

Part VIII

Down the Road

Down the Road

Chapter 25

Moving? We Just Got Here!

There will come a time when your treasured home becomes too big, too small, inadequate or something that forces to rethink your options. Perhaps the neighborhood is changing, perhaps your job is forcing a move. Whatever. Now you have to pack up—again!

What are your options?

If you have to make a job move to another city or state, you don't have a bunch of choice options about a move.

If your house has become too small or inadequate, say you've married, or develop a home business that requires more room, or the house is suddenly too big—think options.

If the house is too small, is it worth adding an addition? Is there room for one? Will an addition be adequate?

Check the tax laws

Will you gain or lose by selling your home. If you buy another house of equal or more value, you don't have to worry much about taxes. If you buy a house much less expensive, there are capital gains taxes to pay. Check with your tax advisor on this one. There are too many variables for each situation to give any "sound" advice without knowing how and where you "sit" financially.

Remodeling isn't the answer, so then what. Start at the beginning of this book again to find another house.

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Contact your realtor to see what your house is worth. Find out what other houses around you are selling for and how your house relates to theirs (same layout, acreage and so forth).

Find out from your bank what you owe on your current house, then deduct that amount from the total worth of the house. That is your equity for a downpayment on the next house.

Do you want to have a buyer's broker or Realtor® work for you to get your new house? Or do you want to try to sell it on your own?

If you want to sell your house through a Seller's broker, then get some names and reputations and ask them to list your house.

Preparing to Sell

You want your house to be as attractive as possible to a potential buyer. Here are some basic pointers from the real estate trade on how to present your house to the public in a most positive way:

Clean everything!

Make your house sparkle. Get into every nook and crack. Clean them up! Even the things you think “lookers” won’t see. Clean out cobwebs, clean the edges of the floors, clean behind the television and under the sofa. Believe me, people will look everywhere.

Paint!

One tried and true trick is to paint the walls, the trim, the house itself (if it is painted siding), anything that looks dingy.

One house my son and his wife looked at was completely painted and redecorated. It looked just grand—on the surface. Except they hadn’t cleaned the grimy kitchen cabinets, nor was there anyway to hide the basics: lack of insulation (the windows were rotting in their sills), stink from the pervasive mildew, a 2 x 4 stick of wood used to hold up the main floor, as well as the “new roof” which was actually just another layer of shingles.

Store any excess “stuff”

If you have to, rent a storage facility for the duration. Strip the house down to the basic furniture needed to keep it looking lived in and attractive.

Empty closets and organize the space so the closets look spacious.

Kitchens and Bathrooms

Your kitchen and bathroom are important selling points. If they look ratty or overused, you've just lost value on your house. If they look fresh and bright, these rooms have just added value to your final price. If you have to put a new floor in—do so! You'll get the money back quickly.

Smell it?

Smells can make or break a house sale. If you smell mildew walking in the door, it's a turn-off. One suggestion is to bake something—particularly bread. Get out your bread machine and bake something rich and smelly. You shouldn't use delicious smells to mask something inherently bad in a house—that should be corrected or mentioned to a potential buyer. Don't cheat on this one, it will come back to haunt you. But if your dog just made a stinky—bake some bread or cookies. Then offer them to the visitors!

Warning!

If this scenario is quite possible, then don't put your house up for sale until you have made arrangements to leave and have a place to go.

Curb appeal

Go outside, walk away from your house, then try to come back to the house as a new visitor would. Try to see your house as others do. Does it just make you pant with excitement? Or look like last year's mud-flinging party is still waiting clean up.

Mow your lawn, trim the edges and around trees. Keep the lawn mowed and neat. Sow grass on the bare spots. Would you buy this house again?

Plant flowers, lots of bright flowers. If it isn't the season for flowers, use seasonal potted plants if appropriate. If the Impatiens are dead, clean out the beds and stick pots of mums on top.

Hire a housekeeper!

Save yourself a lot of grief. If you have too many other things to do, by all means, hire a housekeeper to do the routine stuff for you. You do have to keep the house in order and clean.

Preparing to Move

All the moving information in Chapter 5 holds here.

What if your house sells tomorrow?

Then you had better have a place to go. Unless you can negotiate with your buyers to stay another month or so, you may have to rent an apartment, stay in a hotel, or stay with family or friends.

Plan for this contingency before you put your house up for sale. In many areas of the country, houses can be sold before they hit the market. If you live in one of these areas, by all means, you have better be ready to act immediately. Check with your realtor about the market in your area. What is the likelihood of that happening to you.

What if your house doesn't sell at all?

Then you are back to square one. If your contract is up on the real estate agent and you know that your agent isn't doing well by you—find another agent who will push your home like crazy.

Why isn't it selling?

If your house isn't selling, find out why, then do what you can to correct the situation. Obviously, there will be some situations that you can't do anything about, but there are probably plenty you can do something about. Suppose the kitchen is just plain yucky and for your neighborhood, a great kitchen is a given—all, of course, except yours. Either lower your price, or have a designer create a wondrous kitchen for you and get it installed. Within reason, naturally.

If you have bright pink carpets, and your potential buyers are “neutral” types of people, rip out the pink carpet and install neutral carpets. It is the first impression that will ultimately grab the “lookers.”

Think about this—
Would you like to live there?

If not, why would anyone else?

Alternatively
Can you stay
where you
are?

If you have to leave the house anyway and move, you have to do so. Make sure you leave your old house in the hands of an agent or realtor you trust to sell it fairly for you. You will most likely have to carry both mortgages until the first house is sold. Can you do that financially? It took my brother two years to sell his former house in the East when he moved west.

Can your bank help you?

Go and speak with your bank manager, or mortgage lender. What can they do to help you. Will a bridge loan help? See what they have to offer.

Rent it out

What about the possibility of renting your house until it is sold. If this is a possibility, then be absolutely sure that the tenants have an excellent rental record and you trust them—and most important, there is someone in the area (i.e., your rental agent) to keep an eye on things for you.

Get an overseer/agent

Hire a property management firm to check on your house and make sure that maintenance is done, the house is kept clean and saleable. If there isn't a property management company in your area, make sure your rental agent can do this for you. You will need to have a contact in the area, aside from your tenants.

