

Buyers Benefit From Having an Agent Who Knows Home Systems and Sustainability

One of the reasons I enjoy showing homes to buyers is that I get to educate them about home systems and how they work, as well as identify the sustainable and not-so-sustainable features of each home.

The agents at Golden Real Estate have a thorough understanding of home systems as a result of our combined decades of experience and hundreds of transactions. In addition, we have taken classes on energy efficiency, insulation, solar power and home construction which allow us to serve buyers better when we show them homes.

Together, for example, we toured the model homes at Richards Farms when they were under construction, where we learned, among other things, about that builder's foam insulation process.

There are so many aspects of energy efficiency and sustainability. Everyone by now knows about solar photovoltaics — creating electricity from the sun. Our office has 20 kW of solar panels, but having solar power is only the beginning. It's how efficiently you use that power that makes the difference.

Heating and cooling is the biggest user of energy in any home, and the number and variety of HVAC systems have become more extensive and more complicated, and we understand and can explain them. They include: gas forced air heat-

ing and compressor-based air conditioning (most common in Colorado and much of the country), hot water baseboard heat, hot water radiant floor

heating, wall-mounted heating panels or strips, heat pump mini-splits for both heating and cooling, hybrid heat-pump with gas forced air (which Rita and I have in our home), ground-source heat pump for both heating and cooling (the "gold standard" of efficient heating and cooling) — and let's not forget heating with wood or wood pellets!

Windows can vary greatly. Double-pane windows may be standard now, but a Colorado company, Alpen, has made a name for itself with triple-pane windows and now quadruple-pane windows. Recently I wrote about John Avenson's Westminster home, in which some of his south-facing Alpen windows have micro-etching to divert sunlight toward the ceiling of his kitchen, a high-tech alternative to reflective window shelving, which we saw when we toured a newer building at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

Skylights are so 20th Century. Today's modern replacement are sun tunnels (Solatube is a leading brand), which are great for illuminating interior rooms. Just last week I showed a home with five Solatubes in it, lighting up the living room and an interior bathroom amazingly well

from the mid-day sun. My buyer didn't realize they weren't ceiling light fixtures until I pointed them out. (We have two sun tunnels in our home illuminating our windowless garage and laundry room, and we have four sun tunnels in the Golden Real Estate office. We don't have to turn on any lights on sunny days!)

A knowledgeable agent can also point out passive solar features of a home, which others might not recognize. These include proper window configuration, wide overhangs above south-facing windows, thermal masses in south-facing sunrooms, and deciduous trees providing strategically positioned shade in the summer but allowing more sunlight in the winter. I like to see (and point out) cellular shades, especially vertical ones covering patio doors for cold-weather insulation.

Often I notice that the listing agent didn't mention the features (such as the Solatubes) that my buyers and I recognize as selling points. Of course, when doing the narrated video tours of our own listings, my broker associates and I don't miss the opportunity to point out those features. And, of course, we are sure to mention those features in the MLS listing.

Many agents miss the opportunity to write a separate description on the MLS for each individual room. It's not a mandatory field, but it's the best place to mention a room's Solatube, heated floor, porcelain tile, hardwood or other feature.

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH, Realtor®

Here Are Some Things You Should Expect to Learn From a Home Inspector

A home inspection is the best investment that any home buyer can make, providing you base your decision on the qualifications of the inspector and not by cost alone. Not only might you find a problem that you could get the seller to fix, but you'll also learn things you need to know about as the future owner of that home.

The inspector will also show you where the utility shut-offs are located and how to operate them, which can be important during an emergency.

The cost of an inspection varies from one inspector to the next and depends on the size of the home or possibly the purchase price. Expect

to spend between \$300 and \$500 for the basic or standard inspection. Add-on services which I recommend include a test for radon gas (\$100 to \$150) and a sewer scope (also \$100 to \$150).

If a high level of radon gas (over 4.0 picocuries per liter) is detected, the buyer should demand that it be mitigated, which costs a minimum of \$900 and as much as \$2,000 if there is both a basement and a crawl space.

A sewer scope involves sending a camera through the piping from the house to where it enters the sewer line under your street. Sewer lines in older homes were built with clay pipes which are prone to root intru-

sion and collapse. If root intrusion is discovered, the seller will usually agree to have the sewer line cleaned and rescoped, and if there is a collapse or other break, the repair could cost several thousand dollars, so both tests are money well spent.

The general inspection should be scheduled as soon as possible to allow time for additional inspections as indicated. For example, the inspector may discover evidence of mold or mildew, termite infestation or structural issues, and you'll need time to arrange those inspections.

In older (pre-1985) homes, it's common to encounter a Federal Pacific Electric or Zinsco panel, which can cost \$1,500 or more to replace. The inspector should recommend further evaluation and certification by a licensed electrician

and recommend its replacement since FPE and Zinsco lost their UL endorsement due to breaker failures resulting in electrical fires. An inspector will test electrical outlets for correct polarity and will also check for ground-fault protection on outlets located within six feet of any water source, such as kitchens, bathrooms, unfinished basements, outdoors or in the garage, etc.

He (or she) will walk the roof if possible (even though it's not required) to look for hail damage as well as proper sealing around chimneys, etc.

In this article, I have touched on only some of the many tests and inspections which make the money a buyer spends on professional inspection the best money he or she will spend.

Bidding Wars Are Back, According to Redfin

Nothing has surprised us real estate professionals quite as much as how hot the market has been during the Covid-19 pandemic. Redfin, the brokerage with what I consider misleading TV ads, did an analysis of offers written by their own agents on MLS listings and found that over half of those offers faced competing offers from other agents.

Nationwide, the percentage of Redfin offers facing competition

was 53.7% in June, up from 51.8% in May and 44% in April. Boston led the pack with 72.4% of offers facing competition during June, up from 67.2% in May.

The Denver market came in 12th nationally in terms of bidding wars, with 53% of offers facing competition, down from 55.6% in May. Of the top 12 metro areas, only Denver and Portland had lower percentages in June than in May.



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