



## On the Market

Tips for selling your home quickly and painlessly.

BY JENNY HIGGONS

Look for an agent you are comfortable with and trust, then stick with him, says Steve Bruni.

**B**uying a house is many people's dream—but selling it can sometimes become a nightmare, especially for first-timers unfamiliar with the ins-and-outs. Today's sellers' market isn't as robust as it was, say, four years ago, but prices in Rockland are still more civilized and flexible than those east of the Hudson and in northern New Jersey. We asked some of Rockland's top real-estate brokers and agents for inside tips on how to make the process as seamless as possible for sellers. And, to be fair, they threw in a few pointers for buyers.

### Get a broker who's great at promoting your home on the Web.

Since 80 percent of buyers now use their computers to hunt for homes, your agent must know how to make your house stand out on the Web, insists Steve Bruni of Wright Bros. Real Estate in Nyack. "Many

people don't understand that you *must* make your house look gorgeous in the photo," he says. "Buyers flip through hundreds of listings, and the photos of your house should be attractive enough to immediately catch their eye." If the pictures of your home are not appealing, or if there are too few photos, then those shopping online won't want to see the house in person. A show-stopping presentation starts with pictures taken with a digital single-lens reflex camera on a sunny day and in the current season. If it's September and the photos include snow on the ground, buyers could assume your home has been floundering on the market since the winter.

### Do a major clean-up.

Box up as many personal items and as much clutter—knickknacks, small decorative pieces, toys, etc.—as possible, and be brutal about it, advises Maureen Pellegrini at Prudential Rand Realty in

New City. It will help enable prospective buyers to imagine themselves living there. Straighten up every room (including all storage spaces and the basement) and spruce up the outside (the landscaping, patio furniture, walkways, and gutters). "Clean out the garage and paint the floor, even if it's not already painted," adds Pellegrini. "A sparkling garage will show buyers that the rest of the house is also in good shape." Conversely, a poorly kept home gives the impression that the owner is careless and probably hasn't kept up with regular maintenance on the entire home. And remember this real-estate adage: If you can smell it, you won't sell it.

### Leave or seclude yourself when shoppers stop by.

Karen Ciccone at Keller Williams Hudson Valley Realty in New City knows that buyers can make comments about a home that the owner would

rather not hear. Things like, “Look at the awful color of those walls,” or “Those cabinets are horrible”—when you love them and spent thousands of dollars making them look exactly that way. Also, says Ciccone, “Your absence allows buyers to speak freely and not feel self-conscious.”

### Price your home within the local-market range.

Selling a home is considered the fourth most stressful and disrupting life event, after birth, death, and divorce. Setting the right price will sell any house in any condition. “Today’s consumers are very educated, and some know the market really well,” explains Patsy Duncan, who, with her husband, owns IBNA Spoon River Real Estate in Stony Point. **“Asking a realistic price is of ultimate importance if you truly want to sell. You’ll get the highest price in the shortest amount of time.”**

### Make your home accessible.

We’re not talking around the clock, but showing it every day from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. is reasonable. Buyers who can’t look around your home or set an appointment right away could lose interest. The solution, explains Mary Tricano of Century 21 Grand in Pearl River, is to have a lock box on the front door and/or always be reachable by phone.

## buyers be aware

### TIP 1

**Find an agent whom you trust**, are comfortable with, and who puts you first—and then stick with him. All agents have the same listings, and jumping from one to another will just hold up the whole process.

### TIP 2

Know that if the buyer’s comparative market analysis report says you’re paying more than the home’s market value, **a bank will give you a loan based only on its appraised value or selling price**, whichever is lowest.

### TIP 3

**Check out at least three reputable mortgage brokers**, and don’t sign on for payments that will leave you financially strapped.

### TIP 4

**Take a fixed mortgage**, so you’ll always know what the exact amount of each month’s payment will be.

### TIP 5

**Location is more important than quality.** (You can always fix up the house.) Potentially noisy elements to consider: proximity to traffic lights, bus stops, speed bumps, rush-hour traffic, empty lots, and schools.