

Real Estate *focus*

With Compliments of:



Allan Huestis
Realtor

Keller Williams Realty South

600, 11012 MACLEOD TRAIL S.
Calgary, AB, T2J 6A5

Office: 403-852-0723

Fax: 403-278-8470

ahuestis@shaw.ca

Greetings,

Welcome to the newest evolution of this newsletter. I hope that you find it informative and entertaining.

If you are thinking of making a move, or just curious about the real estate trend in your area, please feel free to contact me any time. It is my pleasure to help you.

Regards,

Allan Huestis



Numerous people are likely going to spend a considerable amount of time browsing through your home while it is on the market. If you are living in the home while it is for sale, your personal things will be on show too and potential buyers might look through drawers and other items that are inside your home. Your privacy and security may become an issue when showing your home, so it is important to consider all your options before you welcome someone into your home.



Protecting Your Privacy While Your Home is on the Market

For many individuals, it is very important for them to protect their privacy, while others are simply concerned that buyers will make assumptions about them and judge them instead of simply judging their home. However, the importance of protecting your privacy is all the same and that goes for anything personal from financial information, such as cheque books to bank statements and personal letters.

Protect your documents

Keep in mind that a potential buyer may open cabinets or drawers—this is not considered snooping. Buyers can innocently tug on a drawer to inspect its construction or depth and find important documents that you might not intend for anyone to see.

Don't leave mail where anybody can find it

Many sellers make the mistake of leaving piles of opened mail neatly stacked on the kitchen counter or somewhere else in the home. By leaving your correspondence out on the table, a potential buyer can find out about your credit card debt, whether you have filed for bankruptcy and other private information that you probably don't want the seller to be aware of. Not only is this an invasion of your privacy, it can also change the offers that you receive from buyers. If you have a stack of mail from a collection

agency, the buyer will know you are desperate to make a sale and will likely propose far under the list price.

Remove personal effects from your walls

From diplomas and religious artifacts to wedding certificates and personal photos, don't provide buyers with any personal information about yourself or your family. De-personalizing is also an important move to make when staging your home for sale anyway, so you can actually accomplish two things by removing the personal effects from your home.

Don't leave your computer up and running during showings

Gaining personal information from your computer takes only minutes for a professional hacker or thief, so be proactive and turn your computer off before potential buyers arrive.

Before you put your home on the market, empty out drawers, stage closets and pack up anything personal including medications. Disassociate yourself with your home—remind yourself that it is a house—a product to be sold on an open market that is bound to see plenty of new faces throughout the term of the selling process.

Consider renting a locker at your local bank and store away your jewelry and other valuable items. It is better to be safe than sorry.

Should You Repair or Replace Your Home Windows?

Over the years, there have been many changes in style, technology, and function of windows. When deciding whether to repair or replace your existing windows, begin by considering their age and condition. As well, poorly designed, constructed and placed windows can cost money through heat or cooling loss.

If your home is more than 30 years old and still has the original windows, chances are your windows are not keeping you as warm or as cool as well-placed and installed newer models. But, there are measures you can take to increase the efficiency of your older windows:

- Tighten the seal around the windows with weather-stripping. There are many different types of weather-stripping available for use on wood, metal, aluminum and vinyl. One of the easiest to apply is caulking cord which comes in a roll. You simply press the cord into place to make a tight seal.
- Every window not made of insulated glass should have a storm window. If your home has storm windows, ensure they are in good condition and install them properly before the cold season begins. When those icy winter winds start blowing, both you and your pocketbook will notice if your windows offer good protection.
- if your home doesn't have storm windows, or they are in poor condition, you can get as good or better protection using heavy-gauge clear plastic sheeting. Seal it tightly over your existing windows and you will have an inexpensive and effective alternative to storm windows.

Five signs that it's time to replace your windows:

- 1- If a window develops ice or a frosty glaze inside a window pane, poor ventilation or insufficient insulation may be to blame.
- 2- If you feel a cold draft in the winter or a warm draft during the summer when sitting near your window, it is a clear sign of poor insulation. This problem can significantly increase your energy bill.
- 3- If you stand inside your house with a candle lit near a window's edge and the flame flickers or goes out, your weather stripping may need to be replaced.



4- If your window no longer remains open on its own, requiring you to prop it open, it is no longer in good condition.

5- If your windows become fogged with condensation there may be a seal failure. Seal failures are usually fixed by replacing either the glazing or the entire window.

Replacing windows

Modern windows not only beautify the appearance of a home, they bring sunlight in during winter, while preventing the warmth created from escaping outdoors. Windows also insulate a home from heat during the summer and keep cooled air from escaping. Today windows combine science and technologies that increase energy efficiency and actually reduce heating and air conditioning costs.

Replacing existing windows with more energy efficient models doesn't have to be done all at once. Begin by replacing the ones causing the most heat loss, such as the large picture windows in your living and dining rooms. Replacing windows in stages over a period of years costs less up front and still increases energy efficiency.

Common window types include: double-hung, casement, stationary, awning and horizontal sliding. They may be made of wood, aluminum or vinyl or a combination of these materials. Almost all feature insulated glass and easy-to-clean designs that provide tight seals and eliminate heat loss.

Whether you plan to install new windows yourself or have them installed professionally, be sure to visit a number of suppliers and study the various products and options on the market. You want to select windows that complement the appearance of your home, increase energy efficiency and give you the most value for your money.

Quality installed replacement windows will give your home protection from the outside elements and provide a great overall aesthetic look from the curb while meeting the energy related requirements required for rebates and tax credit programs.

Condo Living - A one Bedroom Condominium Opens Doors to Creativity

In her new one-bedroom loft in the lakeshore neighbourhood, Sarah enjoys a stunning city view. By focusing on what she was creating in her new space instead of what she was giving up, she was not only able to simplify her lifestyle but found new ways to use some of her most prized possessions.

Less square footage doesn't necessarily equate to less living. Sarah said while entertaining a small group of friends in here stunning city view location within walking distance of her workplace and health club in downtown neighbourhood.

Sarah's new space fits her tastes and lifestyle, having lived with her husband Jim and there two children for over 22 years, she realized that she was a slave to her house. "My two kids had moved out, and the idea of using only two rooms (the bedroom and kitchen) out of six, didn't make any sense. So with some anxiety, we decided to downsize. I joked with my husband that we would have to give up a lot if we moved into a condominium. What we gave up was flights of stairs, shovelling snow, putting out the garbage, raking leaves, cleaning out the eaves troughs, maintaining the furnace, and landscaping to name a few!" Sarah Said.

"Downsizing is about committing to change as much as it is about deciding where to put the furniture. Instead of dwelling on the negative and what you're leaving behind, think about what the positives are; a smaller space often takes less maintenance, leaving more time for hobbies" she adds.

While moving to her new place, Sarah had to give up many of her possessions, yet by focusing on what she was creating instead of what she was giving up, she was not only able to simplify her lifestyle but found new ways to use some of her most prized possessions.

Condos life has many advantages, because the space is smaller, you may be able to spend more on the quality of live and details. For example, you may be able to afford Italian marble for your kitchen counters because there's less counter space.

As a busy downtown Realtor, Sarah says most of her downsizing clients have decent equity in their existing homes and are moving



into the city because they want a lifestyle change. Although they are willing to give up square footage, they still want amenities such as fitness facilities, kitchens with granite counters as well as stainless appliances and spacious master suites.

Condos offer more opportunities to socialize; you will meet neighbours in the halls, the lobby and the laundry room. You will also have the opportunity to meet (and argue!) with them at your association's monthly board meetings. Condo living is a good choice for low-key, sociable types who enjoy getting to know other residents. When buying a condo, keep in mind that happy neighbours are a sign of a responsive, well managed building.

Most condos are equipped with security doors and intercom systems. Many also offer alarms, security cameras, and 24 hour doormen and lots of neighbours. Security conscious buyers and extensive travelers can rest assured that their homes will be watched and maintained while they are away.

A private, waterfront lot with magnificent views is way out of reach for most buyers; Condos ownership makes this attainable for most buyers. With access to luxury, high-end locations such as city center, waterfront, or art-district, is one of biggest perks that condos offer over single family homes.

"Now that I'm a happy condo owner I've discovered that my downsized lifestyle offers many upsides. My husband and I are having the time of our lives. We have adopted an active lifestyle, with long walks on nature trails and short hops to local attractions by public transport. We now take in live theatre, music, and ballet. We try out new restaurants and get "recharged" by the breathtaking beauty of the waterfront" Sarah Said.

On average, condos are much more affordable than houses, making them an excellent fit for individuals who want to lower or limit their housing costs. Clearly condos are the economical choice for retirees hoping to downsize, or first time homebuyers trying to enter high-end markets.



Mortgage Talk - Which Mortgage Should I Choose?

Choosing the right mortgage is as important a decision as choosing the right home. Getting the best deal on a mortgage loan can minimize your monthly payments and maximize the value of the investment you have made in your home. There are many different types of mortgage loans available to home buyers today, and it is important to understand the differences, advantages and disadvantages of each type of mortgage loan.

How long do you plan to stay in this home? Five years? Ten years? Thirty years? The length of time you will be in the home will certainly play a part in determining which loan to apply for. If you only plan to be in the home for 5–7 years or less, you should seriously consider an adjustable rate loan. If you intend on staying 20–30 years, a fixed rate mortgage may be right for you.

How much risk are you willing to accept? If you are the type of buyer that needs to know exactly what you will be paying each month for the term of the mortgage, a fixed rate mortgage will fulfill this need. The fixed rate loan, however, will also net a higher interest rate. If you are willing to take some risk of fluctuations in the interest rate, you may be able to receive a lower interest rate.

How much can you afford? Most lenders set lending ratios that ensure mortgage payments never exceeds more than a third of a person's income. However, this may still be too much of a stretch for you, especially if you have other expenses, potential future income changes or simply a lifestyle to uphold. Once you find a home you love, start crunching numbers. Can you really afford the mortgage payments, and are you willing to cut your expenses and save every month? Make sure you select a mortgage plan with a monthly payment that is within your means.

How much cash do you have available for upfront costs? If you have the resources, make a larger down payment to lower your monthly payment. By keeping a higher monthly payment however, you might be able to shorten the term of the loan to a 15-year loan in order to pay it off quicker. Keep in mind that you'll have closing costs and fees to pay in addition to your down payment. If you don't have much cash saved for your upfront



costs, don't despair. You may need to accept a higher monthly payment or even lower your monthly obligation by choosing an adjustable rate mortgage.

In addition to choosing a type of loan, you must also consider which lender to use. Once again, several factors will influence your decision.

Annual Percentage Rate. This is most likely the best way to make an "apples-to-apples" comparison of lenders. The Annual Percentage Rate reflects the cost of credit on a yearly rate and includes any points and fees in addition to the interest rate.

Interest Rate. Find out the rate the lender will commit and how long the lender will guarantee it. Get any commitments in writing.

Loan Approval. Both approval and funding time should be considered. You don't want to lose a prospective home because your lender takes weeks to fund your loan.

Lender Reputation. Don't rely solely on someone else's recommendation. You, not your friend, must feel comfortable with your lender. If you do feel good about your lender and trust him, it will be much easier to trust his advice on what kind of mortgage will best suit your needs.

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Featured Listings

Auburn Bay \$364,900



Very popular design by Heartland
2 Story, 1417 sq ft.
Lake privilege

Diamond Cve \$629,900



2,470 square foot, Victorian design.
Upgraded blue pearl granite counter
tops, custom millwork, walk-in pantry

Evergreen \$589,900



2282 sq. ft. home features hardwood
floors, 9 ft ceilings, great walkout
entrance from the basement

Looking at Real Estate



Let me setup a search for you.
What did THAT house sell for?
Where is the market headed