

At Golden Real Estate, Our Brokers Focus on What Is Important to Homebuyers

We are a listing brokerage, but like any successful real estate firm, we also represent buyers. While we have particular competence in the listing and marketing of homes for sale, we are also successful in helping buyers find homes to buy, get them under contract, and then shepherd those buyers through closing and move-in, all the while bringing our years of experience and acquired competence to each stage of the process.

We know that, first of all, buyers' agents need to be good listeners — find out what's important to the buyer. That can and does vary from buyer to buyer. In this article, I'll describe what I've found is typically important beyond those very personal needs and wants.

Buyers need and want to know what the real estate market is like and what their money can buy. The best way to learn that, I've found, is to set up an MLS email alert early on, matching their search criteria.

While buyers can do their own searching on consumer-facing websites, not all MLS fields are searchable unless you're a member of the MLS. A good example of that is searching for a main-floor primary suite. That is not a searchable field on any consumer website that I'm aware of. On Zillow you can search for single-story homes, but many 2-story homes also have main-floor primary suites.

Think of other features important to you. Almost every MLS field can be a search criterion, but only for an MLS member agent, who can include them in an MLS alert that he or she sets up for you.

Do you want a fenced yard? RV

parking? Do you want mountain and/or city views? Solar panels? A particular elementary school?

You can receive an alert about homes matching your personalized search criteria as soon as they go on the market. Daily or monthly emails are also an option.

Such MLS alerts can give the buyer a sense of the market, whether or not he/she is ready to start looking at homes and/or make an offer on one they like.

Financing is critical, of course, and a buyer's agent needs to know the financial capabilities and limitations of his or her buyer and have an excellent loan officer who can let the buyer and agent know the price range for which the buyer is qualified. Some loan officers, such as ours, are more creative than others at solving problems and matching a buyer with the best loan.

Knowing whether a particular home is priced correctly and what a proper offering price would be is important to any buyer. When you find a home you want to buy, we have three valuation tools, not just Zillow, that can provide guidance on what a proper offer should be. What did comparable homes sell for, how long were they on the market, and did they sell above or below the listing price? That's easy for us to research and show you.

If you have lost bidding wars and don't want that to be in another one, you can ask your agent to send only listings that have been on the market more than a week or 10 days. By then the chance of competing with other buyers is much reduced.

Homes in newer subdivisions may have significantly higher prop-

erty taxes because they are in a metropolitan tax district. Although the MLS displays the property tax for each listing, it doesn't include the all-important mill levy. The tax rate for a home in a metropolitan tax district can be up to double that of a home outside that tax district, and we can make sure you know when that's the case.

Some buyers, especially those with RVs, want to avoid listings that

are in an HOA that limits RV parking. That's another criterion that can be specified in email alerts, as is the availability of on-site RV parking.

These are just some of the things which we have found are important to homebuyers. What's important to you? Knowing the value of an experienced agent in helping you find homes which meet your needs is a good reason to work with one of us at Golden Real Estate.

Cost-Effective Improvements to Help Your Home Sell Better

When it comes to improving your home to sell for more money, there are several improvements that experience has taught us can make a significant impact. Here's our checklist for you:

- 1. Enhance curb appeal:** First impressions matter, so focus on improving the exterior of your home. Trim the lawn, prune bushes, plant flowers, and add fresh mulch. (I have a vendor to recommend for yard cleanup.) Our handyman can repaint the front door, clean windows, and handle other cosmetic repairs.
- 2. Declutter and deep clean:** Clean and clutter-free homes appear more spacious and are appealing to buyers. We can recommend a professional house cleaner, and we provide a free staging consultation to guide you on the rest. Pay special attention to kitchens and bathrooms.
- 3. Repaint and touch up:** A fresh coat of paint can give your home a renewed look. Stick to neutral colors that have broad appeal. Our handyman can patch any holes and deal with peeling paint. Ensure that all surfaces are clean and well-maintained.
- 4. Upgrade lighting:** Good lighting makes your home brighter and more inviting. Replace incandescent and CFL bulbs with LEDs. Focus on key areas such as the kitchen, living room, and bathrooms. (Batteries + Bulbs has great deals on LEDs.)
- 5. Improve your home's energy efficiency:** Buyers favor energy-efficient homes. Consider installing weatherstripping, sealing air leaks, and adding insulation if needed. Upgrading to energy-efficient appliances,

such as refrigerators and water heaters, can also be appealing. We can guide you on this and recommend honest vendors.

6. Update kitchen and bathrooms: If a major renovation is not feasible, focus on small updates such as replacing cabinet hardware, upgrading faucets, and installing new light fixtures. Consider painting or refinishing cabinets. Flooring is important, too!

7. Enhance storage: Ample storage space is so important! Increase the functionality of closets and cabinets by adding organizers or shelves. Our staging consultant can provide guidance on this topic, too.

8. Improve landscaping: Clean up flower beds, and consider some strategic landscaping improvements such as a patio.

9. Address minor repairs: Our handyman (available only to clients) can fix any visible issues like leaky faucets, broken tiles, or squeaky doors. It's important to fix what I call "eyesores" — anything that draws negative attention during a showing.

10. Stage strategically: Our stager can help you rearrange furniture to maximize space, remove personal items, and add tasteful decorations.

Hiring Golden Real Estate is a good first step. Like our handyman, our free stager is a perk that comes with hiring us, but even before hiring us — in other words, during a listing appointment — my broker associates and I are happy to provide our own advice based on our years of experience listing and selling homes. Call us! Our contact information is below.

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH Realtor®

Just Listed: Condo in Downtown Winter Park

This condo at 78491 Hwy 40, Unit B3, is in the very center of downtown Winter Park, offering great views and easy access to all the activities Winter Park has to offer. This 2-bedroom unit with 1,063 square feet is within walking distance to restaurants, grocery stores, retail shops, the Idlewild Park Amphitheater, the Fraser River, and numerous bike/pedestrian trails. Recent updates include a new water heater, bathroom, and washer/dryer. Free shuttle buses stop in front of this building, allowing convenient access to the Winter Park area and beyond. This condo presents an excellent multi-use investment opportunity, whether for personal use or for rental purposes. More pictures and a video of this listing are at www.WinterParkCondo.info, or call agent/owner Austin Pottorff at 970-281-9071 to arrange an in-person showing.



GOLDEN REAL ESTATE
 Hometown Service Delivered with Integrity
 Promoting and Modeling Environmental Responsibility

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