

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood in El Dorado County, California. The foreground shows a multi-lane highway with several cars. To the left, a residential street curves through a neighborhood of houses with swimming pools and manicured lawns. In the background, a large, calm lake stretches across the horizon under a clear blue sky. The overall scene depicts a peaceful, affluent residential area.

GUIDE TO SELLING IN EL DORADO COUNTY



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HOW TO PROPERLY PRICE YOUR HOME

Your home means the world to you. That is why pricing it can be extremely difficult.

When you can clearly put into focus the data, the emotional strings of selling your home can be set aside. This process will enable you to see your home as a financial transaction, and not a bank of family and friend memories, or a source of great personal pride.

Use These Tools

Online calculators and real estate sites like Zillow and Redfin are good places to start. We are not just talking about the “estimate” for your home. Look beyond the price and you will find other pertinent information, including recent sales and

listings in your neighborhood. These other data points can expand your perspective about current pricing. As you begin to compare and contrast the prices, you start to develop a rough idea about what your home is worth.

Caution: You cannot rely solely on these sites to price your home. While the data has become more sophisticated, it’s best to take a multi-prong approach of pricing your home. Keep this in mind: The market may dictate a far better price than you ever imagined, and that is the result of pricing it just right!

Now that you have a ballpark estimate, it’s important to discuss the price with real estate professionals. Their experience with Comparable Market Analysis (CMA) in home pricing is a standard real estate practice. The agent will sift through some of the same information you may see on Zillow, but will include other factors that will be put into a valuation formula. A CMA will include similar properties with similar features, recent sales, recent listing prices, days on the market, trends and other data points. You may also seek the help of an appraiser. Going through this process will also give you a list of repairs that

Pricing your home will also involve strategy sessions with your real estate professional.

you can take care of before listing your home. It is a sure way to boost your return, but only if the fixes are cost-effective with respect to how much value it'll add to your home.



Do More with Less

Pricing your home will also involve some strategy sessions with your real estate professional. If the market is trending upward, for example, you may decide to slightly underprice your home with the expectation of luring more potential buyers. If they notice that the price is just right (below fair market value) it is likely that they will overbid. They are likely to do this because they know others have the same information and understanding of the market, and therefore, will bid higher. The end result could be a bidding war!

Think Like the Buyer

Now that you've done your homework, talked it over with your family and real estate agent, it's time to fully engage

and think like a buyer. We promise, this approach will help you at every step of the way. For example, if you're looking over comparable homes, think about what home you would pick from the group, and allow that to guide your decisions about pricing your own home. If a similar home looks like yours, but it includes a sunroom and yours does not, step outside the box and see what kind of value that adds. This will allow you to make the needed changes to your own asking price, giving you the competitive edge.

Pick the Fair Price

Now that you are armed with all this knowledge and analysis of the market, it's time to settle on a fair price. This includes

looking at all the data, CMAs, online calculators and the strategy sessions to come up with the price that is best for you and best for the market. If you're honest, rational and detached from the sentimental value of the home you listed, then you're ready to price it right.





THE POWER OF A PRELISTING HOME INSPECTION

Traditionally, the person interested in buying your home will conduct the necessary and discretionary inspections of your property during the purchase process. While you may do your due diligence to ensure your home is in the best condition it can be before listing it, you can also take that a step further.

A prelisting home inspection is done by the seller. It is a direct expense to you, but it can end up paying off in the end. After you list your home and get into contract, the buyer will conduct an inspection. When this occurs, the findings may compel your buyer to ask you for a reduction in price or a credit toward the purchase of the home during negotiations if something unfavorable surfaces. Of course,

it is entirely up to you whether or not to fulfill the request, which can ultimately lower your bottom line.

However, conducting your own pre-listing inspection can actually save you money in the end. When you decide to put your house through this test, you can preemptively discover faults or issues that you can fix before listing your home.

The difference between fixing it beforehand as opposed to agreeing to pay for the repairs through a negotiation can be beneficial in multiple ways:



NEXT PAGE These three amazing methods will put money back into your pocket.

THE BENEFITS

Experts say that doing the repairs yourself will be less expensive because often times, a credit toward certain repairs is done through a generous estimate, which could, in turn, end up costing more than doing the actual repair. Or, the buyer may pad his or her request to play it safe, or in anticipation of other costs associated with the repair.

A pre-inspection will save you time. When you enter a purchase agreement and the buyer begins the inspection process, you may be bogged down by the process if the report reveals something unexpected or unsettles the buyer. The back and forth of figuring out what you're willing to pay for or not, will disrupt the flow of selling your home, and thus could cost you time. When you're armed with a pre-inspection report, you have the knowledge of what's wrong, and that can be addressed before entering an agreement, or through disclosure.

As a seller, you may have the competitive edge as well by knowing the exact condition of your home. This will allow you to list the home with confidence because of your due diligence. You can declare that it is in "excellent condition," and you can prove it through a document.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS



A pre-listing inspection report can be bad news, however. There may be some findings -- think foundation, mold or roof issues -- that you may not want to pay for that could turn buyers away.

Overall though, a pre-listing report benefits the seller and has the potential for savings, but only if the findings are positive, or you're willing to dish out the funds to make the needed repairs to the home. Doing so may or may not boost your asking price, however.

The cost for a pre-

listing home inspection is based on the square footage of the home. Keep in mind that this report can remain confidential to an extent. If you, for example, find something in need of repair and you fix it before listing, there's no need to disclose that information. So, you can market your home without saying it's in need of repairs -- and that type of listing can give you a competitive edge.

HOW TO CHOOSE A REAL ESTATE AGENT

THE REAL ESTATE MARKET IS FILLED WITH HIGHLY INTELLIGENT AND QUALIFIED REAL ESTATE AGENTS.



Many of them have years of experience and know the ins and outs of the market and your El Dorado County neighborhood.

All the qualifications in the world, however, may not be enough. So, it is your challenge to sift through these incredible candidates to find the perfect fit. How is that done? The answer may not be apparent until after your transaction is complete. Following these steps below, however, will allow you to feel confident about the agent you decide to hire and entrust with perhaps the biggest financial, and emotional, rollercoaster ride you've ever been on!

STEPS TO PICKING THE RIGHT REAL ESTATE AGENT

1. Look up their licensing

Chances are that if you go through an established brokerage, the agent will be in good standing, but it doesn't hurt to Google. There are websites that allow you to look up agents by their licensing.

2. Start a conversation

Get to know the agent you are interviewing by going out for coffee or lunch. A comfortable, neutral setting would bode well for you. It'll give you both an opportunity to discuss expectations and possible strategy. More importantly, this meet up will give you time to get a feel for the possible rapport

between you and the real estate professional – and that certainly will go a long way once you begin the heavy lifting of selling your home.

3. Talk with recent clients

Once you begin to speak with potential real estate agents, ask them if you can talk to some of their recent clients as part of the interview process. This will allow you to learn more about the agent's personality, approach and track record. You may want to ask the past clients about what kind of property they were helped with, its price, the neighborhood and other distinguishing factors. Your

goal is to find past clients similar to you.

4. Set a standard for specialty

Some agents have specialties that may be beneficial to your situation. Designations like "Certified Residential Specialist" tell you that the agent has undergone additional training. The added resume bullet is not just about a certificate, it speaks about the agent's dedication and understanding in a particular area that could help you along the way.

HOW TO GET YOUR HOME 'SALE-READY'

Deciding to sell your home is just one step in the overall real estate process. The decision may feel like one small step for you, one big leap for mankind. In other words, it's a big deal.

Getting your home to be sale-ready requires a lot of planning, prep work and strategy, yet it may feel as complicated as a mission to the moon.

It doesn't have to.

Here you are. You've made that big leap and decided to test the real estate market, and possibly relocate your family to a great area like El Dorado County.

Now what?

It's all about appearances.

Now that your home is a free agent, you must sell it. Make it marketable. Let it shine.



NEXT PAGE These five amazing methods will put money back into your pocket.

Distance yourself from the personal side of your home. That may be a tall order. You and your family have built a lot of good memories there that no one can take away. Personal items, or some features that give you home character, need to be taken down. This mindset has multiple benefits. Disassociating yourself with your home, as difficult as that may seem, allows you to view this transaction through a different lens. No longer are you selling your home, you're selling a piece of property and land.

Secondly, it allows you to physically disassociate items within the home so prospective buyers can envision their own home setting. Family photos, an abundance of your decorations, clutter left behind from your last family gathering, can place a barrier between potential buyers and what they can envision. Distance yourself from your home so that the next owner can feel closer to home. By doing this, you're more likely to enrich your experience and land the right buyer.

Clean and declutter. We touched on this in our first point, but it cannot be stressed enough. When you're ready to showcase your home, it is imperative that you leave it squeaky clean. When you open the front door, and allow visitors to tour, they are going to be looking everywhere, peeking into every nook and cranny, and more importantly, envisioning what it'll be like to call this place home. For optimal effect, be sure you do the following:



1

Mow your lawn, trim the weeds and rake up any foliage debris. Power wash your porch area, sidewalk and driveway. Make it shine. Curb appeal is a big deal. When prospective buyers stop by, you'll want them to be impressed by what they see first.

2

Organize your counter tops. Line up your dining room chairs. Vacuum around and under your couches. Neatly stack your dishes. Hang matching towels in the bathroom. Dust off books. You get the idea. A neat and clean home is far more appealing than the alternative. Consumers may have options during the peaks of home buying season, so it's best to make a lasting impression.

3

Make small repairs. Remember last year when you told yourself you were going to patch those holes, or fix that weird noise coming from your guest bathroom? Now is the time. Make a list of doable and inexpensive repairs and get to it. Cracked floors or counter tiles, squeaky doors, new paint and burnt-out light bulbs are all great targets. Hey, it may even be worth replacing your own bedspread to give new life to your master bedroom.

4

Rent a storage unit. This investment may seem counterintuitive before actually selling your home, but reserving some extra space away from your home will allow you to store extra furniture and other items. This will help declutter your home, making it feel bigger to potential home buyers.

5

Make your home sparkle. Now that your just days away from showing your home, it's time to keep it clean. This includes washing windows, clearing out cobwebs, cleaning out last week's pizza in the fridge, vacuuming and mopping. You get the idea. The night before your big day, don't forget to display some flowers, fresh fruit and maybe a fragrant candle for your guests.



PREPARING FOR YOUR OPEN HOUSE

Take a deep breath.

In just a few days, you will open the front door to your home to complete strangers for an open house.

What could possibly go wrong? Everything, you're thinking.

If you followed the best practices for preparing for this big day, you don't have anything to worry about.

There's a reason why a herd of potential home buyers are planning on visiting your open house. So, the pressure is on. The last thing you want to do is lose a potential buyer by overlooking any details.

There's still time to get everything just right before the big weekend. Here are some things to keep in mind:

PREPARING FOR YOUR OPEN HOUSE

QUICK LIST

- Do final sweep through
- Remove personal items
- Make your home smell good
- Create ideal conditions



- By now, your home is probably the cleanest it's ever been. Keep it up and do one final sweep through a few hours prior.

Wipe down surfaces that people may touch. Dust off any areas that may have collected some unwanted particles over the last couple of days. Do a quick walk through, or, ask a friend to take the walk with you. A fresh pair of eyes can go a long way in finding things that had gone unnoticed.

- Remove personal items.

Remember, potential homebuyers are looking for a fresh start. Provide them with as blank a slate as you can. Of course, we're not saying you should empty your home, but consider setting personal and sentimental objects aside. Minimize them or box them up for this stage.

24 HOURS BEFORE

Congrats! Most of the work is out of the way. Your home is ready for the big day (Sunday is ideal), and all your hard work is about to pay off.



- It's not all about looks.

Your house should also smell good. Close your kitchen (no cooking!), clean up your pet's sleeping area and allow your home to breathe. You may also consider starting a pot of coffee to delight your visitor's sense of smell. This comforting smell, or that of freshly baked cookies, or an aromatic candle, can be appealing to your visitors.

- Conditions in your home ought to be just right.

Aim for room temperature throughout the house. Think about the ideal ambient affects you enjoy at home and allow your visitors to enjoy the same. Temperatures, smells, lighting and cleared walkways, for example, will allow your visitors to feel right at home.

Now that these miscellaneous items are done, you're ready for a successful open house.



HOW TO PROPERLY PRICE YOUR HOME.

What to do when you get an offer

Here's the scenario. Your home was listed two weeks ago. You had a successful series of open houses and some appointments for viewing your home. You even baked fresh cookies for last weekend's showing and you thought everything went as smooth as possible. You're feeling on top of the world.

Then you hear crickets.

Where are the offers, you think?

Depending on the approach you and your real estate agent decided on, it's possible that you set a specific date on which you would look over offers. If that's the case, you just need to communicate with your agent about timing because it may be that offers are just waiting for your timeframe.

Offers may not happen immediately. Shoppers can take their time, talk things over with their agents and really think it through before submitting an offer.

Here's what you can expect next:

Your agent has a fiduciary responsibility to convey this information to you. If and when an offer comes in, you can be assured that your agent will contact you and keep you in the loop. Whether you set a deadline to review offers or not, do not get discouraged by the first or second offers that come your way. More are likely in the pipeline.

Each offer must be vetted.

Yes, the highest offer may sound appealing, but there may be other variables at play. It serves your interest to select the strongest offer, and that doesn't always mean the highest dollar amount. A cash buyer may offer \$5,000

less than a pre-qualified buyer. The benefits of a cash buyer may be a swifter transaction. While you may decide to stay the course instead of saving some time, the person offering the higher amount may be a little riskier. Is there a guarantee that the buyer will get funded? The buyer with the higher bid may even ask for credits back for repairs, and that'll subtract from your bottom line. Remember, a pre-approved buyer is further along in the loan process than a pre-qualified one, and that's something else to consider.

Must be in writing. This goes without saying, but it's important to remember that you cannot rely on any verbal indications about a contractual function, including an offer for your home. If your agent has a conversation with the buyer's representative and figures are discussed, you must see it in writing for it to be valid.

The buyer's package can sway your decision to accept or decline the offer. By package we mean the specifics the buyer brings to the table. Will the buyer agree to close within 30 days? What kind of financing/down payment is the buyer willing to provide? These are all factors that you will have to consider before taking the next step.



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET AN OFFER

IN THE DETAILS

Before the keys are handed over, you'll learn what package your buyer will submit.



OK, if that all makes sense, the next logical step is taking an action on an offer. You can either accept, counter or respectfully decline. You can technically decline by simply not replying. Then, there's a little more waiting. Once you take action in writing for acceptance, then you move forward with more negotiations and the escrow process commences. During this crucial time, the buyer is responsible for conducting all appropriate and mandated inspections. Please be advised that this is also a time when the buyer may ask for repairs or credits on certain items.

How to handle negotiating repair costs

Selling a home is a constant negotiation – with others and yourself. From deciding on a price before listing and then dealing with a negotiation while in contract, you will learn that the process truly is filled with some back and forth.

You may be required to do a little price haggling if your offers all come in under asking price. While the price of your home may fall in line with other similar homes, the price-changing differences may lie within what the seller is willing to fix. The seller may entice buyers by agreeing



to pay for \$2,000 in closing costs, for example. Concessions such as this extend incentive to the buyer and are just another

piece of the negotiation puzzle.

When you enter into a contract, one of the most important clauses within states that the home is being sold in its present condition and all material facts about the home are provided. The provision allows the seller to inspect the home and request you to make repairs. This caveat includes the buyer's right to cancel the agreement if the buyer does not comply with the request. If you decide to entertain the request, you will enter into another negotiation.

Dealing with Repairs

Cosmetic repairs are usually not covered by the seller. Big-picture issues, like a damaged roof, is a different story. If the buyer asks you to pay for repairs to the roof, your hand may be forced because your next buyer may ask for the same. This holds especially true in a mild market. In addition, if you decide to walk away and are given a copy of the inspection report, you'll need to disclose the defect as part of your offer to provide facts to potential buyers

A second opinion on a requested repair can save you money. If, for example, the buyer is asking for you to fix some issues with mold, you may counter the offer after obtaining your own bid from a contractor. You can also entice your buyer by offering a credit rather than making the repairs yourself. Keep in mind that certain repairs, such as Section 1 repairs, may be required by lenders. In other words, funding from the bank may be contingent upon a clean slate of health. Your buyer's hand may be tied, and depending on the number of offers and types of financing the buyer brings to the table, this may put you in a bind, too.

Instead of paying for a repair, you may offer to help pay for a home warranty that would go toward future repairs.

Gain the Leverage

The basics of negotiating start with leverage. In a seller's market, for example, you may have the leverage of saying no to certain repairs knowing that buyers are lining up for real estate. On the other side, you may be inclined to agree with reasonable requests for repairs when the market favors the buyer.

If you have more questions about the particulars of certain sections that spell out conditions about repairs and conditions of the home, be sure to express your questions to your real estate agent. Generally, the section states that the seller will disclose known material facts and defects. Since the seller may not know everything about the property, the buyer is entitled to an inspection, from which additional negotiating may arise.





MOVING OUT AND CLOSING ON YOUR HOME

As you approach the finish line of selling your home, thoughts of closing the deal and even moving out are at the forefront of your mind.

All the stresses of selling your home will soon become a distant memory as you mentally prepare to hand the keys to a new owner and move into your new home.

As you near the finish line of escrow, financial and legal details continue to be ironed out by the third party. Its participation allows you to focus on the negotiation and selling of your home. Near the end of this process, you and your seller will get a preliminary title report, payoff balances from lenders and property tax information.



Before packing your bags and loading up the moving truck, however, you have some responsibilities.

- Fulfill your duty to keep the house in the condition in which it was presented.
- Negotiate any last-minute repairs discovered by the buyer's inspector.
- Notify your utility companies about the expected final service date.
- Prepare to move by making a list and reviewing closing documents.



If your buyer's lender requires a survey of the property, you must review the document. You may also be asked for a final walkthrough of the home before the deal is consummated. When the day comes to finally close, the deed will be filed at the county and the transaction will be on record. You will still need to sign more paperwork, but the heavy lifting is behind you at this point.

Getting Ready to Move Out

Your move-out date will be part of the contract. This may include any additional days you request from the new owner of the home, requiring you pay rent for any extra days you request.

Be sure to check the closing document to guide you when you begin to remove items from the home. Remember, you may have agreed to leave some items behind. Any fixture that is attached is also required to stay, even if not explicitly spelled out in the contract.

If you agreed to transfer any services like the alarm monitoring system, then be sure to set that up for a smooth transfer. A detailed note or instructions may also assist the new owners of the home.

Just as it's important to leave behind items you agreed upon, you also want to avoid leaving anything behind without it

being signed off on by the buyer. Put yourself in the buyer's shoes. Do you want to enter a new home with unexpected items left behind? Surely not. If you're rethinking leaving something behind late in the process, you may contact your real estate agent to gauge the buyer's interest. Chances are, however, that the item you want to be left behind is not as appealing to the buyer.

As a common courtesy, you'll want to make sure the place is cleaned up and looking as good as you showed it – just without all the furniture or other household items.

When your steps away from closing, double check your lists and closing documents. Eyeball everything and walk through the home one final time. This is an exciting time, so, just retrace your steps to ensure that nothing was forgotten.

You can notify your agent that the home is good to go. As you close and lock your front door for the last time, think about all the wonderful memories you made and what

The seller may also pay out expenses drawn out in the contract, including the remainder of the mortgage, real estate commission, taxes and any credits promised to the buyer.

the home meant to you. This will be a sentimental time, but it is also a time for celebration, and a toast to your upcoming endeavors in your new home is in order.

