
Realtor

10 Steps to Selling Your Home

You've decided you're ready to sell your home- Now what?

There are several steps involved in the home selling process. Here are 10 Steps that give you an overview of what you need to do.

1. Define Your Needs for Selling Your Home

You first need to ask yourself the questions- "Why am I selling my home, and what do I hope to accomplish out of it?"

Your reason for selling it may be that you've outgrown your current home and are ready for something larger. This would be very different and give you more time than if you were moving because of a new career opportunity in another state.

Explore your short and long term goals and decide how selling your home fits into those goals. Your agent will identify all of the variables within your individual goals and how best to achieve them within your time frame. Your Realtor will apply his or her expert knowledge to your particular needs and set a realistic time frame for the process to proceed. Working together, you and your agent can find the best solution to meet your expectations for selling your home.

2. Choose Your Pricing Strategy

The next thing you need to do is to consult with your Realtor to determine the best possible selling price of your home. You will need to take into account the state of the local market- whether it is a buyer's or seller's market, the condition of your home, and sales of comparable homes in your neighborhood. He or she will create a comparative market analysis by taking into consideration the type of market you are in and recent sales of comparable properties. Your agent will then guide you to the best fair market price that will help sell your home within your desired time frame. Usually, real estate agents have a clearer and more objective sense of market value than anyone else- including appraisers!

Often, it can be hard for you, as a seller, to also maintain objectivity, so remember to be reasonable about the price you set. You will always be better off setting a fair market value price than setting your price high expecting that someone will come along and be willing to pay it. If your home stays on the market too long because it is overpriced, potential buyers may think that something is wrong with it and you may end up selling it for less than what you could have gotten if you had started out with a realistic asking price.

3. Prepare Your Property

This is often the hardest step for many sellers. In order to sell your home in the shortest time, for the highest price, it needs to show well to buyers and have great "curb appeal." Curb appeal is the way your home looks to people when they drive up to it- "standing at the curb." Your landscaping should be neat and

finished- no weeds, rock should be kept raked, grass should be cut regularly. Planting a few flowers if you have room for them is a nice touch, but need to be kept up. The outside paint on the home should be clean, not faded or peeling. The front door can be a very important first impression. If it is dirty, wash it. If it needs painted, paint it. Trees should be kept trimmed and leaves should be raked. If your driveway has oil stains on it, clean them up. Remember, the front yard is the first thing potential buyers see when they pull up to your home.

The inside of your home is the next thing to look at. When you have lived in a home for a long time, you may tend to overlook certain things because you see them everyday. A good idea is to have an objective outside person walk through your home with a critical eye. Have them point out everything they see that needs repaired in the home, and make a list. You can have a friend do this for you, or your agent can help you with this. Then make sure the home is spotless clean. Clean ceiling fans, baseboards and tile grout. A clean house will sell faster. If you smoke inside your home, you should switch to smoking outside. The smell of smoke in a home will eliminate 75% of all potential buyers from making an offer on your home. Then have your carpets professionally cleaned and deodorized. Have your air ducts cleaned. You may need to re-paint the interior of your home. Move a picture that has been hanging for a while and see if the wall around it has yellowed. If it has, you will need to re-paint.

Carpet can be a big negotiating point when you receive an offer. If yours looks brand new, you won't have to worry about it. Buyers may ask for a carpet allowance if it has many stains or smells bad. These can range anywhere from a couple thousand dollars on up. If you don't want to give this allowance, make sure your carpets are clean and free from stains.

Free your home of clutter. If you have stacks of boxes or things that you just don't have room for, you may even want to rent a storage unit while your house is on the market. The less cluttered your home looks, the bigger, more spacious it looks to buyers. Organize closets and cabinets so that nothing falls out when someone opens them. If you are showing the home during the daytime, open the curtains or blinds to let in as much light as possible. It should be "light and bright" inside. If it is nighttime, turn on all the lights in the home to give it a warm feeling. Remember, everything you do to help the buyers picture your home as theirs will add dollars to their asking price.

♥ 4. Choose a Marketing Strategy

Now that your home is ready, it's time to put it up for sale and market it. Establishing a marketing strategy with your real estate agent is a must. Your agent will expose your home to the most potential buyers possible using a marketing plan that will have the highest possibility of bringing not only the most buyers, but also the most qualified buyers, to your doorstep.

There are many different ways to get the word out there that your home is for sale. A yard sign, flyers, and direct marketing are just a few of the many options available. If you are in a buyer's market you will have to be extra careful when choosing a plan. You don't want your home to sit with no one showing interest. You and your agent should structure your marketing strategy so that the first 3-6 weeks that your house is on the market will be the busiest.

▼ 5. When You Receive an Offer

When a buyer decides they want to buy your home, an offer will be presented. Your real estate agent will advise you as to whether or not the prospective buyer is qualified to purchase your home. After all, there is no reason to review an offer if the person(s) making it will not be able to actually buy your home.

You and your agent will then review the written document, taking care to note what is required of both parties to execute the transaction. The contract should protect the best interests of all parties involved and should be comprehensive in nature.

Once you accept the contract, it may be too late to make any changes. The contract, though not limited to this list, should include the following:

- A legal description of the property
- The offering price
- The down payment
- Financing arrangements
- A list of fees and who will pay them
- Amount of the deposit
- Inspection rights and possible repair allowances
- The method of conveying the title and who will handle the closing
- A list of appliances and furnishings which will stay with the home
- The settlement date
- Any relevant contingencies

Remember that the legalities of this phrase are very important. If you have any questions or concerns, be certain to address them with your Realtor right away.

▼ 6. Negotiate the Offer

Most offers to purchase your home will require some level of negotiation to come to a win-win agreement. Your Realtor is well versed on the legalities of the real estate contract used in your area and will handle the responsibility of protecting your best interest throughout these negotiations. In addition, your agent has a thorough understanding of the contract itself, including what each contract clause means to you and your buyer, what you will net from the sale of your home, and what areas in the contract lend themselves easiest to negotiation. Your agent will review the written offer with you to make sure that you thoroughly understand what the buyers are offering and what they are asking in return. She will give you a written "cost sheet" of your estimated closing costs and approximately how much money you will pocket with the offer. Some of the items that you may have to negotiate are:

- The price
- Financing
- Closing costs
- Repairs that need to be done

- Appliances and fixtures
- Landscaping
- Painting
- Occupancy time frame

To really gain some insight into why potential buyers are pursuing the purchase of your home and how they might proceed in the negotiations, it is also important to know as much about the buyer as possible, especially their motivation for buying. Sometimes your agent can get this information, but often times it is difficult to obtain. Once both parties have reached a point where the deal is acceptable, your agent will be certain that you have a legally executable contract.

✓ 7. Find the Necessary Vendors

Once you have accepted an offer to sell your home, your Realtor will inform you of all the procedures involved in order to proceed successfully to closing, as well as the parties responsible for completing those procedures and estimates of completions. Your contract may require, or allow for, the following:

- A formal appraisal
- A professional home inspection
- A termite inspection
- A survey

Usually, with the exception of the appraisal, these must be done within the first 10 days after the contract has been accepted. Your Realtor can advise you which, if any of these, you are required to pay for, and when payment is due.

Your agent will then coordinate with all the parties to keep you informed as to the results of the various inspections. If each returns acceptable results as defined by the contract, then the sale may continue. If there are problems with the property, the buyer may ask you to make some repairs prior to closing, at your cost. They must submit this request within a time period specified in the contract, usually 10 days. You will then have 5 days to review the list and determine which, if any, of the repairs you are willing to make. By the end of the 5th day, you will give a written response to the buyer as to which repairs you agree to make. If you agree to everything the buyer has requested, the buyer is then bound to the contract. If you agree to make only part of, or none of the repairs requested, with the exception of cosmetic items, the buyer will have 24 hours to decide if they want to cancel the contract. If they cancel during this time period, the buyer will receive all of their earnest money back. Your agent will advise you throughout this process and will help you coordinate any actions you must take to keep the sale moving forward.

There are some sales that go smoothly and some that require a lot of work to get to the closing table. Until you get into it, you won't know which one you have on your hands. Either way, your agent will be there with you every step of the way.

✓ 8. Prepare for Closing

A few days before the closing, your Realtor will contact the title/escrow company that will handle your

closing. She will make sure that all of the necessary forms and documents have been prepared and are going to be available for you to sign on the appropriate date. Your agent will also contact each party to the transaction to be certain that they have taken all actions necessary for closing, so the entire closing can actually happen on the date and time planned.

Your agent will also prepare you in advance for the process of the closing, advising you of any documents you must bring to the closing, how much time to block off for the closing, and any other information that is pertinent to the closing meeting itself. If there are any snags that may delay your closing, your agent will notify you immediately and advise you of your options.

♥ 9. Closing the Sale

"Closing" refers to the meeting where ownership of the property is legally transferred to the buyer. **Close of escrow is defined in the standard AAR contract as the recordation of documents.** Your Realtor may be present during the closing to help explain the process and forms to you and make sure everything goes as planned. By being present during the closing, he or she can mediate any last minute issues that may arise.

As the seller, you will need to be prepared to give over any necessary documentation regarding the property, including repair receipts and, depending on the arrangements made during the negotiations, you may be required to have done something specific in order to close. Your agent will advise you well in advance of any action needed by you in order to close.

Be sure to read all the documents and ask any questions you may have. It is important that you understand every document you are signing as they will all have some legal consequence.

♥ 10. Post-Closing

Congratulations of the successful sale of your home!

Hopefully, everything went as planned and you will be moving in the time frame you expected. Your Realtor will help you with a checklist of everything you need to do to turn the property over to the new owners. You will need to make sure that all of the utilities are turned off, or changed into the new owner's name, cancel your local services (i.e. newspaper, lawn care, etc.), and turned in a change of address to your local post office. The property and anything assigned to the buyer according to the contract should be prepared appropriately for the new owners. The home should be left in substantially the same condition as when the contract was written. This will make the transition as smooth and effortless as possible.