual tour gives them more room for detailing your home, with the added bonus of putting it together to music and making a moving picture. Virtual tours can also be promoted on video only websites like You Tube, and can be linked from you and your agent’s social media pages.
- ▶ Facebook/Twitter/etc. – A good agent will have a strong social media presence, including Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and other platforms where they can spread all of the above marketing tools. Ask your agent if they have a business Facebook page, a Twitter account, and a You Tube channel, along with profiles on real estate websites like Zillow and Trulia. The real estate industry has changed tremendously in even the last 5 years, and any agent who isn’t promoting themselves (and your house!) that way is missing a rather large portion of the Buyers that are looking. Also ask about non-mainstream online marketing like Craigslist and community bulletin boards.

You need to like your agent, and there are certain tasks you need to take care of as a Seller, like maintenance. But you’re really paying your Agent to do one thing – get your house sold. Make sure that they are doing their job, using available technology and marketing your home properly. A good agent will be excited about your home, even if it’s a dinky one

bedroom cottage. If your agent truly loves homes, they will be able to find the good parts of your house and market the hell out of it!

Things That Can Go Wrong When Listing Your Home

Your Home May Not Be Worth What You Think

The biggest shock most sellers face is the true value of their homes, either determined by one or more agents in comparable market analysis reports or through actual offers from buyers. Sometimes sellers can be pleasantly surprised when houses go up 20% in value in two years as in some parts of California, Texas and other parts of the country. But most sellers find that their homes are not made of gold like they wish. The reality is that markets change, and home values rise and fall. Many factors affect home values and most of them are subjective and hard to measure. Sometimes you may see no difference between your home and others on the market, and it is hard to understand why your home may appear to be less valuable. Harder to understand is why improvements you may have made do not seem to raise the value of your home. Also irrelevant is what you paid for the home, and what you need the home's price to yield so you can pay debts or buy another property. Many people believe their home should pay off like a securities investment.

Historically home values have barely kept pace with inflation – that is why they are a place to live, not an investment. But many people believe that when you spend that much money, you ought to be making money on your home. The economic reality says otherwise, because homes depreciate even while they gain in value. Buyers will determine the true worth of your home, in this market, at this time, and what your home is worth right now may be very different than what it was worth three months ago or what it will be worth six months from now. What you can do with your agent is determine an asking price based on comparables, square footage, condition, and other factors, and see what the market will bear.

People Won't Love Your Home Like You Do

You love your home and fully expect others to appreciate the same qualities in it that you do, but buyers have their own lifestyles, preferences, tastes and attitudes. The chances of finding a buyer who will want your home "as is" are slim to none. In fact, buyers will look at your home with an eye to how they can make it their own. Then they will love it the way you do. But first, they may knock out that wall where you have your prize fish tank, tear down that designer wallpaper you had imported from England and gut the kitchen where you spent so many Thanksgivings preparing dinner. All those changes cost money, so they will value your home less while they consider remodeling and decorating costs. It will hurt your feelings that the buyer will find every little flaw possible with the home and use that knowledge to negotiate the home's price downward. Don't let yourself think that what was good enough for you and your family should be good enough for the buyer. Keep in mind that selling a home can be fiercely competitive. Your home is competing against new homes, homes that have already been updated, and homes that offer unique features that your home doesn't. Your home has to withstand the glare of scrutiny. So, keep your cool. It's just business, not personal. You weren't going to take that wallpaper with you anyway.

Sooner Or Later You Will Lose Your Temper

Your relationship with your buyer will be one of love/hate. The buyer is an adversary because they want to pay the least for your home, while you want to net the most possible. The buyer, in order to improve bargaining leverage, may pick your home apart. Many of the buyer's complaints and requests for repairs will be legitimate, but some may not. In fact, some requests can be outrageous. It's your job to stay focused on the ball. If you don't want to comply with the buyer's wishes, you don't have to. You can draw the line, and have your agent tell their agent to tell them to get real. But, the bottom line is that the buyer brings the money to the table. No transaction can take place without one so letting tempers flare only gets you further from your goal. The buyer has pride, too, and doesn't want to lose face any more than you do. But anyone who can't be reasonable because they have let angry feelings get in the way isn't going to be making

any deals happen. You may get angry at your Realtor, too. But if your agent is a pro, they will be able to handle your concerns. Just know that some things, like other people's behavior are simply out of your Realtor's control.

Unexpected Showings

Buyers aren't going to operate on your schedule. When your home is put on the market, you won't have just your own Realtor showing your home, you may have dozens of Realtors and their clients wanting to see the home at almost anytime of the day or evening. You may feel like fair game when buyers show up at your home without an appointment or ahead of their Realtors and ask to see your home. Don't let them in no matter what they say. There is no reason for an unaccompanied buyer to be in your home for any reason. Just say no. Your Realtor will ask you to keep your home in show condition, which is not easy. People will break appointments, ask to reschedule and there are only so many times a week you can buff those hardwoods. Be flexible, and trust that every buyer who enters your home, regardless of whether they saw your laundry on the floor, is a potential buyer.

Buyer Rudeness

Everyday, we each experience rudeness in society. People don't RSVP in time for the party, they don't write thank you notes anymore, they get in the express line with at least 20 items, and they are turning road rage into a national pastime. So why be surprised when buyers visit your home and leave their sweaty McDonald's cup on your coffee table? Or leave the cabinets and closet doors open wherever they looked? Or miss their appointment altogether, expecting you to reschedule at a moment's notice? As tempting as it may be to play Miss Manners, it's not worth passing up a good offer because the buyer left a dirty diaper in your trash bin.

Inspections

Inspections kill more deals than any other single factor besides overpricing. All older homes have some minor and some major problems. These can either be addressed in the sales price of the home, or as a negotiation with

the buyer under contract. And it is a matter of opinion how seriously the buyer will take some problems over others. Although the inspection is typically an expense on the buyer's side of the ledger, sellers can avoid a lot of heartache by hiring an inspector themselves before listing their homes. The inspector should reveal what the buyer's inspector will find, giving you the knowledge you need to fix problems that must be fixed, price the home more competitively with your agent and give you maneuverability in negotiations with the buyer. A buyer who sees a favorable inspection report is more likely to make a fair offer, and less likely to bargain hunt or place a lot of contingencies in the contract. If you don't choose to have your home inspected, be prepared to be surprised with some repair expenses or face a price reduction if you want to keep the deal going.

Last Minute Problems That Delay Closing

Service providers, from lenders to inspectors to closing agents, may cause problems, sometimes without meaning to. In some areas, closings are happening at such a rate that all service providers associated with the real estate transaction are on overload. Lenders may wait until the day before closing to appraise your home. Title insurers, dispatched at the last minute, may find an area of dispute in your survey. The plumber who was going to replace your shower pan in time for final walk-through is called out of town and can't do the job. Any of these scenarios and many others may cause closing to be delayed by days or even weeks. Expect people to be late, unprepared, or to not show up at all. Try to schedule repair people, appraisers and closing agents any time but peak periods. Your closing will go much more smoothly if you close during the first of the month rather than at the end with everyone else. A lot of other things can go wrong, too. Your sprinkler system could go off and soak the buyer. Your dog may get loose and bite your buyer's agent on the ankle. A storm could take your roof off an hour before closing. Whatever happens, you can prevent a lot of problems in advance, and handle the unexpected ones with a good sense of humor.

Be prepared for anything and everything. Listen to your Realtor. You're paying for good advice. Take it.

Where do I go from here?

- ▶ I will prepare a Comprehensive Market Analysis - looking at the market to find out what is for sale now, and what comparable homes have sold for already, is an important first step in deciding whether to list your home.
- ▶ Set up an appointment with me for a walkthrough of your home - even if you're not ready to sell right away, I can give you valuable information on how your home looks to an outside eye, and can make recommendations on updating and staging your home.
- ▶ Stay in contact - I know it takes a while to make the decision and get all the pieces in place for a move. That's no problem, and I'm here whenever you're ready. If you have questions, or even just want to say hello, just call, text or email us anytime - no strings attached.

About Erica Guelinas and Century 21 Circle

In the complex world of real estate, I believe that a partnership between us is the best and most pleasant way to complete a real estate purchase. I will bring my knowledge of the local real estate market and the real estate transaction, and when combined with your enthusiasm and optimism, we will make a great team!

My goal is client satisfaction, and I know the real estate process, keep current on local real estate trends, and listen to my client's needs and wants. This process is centered around you, and I will give 100% to make sure we can accomplish a smooth real estate transaction.

When buying or selling, the real estate process is always more enjoyable when you understand each phase of the transaction. You have a right to know everything that is going on, and as your real estate agent, I am dedicated to keeping you informed every step of the way.

Honesty is paramount in relationships with clients. I believe that, with good information, you can make good decisions and overcome any issues that may arise. My honest approach and good communication are skills that have established our credibility in the marketplace, and will be a valuable resource to you.

I became a real estate agent because we love houses, and because I enjoy working with clients like you. I am committed to treating all parties in a real estate transaction with respect and integrity, and I always strive to provide the best possible service to clients before, during and after we find you a new home!



Erica Guelinas
Agent, Century 21 Circle
219-765-2062
HSByErica@gmail.com
www.HomeSalesByErica.com



Here's What My Clients Have to Say....

“Erica Guelinas is extremely knowledgeable in her field. Erica helped us to make a difficult situation of selling a realistic goal. Erica's recommendations to help to make the house more salable were greatly valued, respected, and spot on. Erica was always accessible. Erica helped us with negotiation tips and techniques and continues to help with our future endeavors. We thank Erica for being a stabilizing force in our encounters.”
Bob and Charlene G.

“Erica is the best! She went out of her way to schedule showings when we were available. She also went out of her way to give us recommendations of properties that she thought would suit our needs. She is indeed an expert at what she does and has become a good friend too.” Doug and Ken I.

“Right from the start, Erica was terrific. I wanted to see a salon that was for sale, but the listing agent didn't respond to my telephone calls. I had used @properties in the past, so I went to the office here in Lowell in hopes that someone could show me the property. Turns out the office was closed, but they forgot to lock the front door. I poked my head in and asked if anyone was still there. Lucky for me Erica was working late that night. She was able to arrange a showing of the property, and the rest is history. I'm now the proud owner of a hair salon that I hope to make very successful. I'm truly grateful that Erica helped make that dream come true. She really is the best.” Don D.

“Erica knows her stuff, is personable and reliable. She sold our starter home and helped us find our forever home. I HIGHLY recommend hiring her if you want to an honest and helpful realtor.”
Andy and Megan T.