



## Use a Home Inspection to Help Market Your Property

If you want to be really proactive and intelligently strategic about marketing your home you'll make the first call to a home inspector. This may seem odd to you, because most people believe that home inspectors only work for buyers. You most likely employed one to conduct the inspection on your own home before you bought it, and it may not have occurred to you that you would need the services of a home inspector again until after you sold your home and were in the process of buying the next one. But nobody can give you the kind of insight and report that a home inspector will deliver, showing what issues may be hiding inside the walls, basement, and attic waiting to manifest themselves and kill a potentially successful sale.

Sellers always get nervous when the buyer's own home inspector comes, because the inspector may find some pretty disturbing evidence that makes the buyer reluctant to proceed with the purchase. Of course the inspector may also give the house a great bill of health, which is an encouraging endorsement. But the point is that the savvy sellers don't wait until the buyer is already that far along before they uncover any issues and address them. They do it well ahead of time, even before listing the house, by hiring the same kind of home inspector to work for them. While this may seem strange, it is one of the best-kept secrets of professional real estate sellers.

What you do is hire the inspector, telling them that you are preparing to sell your house and you want him or her to give you a report on the condition of your home. You might pay \$250 or \$350 for a typical report that details all sorts of useful information – and that is a fraction of the price you would pay to salvage a sale late in the game if the buyer's inspector uncovered the same things. You find out right away where to focus your budget to make the house look its best and show the most value, and you will not lose any sleep wondering what is going to happen when the buyer's house inspector shows up. The peace of mind alone is worth the cost of the inspection, but what is really advantageous is that you get a market edge on all other people selling in your neighborhood.

Right now the housing market is picking up momentum in ways that are giving positive encouragement to buyers and sellers that we have not seen in years. Not only are we on the threshold of springtime – which is historically and traditionally the busiest time of year for home sales – but the real estate economy has also gained significant traction.

Experts from real estate brokers to housing market economists are all lining up to explain why 2011 will be a major turning point for the markets. What it all points to is a perfect storm of forces that will likely make this spring a great time to buy or sell a house.

As soon as the warm weather arrives, you need to line up professionals – including home inspectors, repair contractors, and potential listing agents – right now. If you wait a month or two then you'll be caught in the traffic jam of everyone else trying to schedule appointments with these professionals.



Before you can start talking about repairs or cosmetic improvements with handymen and contractors – or crunching realistic numbers with real estate brokers to determine your asking price – you need to know what an inspector will find once you get a purchase offer from a qualified buyer.