

## **8 Reasons Why You Should Work With a REALTOR®**

Not all real estate practitioners are REALTORS®. The term REALTOR® is a registered trademark that identifies a real estate professional who is a member of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics. Here's why it pays to work with a REALTOR®.

- 1. Navigate a complicated process.** Buying or selling a home usually requires disclosure forms, inspection reports, mortgage documents, insurance policies, deeds, and multipage settlement statements. A knowledgeable expert will help you prepare the best deal, and avoid delays or costly mistakes.
- 2. Information and opinions.** REALTORS® can provide local community information on utilities, zoning, schools, and more. They'll also be able to provide objective information about each property. A professional will be able to help you answer these two important questions: Will the property provide the environment I want for a home or investment? Second, will the property have resale value when I am ready to sell?
- 3. Help finding the best property out there.** Sometimes the property you are seeking is available but not actively advertised in the market, and it will take some investigation by your REALTOR® to find all available properties.
- 4. Negotiating skills.** There are many negotiating factors, including but not limited to price, financing, terms, date of possession, and inclusion or exclusion of repairs, furnishings, or equipment. In addition, the purchase agreement should provide a period of time for you to complete appropriate inspections and investigations of the property before you are bound to complete the purchase. Your agent can advise you as to which investigations and inspections are recommended or required.
- 5. Property marketing power.** Real estate doesn't sell due to advertising alone. In fact, a large share of real estate sales comes as the result of a practitioner's contacts through previous clients, referrals, friends, and family. When a property is marketed with the help of a REALTOR®, you do not have to allow strangers into your home. Your REALTOR® will generally prescreen and accompany qualified prospects through your property.
- 6. Someone who speaks the language.** If you don't know a CMA from a PUD, you can understand why it's important to work with a professional who is immersed in the industry and knows the real estate language.
- 7. Experience.** Most people buy and sell only a few homes in a lifetime, usually with quite a few years in between each purchase. Even if you have done it before, laws and regulations change. REALTORS®, on the other hand, handle hundreds of real estate transactions over the course of their career. Having an expert on your side is critical.
- 8. Objective voice.** A home often symbolizes family, rest, and security — it's not just four walls and a roof. Because of this, homebuying and selling can be an emotional undertaking. And for most people, a home is the biggest purchase they'll every make. Having a concerned, but objective, third party helps you stay focused on both the emotional and financial issues most important to you.

## **5 Things to do Before Putting Your Home on the Market**

1. **Have a pre-sale home inspection.** Be proactive by arranging for a pre-sale home inspection. An inspector will be able to give you a good indication of the trouble areas that will stand out to potential buyers, and you'll be able to make repairs before open houses begin.
2. **Organize and clean.** Pare down clutter and pack up your least-used items, such as large blenders and other kitchen tools, out-of-season clothes, toys, and exercise equipment. Store items off-site or in boxes neatly arranged in the garage or basement. Clean the windows, carpets, walls, lighting fixtures, and baseboards to make the house shine.
3. **Get replacement estimates.** Do you have big-ticket items that are worn out or will need to be replaced soon, such your roof or carpeting? Get estimates on how much it would cost to replace them, even if you don't plan to do it yourself. The figures will help buyers determine if they can afford the home, and will be handy when negotiations begin.
4. **Find your warranties.** Gather up the warranties, guarantees, and user manuals for the furnace, washer and dryer, dishwasher, and any other items that will remain with the house.
5. **Spruce up the curb appeal.** Pretend you're a buyer and stand outside of your home. As you approach the front door, what is your impression of the property? Do the lawn and bushes look neatly manicured? Is the address clearly visible? Are pretty flowers or plants framing the entrance? Is the walkway free from cracks and impediments?

## **Simple Tips for Better Home Showings**

1. **Remove clutter and clear off counters.** Throw out stacks of newspapers and magazines and stow away most of your small decorative items. Put excess furniture in storage, and remove out-of-season clothing items that are cramping closet space. Don't forget to clean out the garage, too.
2. **Wash your windows and screens.** This will help get more light into the interior of the home.
3. **Keep everything extra clean.** A clean house will make a strong first impression and send a message to buyers that the home has been well-cared for. Wash fingerprints from light switch plates, mop and wax floors, and clean the stove and refrigerator. Polish your doorknobs and address numbers. It's worth hiring a cleaning service if you can afford it.
4. **Get rid of smells.** Clean carpeting and drapes to eliminate cooking odors, smoke, and pet smells. Open the windows to air out the house. Potpourri or scented candles will help.
5. **Brighten your rooms.** Put higher wattage bulbs in light fixtures to brighten up rooms and basements. Replace any burned-out bulbs in closets. Clean the walls, or better yet, brush on a fresh coat of neutral color paint.
6. **Don't disregard minor repairs.** Small problems such as sticky doors, torn screens, cracked caulking, or a dripping faucet may seem trivial, but they'll give buyers the impression that the house isn't well-maintained.
7. **Tidy your yard.** Cut the grass, rake the leaves, add new mulch, trim the bushes, edge the walkways, and clean the gutters. For added curb appeal, place a pot of bright flowers near the entryway.
8. **Patch holes.** Repair any holes in your driveway and reapply sealant, if applicable.

9. **Add a touch of color in the living room.** A colored afghan or throw on the couch will jazz up a dull room. Buy new accent pillows for the sofa.
10. **Buy a flowering plant and put it near a window you pass by frequently.**
11. **Make centerpieces for your tables.** Use brightly colored fruit or flowers.
12. **Set the scene.** Set the table with fancy dishes and candles, and create other vignettes throughout the home to help buyers picture living there. For example, in the basement you might display a chess game in progress.
13. **Replace heavy curtains with sheer ones that let in more light.** Show off the view if you have one.
14. **Accentuate the fireplace.** Lay fresh logs in the fireplace or put a basket of flowers there if it's not in use.
15. **Make the bathrooms feel luxurious.** Put away those old towels and toothbrushes. When buyers enter your bathroom, they should feel pampered. Add a new shower curtain, new towels, and fancy guest soaps. Make sure your personal toiletry items are out of sight.
16. **Send your pets to a neighbor or take them outside.** If that's not possible, crate them or confine them to one room (ideally in the basement), and let the real estate practitioner know where they'll be to eliminate surprises.
17. **Lock up valuables, jewelry, and money.** While a real estate salesperson will be on site during the showing or open house, it's impossible to watch everyone all the time.
18. **Leave the home.** It's usually best if the sellers are not at home. It's awkward for prospective buyers to look in your closets and express their opinions of your home with you there.