



# Advice To Help Sell Your Home

Courtesy of *The Hecht Team*

## Determining The Value Of Your House

### Value

The VALUE of your house is determined by what a BUYER is willing to pay in TODAY'S market, based on COMPARING your house to others currently available. Buyers determine value based on:

- Condition
- Appearance
- Features
- Amenities
- Location
- Improvements

The amount of time needed to sell your house is a major factor that influences an agent's recommendation on price dramatically. If you are under time constraints to move quickly, such as an unexpected job change, this will play a key role in the pricing of your house.

### Price

The price of your house cannot be determined by the following:

- What you paid for your house
- The amount of cash you need from the sale of your house
- What you want for your house
- Sentimental attachment
- What an appraiser says your house is worth

# Showings and Appointments

The listing office or showing service will contact you, based on your instructions, to inform you of a showing. Please accommodate all showings if possible. Sometimes it may be inconvenient for you to have the house shown, but you may never get another opportunity for that particular person to look at it again. Many times, the buyers may be from out of town, or just ready to make a decision immediately.

You should consider having a lockbox on the property, if you haven't already. It will make the property much easier to show which will increase the marketability.

All showings will be set up through our showing service, unless you have spoken with your agent about other options. The company is Centralized Showing Services, and they will always introduce themselves as such. If an agent knocks on the door that does not have an appointment, ask them to call the office to set up an appointment. If a customer knocks on the door to view the property, give them your agent's card and ask them to call the agent for information and an appointment for a showing. You can never be too safe.

If possible, plan to be away from your house, and make arrangements for your pets when your house is being shown. If you are unable to leave, simply give them the space needed for comfortable viewing. Many buyers feel intimidated when the owner is in. It is also harder for them to imagine themselves living there when they feel like a guest. Finally, buyers also tend to stay longer when the owner is not there.

When you leave the house in the morning or during the day, please leave it as if you know it's going to be shown. It's difficult sometimes and might even mean you have to get up a little earlier in order to take care of these important items. You never know when the right person is going to look at it, so you want to always be ready for them.

For your convenience we have included some staging tips on the next several pages.

## Seller Responsibilities

*As the Seller you play a critical role in successfully selling your home. Together, we will work as a team to strategically place your house in today's market. The following topics are things we will need to carefully consider.*

### Price

The price that you ask for the property is partially based on your motivation to sell. Price is going to play the biggest factor in the sale of your property. Price can be determined by several factors, which may include timing constraints, money, personal reasons or a mixture of these. If a buyer is considering two very similar properties, typically, the property, which is marketed at a lesser price, will be the one selected.

### Timing

If you are working within a time frame to move, it is critical to price your house aggressively. Please keep in mind that the first 30 days from your original list date is the most critical. This is typically when you will see the most activity on your home because it is "new" to the market place. There are buyers out there who have seen everything available and for one reason or another, have not bought. They are waiting for new properties to become available to view. When a new property does hit the market, buyers and agents are eager to look at it. After this initial surge, the buyers who look will more than likely be new to the market place. As you can see, it is for this reason that the first 30 days is most critical. If you need a certain amount from the sale of your house and you are not bound to a time frame, then you may price it slightly higher. However, it may take longer to find a buyer who is willing to pay that price, and will require patience from everyone.

### Access

Typically an agent will place a lock box on your property which will allow agents within our local Realtor association access to your property. Only Realtors in good standing will have the security-coded keys to open a lock box. Their entry is recorded so you and your agent will always know who has shown your property. However, most entries typically result after a call to our showing service, Centralized Showings, for a scheduled appointment. Centralized Showing Services will contact you, based on your instructions, and inform you of a showing. This will allow you ample time to prepare.

## Condition

It's always important to give the best first impression to potential buyers and agents. Your agent may advise you, to hire an independent home inspector to determine the repairs needed prior to placing your house on the market. Most buyers today will hire an inspector to determine the condition of the property. If you, as the seller, order your own inspection prior to having a qualified buyer, you have the ability to make the repairs a home inspector may suggest. This may reduce delays once a buyer makes an acceptable offer to purchase. Leaving a home inspection report in the property during showings also reinforces the assurance that potential buyers are looking at a strong home that the seller has been maintaining. We've also included some staging tips to give you some ideas and examples.

## Documentation Required

Now that you have selected an agent to market your house, the company/agent will need documents for the listing process and to provide to the buyer and his settlement agent. These documents (where available) include your current title insurance policy; copy of your deed; copy of your current survey; homeowner association documents including a copy of your covenants, conditions and restrictions (if applicable); copies of any recent inspections; copies of repair or improvement permits and invoices; utility bills; and finally, a recent property tax bill. In addition to these, your agent will provide agreements and disclosures, as applicable, which are required by law. Please review each carefully with your agent.

## Staging Your Home & Why It's So Important

Will Rogers once said "You never get a second chance at a first impression." While Mr. Rogers was talking about people, it is also applicable to houses, especially when they are on the market for sale. It is important to make certain that the first impression is a favorable one.

If you have ever visited new construction model homes, you know how fabulous they look. The thought might have even crossed your mind that you'd like to not only have the house but all the furniture, pictures, flower arrangements and even the knick-knacks on the shelves.

There are some individuals who really know how to make a house look its best without spending a lot of money. There are things that can be done to give it that "model home" look so prospective buyers will want it and everything else in the house that you're willing to sell.

When houses have this kind of appeal, they sell quickly and usually for the highest price possible. Another interesting characteristic of houses that look this good is that usually the transaction is remarkably free of problems.

What more could you want than to get your house sold for top dollar in short order without any hassles? If you'll read through this booklet and use some of the suggestions, you'll be on your way to one of these successful sales.

One word of warning... don't wait to see if the house will sell before implementing these ideas. It is crucial that you and your agent begin right away!

## The Absolute Basics Of Home Staging

We want to get your property looking great inside and out for maximum exposure. Please keep in mind; the exterior is just as important, if not more important, as the interior. When an agent arrives with prospects, have the drapes and window shades open to let in as much daylight as possible. If it happens to be night, be sure that all of your outdoor lights are on, especially landscape and pool lights if you have them. Open all doors between rooms to give an inviting feeling. Turn on all of the lights including the lamps. Tune the radio to some quiet, "elevator style" music and turn the television off.

When you leave the house in the morning or during the day, please leave it as if you know it's going to be shown. You never know when the right person is going to look at it, so you must always be ready for them.

In addition to the suggestions below, a basic requirement for showing preparation is to be sure there is not too much furniture in a room. Even though it may be inconvenient, you will be far better off by selecting the pieces that look best and putting the others in the garage, basement, or better yet in storage. You can rent a mini-warehouse for a few dollars a month.

# Interior Appeal

## ***Smell***

You may be accustomed to your property's distinctive scent, but smells from cooking, cigarettes, pets, flowers, etc., have different effects on different people. Because you can't anticipate individual likes and dislikes, it's generally best to go with an overall clean smell. Most cleaning aids will produce a desirable scent. A clean-smelling house creates a positive image in the buyer's mind. Be aware of any odors such as mildew or gas that may signal a problem.

## ***Lighting***

Take full advantage of natural light. Artificial light is as important as natural light. Replace bulbs where needed. Use directional lights to create focal points, highlight special features or set a mood. Interesting lighting can help distinguish your house in a buyer's eye.

## ***Color***

The key is to be cautious in selecting colors. Colors can evoke positive emotions, alter perceived sizes and minimize cosmetic flaws. If it is necessary to replace carpeting or repaint, choose neutral colors, such as shades of white or beige for primary surfaces-walls, floors and ceilings. Remember that your main goal is to please the majority of prospects.

## ***Entryway***

Add a mirror to open up narrow spaces. Existing mirrors should be spotless. Make sure the baseboards are in good shape. Flooring should look it's best. Secure area rugs to prevent slipping. An attractive candy dish filled with wrapped sweets is a nice gesture.

## ***Living Room / Den***

Arrange furniture to make the room as open as possible. Avoid knick-knacks.

## ***Fireplace***

Sweep and clean fireplace and tools. A few logs neatly piled on the hearth may create the same cozy feeling with much less bother.

## ***Floors, Walls & Paneling***

Keep walls clean and free from smudges. Check for peeling paint. A new coat of paint will impress buyers. Clean wallpaper and glue down any loose edges. Make sure the baseboards are in good shape. Shampoo carpets and area rugs. Wax and buff wood floors. Use lemon oils on wood paneling and furniture to make them shine and smell great.

## ***Kitchen***

National studies show that the kitchen is the most influential area in the house. All appliances should be spotless. Clean the oven and range top, put new drip pans under the burners. Clean around the seal of the door to the dishwasher. Remove stains from sinks and store dishes out of sight. Counter tops should be clean and uncluttered. Too many small appliances on counters can minimize the apparent workspace. Pantry or storage should be clean and organized to reveal maximum usable space. Remove or replace worn shelf paper. Tighten any loose knobs and adjust hinges if needed.

## ***Dining Room***

Clean fixtures until they sparkle. A dimmer for the lights is an excellent investment. Furniture should be dust-free and arranged comfortably. To create a warm and inviting room, set out an attractive tablecloth and fresh flowers.

## ***Bathrooms***

Keep all surfaces spotless, fresh and dry. If necessary, repair caulking around tub and grout between the tiles. This is the time to bring out your best soaps and towels. Replace worn or dirty shower curtains. Be certain drains and faucets work properly. Store personal care products out of sight. To camouflage any stains in toilets use a colored toilet bowl cleaner that can be dispensed with each flush. Check any leaks or disturbing sounds. Organize cabinets and drawers. Remove or replace worn shelf paper. Remove personal items you don't want seen. Buyers tend to snoop.

## ***Bedrooms***

Keep them neat. Beds should be made and clothing put away. In children's rooms, it's helpful if walls and furniture are not cluttered.

## ***Attics, Basement & Garage***

Attics, basements, and garages are important considerations for a buyer. Attempt to remove unnecessary and rarely used items. Keep areas neatly arranged and well illuminated. Organize your space. Hang tools, bicycles and gardening implements on the walls. Wash the floors to remove any stains or consider painting the floor if oil and/or gas stains are visible. Make sure that pull-down staircase is screwed together and strong enough to be used safely. Be sure there is a light in the attic.

## ***Closets, Cabinets & Drawers***

Storage spaces appear much larger when they are neat and well organized. Get rid of things you haven't used in the past five years and pack up everything that you haven't used in the last year. Do it without conscience or remorse. You're going to have to do it anyway when you move. Closets should look like they have enough room to hold additional items. You might need to box up offseason clothes to make it look that way. Get everything off the floor and don't have the shelves piled high.

## ***Laundry Room***

Make sure the washer and dryer are free of lint and caked-on detergent.

## ***Window & Window Treatments***

Wash all the windows in the house, inside and out. While you're at it, clean all the windowsills and the bottom of the window jambs and wash the blinds. Be sure they open freely and do not stick. Curtains and shades should be clean and left open. Buyers prefer a bright and airy feeling.

## ***Plumbing***

Be certain that all faucets, showers and toilets are not leaking. Tighten the bolts around the toilets.

## ***Stairways***

Make sure that stairs are safe, uncluttered and in good repair. Tighten loose railings, if necessary.

## ***Hardware***

Oil door hinges; tighten knobs and handles. Be certain doors open freely and do not stick.

## ***Furnace & Air Conditioners***

Keep units clean and well maintained. Change the filters and remove dust and dirt from exterior of units.

## ***Crawlspace***

Look under your house for any signs of moisture or standing water. Moisture is one major reason for buyers to become reluctant during the purchase process. Also check for mold and have a termite inspection.

## ***Drive-Up/Exterior Appeal***

Stand at the street and look at the house to check the curb appeal. Ask yourself "If I were a buyer, would I want to see more?" You may realize, you have some yard work to do. The last thing you want is for an agent to pull in the driveway and the buyer decide not to come in. Here are a few more tips for the exterior of your home:

## ***Lawn & Yard***

Landscaping is supposed to enhance the property, not hide it. Your lawn and landscaping must appear well maintained. Grass should be cut, walks edged, hedges trimmed, and gardens weeded and cultivated.

## ***Trees & Shrubs***

One of the easiest things to do is trim the shrubs that might be overgrown. They should be lowered to a height-near the bottom of the windows. If there are branches hanging low in the yard, you'll need to prune them. A simple rule of thumb is to have all the limbs high enough so that you can walk under the tree.

## ***Flowers***

Clean out the flower beds and make them look good. Get all the weeds out and have a distinct border between the beds and the yard. Everyone dreams of a "Home & Garden" type home with flowers in the beds. Invest in a few flats of flowers that will last an entire season and add color and beauty to the front of your home.

## ***Driveways & Sidewalks***

Wash down driveways and sidewalks; check them for cracking and crumbling, and patch/seal as necessary. In winter months, be sure walks and driveways are clear of snow and ice.

## ***Siding***

Make sure the exterior siding is in good condition. A fresh coat of paint is recommended if there is extensive cracking or peeling. Typically painting the trim or touching up trouble areas will be all it takes. Some surfaces may only require power washing to enhance your property's curb appeal.

## ***Front Entrance***

Check to ensure that all light fixtures, hinges, doorknobs, locks and doorbell are in good working order. Doors themselves should be cleaned and, if necessary fresh paint or stain will go a long way toward enhancing your home's appearance. Remember to sweep porches. You might even put some nice looking flowerpots on the porch with some blooming plants in them.

## ***Windows***

Replace any broken panes or broken thermal seals. Wash all windows inside and out. Screens should be free of serious runs or tears. Also, remember to inspect to ensure they function properly.

## ***Roof & Gutters***

Look for shingles that need to be secured or replaced. Make sure gutters and down spouts are firmly in place and clear of any debris. Gutters may need to be touched up with fresh paint.

## ***Fences***

Repair any areas that are in bad shape. Where necessary, apply a new coat of paint or stain.

# From Offer To Contract, Closing & Disbursement Of Funds

## Once An Offer Is Received

Once an offer is received, your agent will make an appointment with you to discuss the terms and conditions of the offer and counsel you on how to proceed. You have three options in responding to an offer: accept, counter or reject the offer. The counter offer process can go between the buyer and seller several times until an agreement is reached or until negotiations are discontinued by one of the parties. With a reasonable buyer, you should be able to reach an agreement with terms and conditions favorable to both parties.

Remember that price is not the only consideration of an offer. Many factors come into play depending upon your unique situation. If you receive a very low offer do not become angry. If you need to move quickly for any reason you might want to think about taking less if the closing date is more accommodating to your time frame. Remember also that your most qualified buyer may be the toughest to deal with during negotiations. Listen to your agent's advice and draw from their experience and the experience of their broker. You wouldn't want to accept an offer from a buyer who is not able to obtain financing even if it's above asking price.

Once an agreement is reached and the contract and all addendums have been signed or initialed by both you and the buyers, the terms of the contract are legally binding.

## From Contract to Closing

At the point an offer becomes an actual contract, the earnest money will be deposited from the buyer. Your agent will follow-up to ensure that any contingencies are removed within their stated time periods, and coordinate the appraisal, survey and other inspections required by the lender or requested by the buyer. The lender will require an appraisal in the course of their approval process to ensure the property's value justifies the purchase price and loan amount. If your buyer chooses to have a home inspection, depending upon the terms of your contract, you may or may not be responsible for making repairs. If you chose or are required to rectify any problems, the repairs will then be subject to re-inspection. The appraisal and inspections can raise issues that may require re-negotiation of the contract.

Typically the buyers will do a walk through to inspect the property just prior to closing. Unless other agreements are in place you should have the property vacant and clean to the point in which you would like to find it if you were the buyer.

## **Closing**

The closing attorney is typically selected by the buyer and is responsible for ensuring that the buyer is given clear title at closing and for the receipt and disbursements related to the transaction. The same attorney usually executes the deed and lien waiver for the seller. The lien waiver is simply a document, which states that you have not had any work performed on the property which has not been paid for outside of closing or included on the HUD-I.

The HUD-I is a summary of all monies and disbursements in the transaction. This includes the loan amount, down payment, earnest money, agent fees, lender, escrow and title insurance fees, homeowner insurance fees, attorney and recording fees as well as seller payoffs and revenue stamps and the pro-ration of property taxes. The property inspection and repair fees can also be included on the HUD-I.

## **Disbursement Of Funds**

In North Carolina the closing attorney cannot disburse funds until the title has been updated and documents relating to the closing have been recorded at the Register of Deeds office. You should discuss this timetable as well as the time of buyer possession with your agent. You should be aware and make your agent aware of any possible delays, especially if you intend to use these funds to immediately close on your new home as it will take some coordination between the closing attorneys, you, your buyer and those whose property you are purchasing.

# Moving Checklist

## Two months prior to Moving Day

- o If you will use a mover, get a few estimates from moving companies.
- o If you will move yourself, get costs from at least two truck rental companies.
- o Create a floor plan of your new home for furniture and appliance placement.
- o Make an inventory of your household goods and begin to remove clutter (start with the basement, attic, garage, and other storage areas).
- o Start a file for all your moving paperwork (estimates, receipts, etc.).
- o Arrange to transfer school records.
- o Choose a mover (or truck rental company).
- o Get your new home ready: contact painters, carpenters, plumbers, roofers etc., so your home is ready when you arrive. Remember to change the locks on all the doors in your new home.

## Six weeks prior to Moving Day

- o Obtain and fill out post office change-of-address cards.
- o Subscribe to the paper in your new hometown to learn more about your new community.
- o Make arrangements for storage if necessary.
- o Ask your doctor or health plan provider for referrals, and obtain all medical records.
- o Have antiques, pieces of art, and other valuables appraised.
- o Clean all closets and drawers.
- o Start using foods and cleaning supplies that cannot be moved.

## Four weeks prior to Moving Day

- o Schedule disconnection of all utility services at your old home, and connection of them at your new one. Be sure to disconnect the day after you leave and connect the day before you arrive.
- o If you have “last month” deposits with services, such as the telephone company, request your refund.
- o If you are moving yourself, reserve a rental truck.
- o If you are packing yourself, obtain packing materials and start packing items you won’t need until after you arrive at your new house.
- o Arrange for cleaning and repair of furniture, drapes, and carpeting, if needed.
- o Arrange for special transportation of your pets and plants if necessary.
- o Check with your insurance company to see how your possessions are covered during transit.

- o Make any travel plans necessary for your move.
- o Check to see if you need any moving permits.
- o Plan your moving sale. Remember to check with local authorities about restrictions.
- o Collect your important records -- Gather personal and family records, including medical and dental, veterinary and school records; legal and financial documents; birth certificates, passports and insurance documents.

### **Three weeks prior to Moving Day**

- o Properly dispose of items that cannot be moved, such as flammable liquids.
- o Prepare auto registration for transfer (if moving to another state).
- o If you are moving in or out of an apartment, arrange for use of the elevator.
- o Make child-care arrangements for moving day.
- o Hold your moving sale.

### **Two weeks prior to Moving Day**

- o Arrange for disposal of anything not sold at your moving sale.
- o Service your car in preparation for the move.
- o If you're moving from a warm climate to a cold one, check your antifreeze.
- o Return any borrowed items (including library books) and retrieve any loaned items.
- o Cancel newspaper delivery.
- o Notify any creditors of your move.
- o Transfer prescriptions and be sure you have an adequate supply of medications on hand.
- o Assemble a file folder of information to leave for the new owner of your home.
- o Change your address - One week before your move, send change-of-address cards to everyone who will need to contact you.
- o Pick up laundry -- Laundry tickets are easy to misplace, so ask for your things by name and not just by the receipts you have.
- o Pack a travel kit: Put aside critical items like a checkbook, credit cards, personal phone book, ID, flashlight, keys, toiletries, tools, paper plates, cups, towels, travel alarm clock, aspirin, bandages and games for the kids. Also, pack a suitcase with clothing and other personal items.

*Congratulations & Thank You*  
*Bob and Nicole*

## One day prior to Moving Day

- o Transfer your bank accounts.
- o Take animals to vet for immunization, if necessary.
- o Close and empty your safe-deposit box.
- o Settle any bills with local businesses.
- o Drain power equipment of oil and gas. Drain water hoses.
- o Find new homes for plants that will not be moved.
- o Confirm any travel reservations.
- o Drain your waterbed.
- o Defrost refrigerator and freezer, propping doors open.
- o Let movers pack your belongings (unless it's a do-it-yourself move).
- o Disconnect and prepare major appliances for move.
- o Set aside anything that will travel in your car so it will not be loaded on the truck.
- o Pack a box of items needed first at the new house. Clearly mark this box "Load Last."
- o Obtain cash or traveler's checks for the trip and to pay the movers.
- o Confirm arrival time of your moving van/truck.
- o If moving yourself, dismantle beds and other large furniture.

## Moving Day

- o If using a mover, be sure someone is at the old house to answer questions.
- o Note all utility meter readings.
- o Read your bill of lading and inventory carefully before signing. Keep this paperwork in a safe place.

## Delivery Day

- o Again, be on hand to answer any questions.
- o Check your belongings carefully and note on the inventory paperwork any damaged items.
- o On an interstate move, be prepared to pay the driver before your possessions are unloaded.
- o Supervise unloading and unpacking.
- o Be prepared to pay your mover with cash, certified check, or traveler's checks unless other arrangements have been made in advance.

*ou For Your Business!!*  
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