

Bringing All The Pieces Together
To Help You Buy Or Sell Your Home



Practical Information For
Home Buyers And Sellers



Whether you're buying or selling a home, Town & Country Realty can help make the experience successful and hassle-free. As professionals in the real estate business since 1966, we have the knowledge and the skill to help you make the right move.

You'll find the enclosed information helpful as you prepare to buy or sell a home. We also encourage you to talk with a Town & Country Realtor about any questions you may have.





In The Market To Buy?

Here are five steps that will get you off on the right foot:

Get Your Finances in Order

Your credit reports are an ongoing look at how you manage your finances. It's best to know what your credit reports say about your financial history *before you apply* for a mortgage. Your reports play an important role in the mortgage approval process and in determining the interest rate and other loan terms that a lender offers you.

Get Familiar with the Mortgage Industry

Finding the right loan and lender is crucial. It's up to you to determine which lender is best for your needs, and it's always a good idea to have some background about the loan process before you talk to a lender. HOW SHOULD THIS BE ACCOMPLISHED?

Get Pre-Approved for a Mortgage

Consider this scenario: A home seller gets two similar offers. One is accompanied by a letter from the buyer's bank that states she is pre-approved for a mortgage in the amount of the offer. The other has no supporting documents. Which offer do you think the seller will consider first?

Determine Your Wants and Needs

Buying a home isn't as difficult as you might think. You can make it even easier if you get familiar with your local real estate market ahead of time, and make a list of your wants and needs before you start looking at houses.

Learn to Work with Your Real Estate Agent

Real estate agents represent buyers, sellers, or both – and in some cases they can work as neutral facilitators for either party. Know what you want from a real estate agent and be clear about his or her duties and loyalties.



Getting Ready To Sell?

The most important step in selling your home is to set the right price for your market. It's also where many sellers make a critical mistake. For best results in pricing your home, we recommend these guidelines:

Don't be fooled into thinking higher is better.

It's easy to get caught up in the excitement over choosing a selling price. But it's a mistake to choose the listing agent who suggests the highest list price, without considering other market factors.

Establish your home's value objectively.

It doesn't really matter how much money you think your home is worth, nor what your agent thinks. The person whose opinion matters most is the buyer who makes an offer. Pricing homes appropriately involves comparing similar properties, making adjustments for the differences among them, tracking market movements and taking stock of present inventory, all in an attempt to come up with a range of value, an educated opinion.

Understand the market.

There is no hard and fast price tag to slap on your home. Real estate agents compile the numbers and assess current conditions to present their best recommendation. In the end, the market will dictate the price.

Prepare Yourself And Your House For Sale

Disassociate Yourself With Your Home

- Say to yourself, "This is not my home; it is a house – a product to be sold."
- Make the mental decision to "let go" of your emotions and focus on the fact that soon this house will no longer be yours.
- Picture yourself handing over the keys and envelopes containing appliance warranties to the new owners!
- Say goodbye to every room.
- Don't look backwards – look toward the future.

De-Personalize

Pack up those personal photographs and family heirlooms. Buyers sometimes can't see past personal artifacts, and you don't want them to be distracted. You want buyers to imagine their own photos on the walls. You want them to say, "I can see myself living here."

De-Clutter!

- If you don't need it or use it, donate it or throw it away.
- Remove all books from bookcases.
- Pack up knickknacks.
- Clean off kitchen counters.
- Put essential items used daily in a small box that can be stored in a closet when not in use.
- Think of this process as a head start on the packing you will eventually need to do anyway.



Organize Bedroom Closets and Kitchen Cabinets

Imagine what a buyer believes about your space (and you) if she sees everything organized. It says you probably take good care of the rest of the house as well. This means:

- Alphabetize spice jars.
- Neatly stack dishes.
- Turn coffee cup handles facing the same directions.
- Hang shirts together, buttoned and facing the same direction.
- Line up shoes.



Rent a Storage Unit

Almost every home shows better with less furniture. Remove pieces of furniture that block or hamper paths and walkways and put them in storage. Since your bookcases are now empty, store them. Remove extra leaves from your dining room table to make the room appear larger. Leave just enough furniture in each room to showcase the room's purpose and plenty of room to move around. You don't want buyers scratching their heads and wondering, "What is this room used for?"

Staging Your Home

Dress your Home for Success

Preparing your home for sale is about more than cleaning, decluttering, painting and making minor repairs. It's all about "dressing" the house for sale...adding the small details...creating a mood. It's a process called staging.

Staging makes your home look bigger, brighter, cleaner, warmer and more loving. Best of all, it makes homebuyers want to buy it.

There are many steps you can take yourself to help showcase your home in its best light. You also can work with a professional stager for additional help.

Here's what you can do:

Remove/Replace Favorite Items

If you want to take window coverings, built-in appliances or fixtures with you, remove them before you show your home. If the chandelier in the dining room once belonged to your great grandmother, take it down. If a buyer never sees it, she won't want it. Pack those items and replacethem, if necessary.

Make Minor Repairs

- Replace cracked floor or counter tiles.
- Patch holes in walls.
- Fix leaky faucets.
- Fix doors that don't close properly and kitchen drawers that jam.
- Consider painting your walls neutral colors.
- Replace burned-out light bulbs.



Make the House Sparkle!

- Wash windows inside and out.
- Rent a pressure washer and spray down sidewalks and exterior.
- Clean out cobwebs.
- Re-caulk tubs, showers and sinks.
- Polish chrome faucets and mirrors.
- Clean out the refrigerator.
- Vacuum daily.
- Wax floors.
- Dust furniture, ceiling fan blades and light fixtures.
- Bleach dingy grout.
- Replace or remove worn rugs.
- Hang up fresh towels.
- Clean and air out any musty smelling areas.

Scrutinize

- Go outside and open your front door. Stand there as if it's your first time entering. Does the house welcome you?
- Linger in the doorway of every single room and imagine how your house will look to a buyer.
- Examine carefully how furniture is arranged and experiment by moving pieces around..
- Make sure window coverings hang level.
- Tune in to the room's statement and its emotional pull. Does it have impact and pizzazz?

Check Curb Appeal

Your home's exterior makes the first impression on a prospective buyer.

Be sure to:

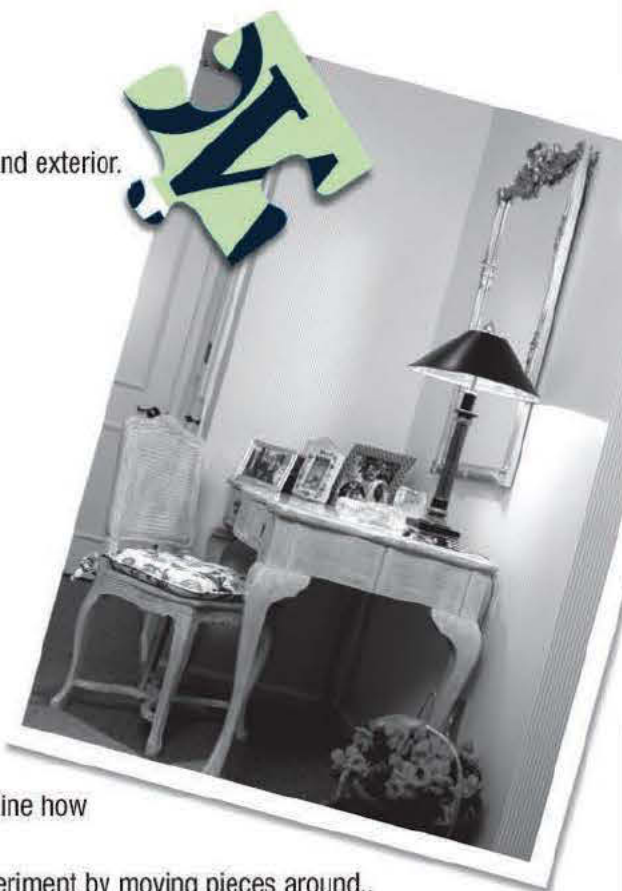
- Keep the sidewalks cleared.
- Mow the lawn.
- Paint faded window trim.
- Plant yellow flowers or group flowerpots together. (Tip: Yellow evokes a buying emotion; marigolds are inexpensive.)
- Trim your bushes.
- Make sure visitors can clearly read your house number.

Work With A Professional Stager

If you want extra help in getting your home ready to sell, consult with a professional stager. He or she will guide you, room by room, inside and out, to create the right atmosphere around your home.

Stagers often use accessories to create an effect. These can include mirrors, plants, silk flowers, floor and table lamps, area and throw rugs, small love seats, ottomans, afghans, pillows, baskets, and plastic tables and chairs.

Your backyard or deck may need staging, too. Professional stagers often bring in plants and potted flowers, and add additional color by setting the picnic table with bright, plastic dinner plates.



Understanding CMAs

Don't want to pay too much for a home? Want to be sure that you aren't paying more than market value for your home purchase? A CMA – Comparative (or Comparable) Market Analysis – is the strongest tool in your home-buying arsenal to help assure you're paying a fair price.

A CMA recaps housing activity in the area in which you are interested, focusing generally on three properties that are similar in size and amenities located in the same neighborhood or nearby. The CMA will list specific details (number of bedrooms, number of baths, total room count, square footage, age, etc.) for similar properties that are currently on the market (active listings); are under contract but not yet closed (pending listings); have closed and transferred ownership (sold listings); along with those listings that have either expired without selling or have been withdrawn by the seller (taken off the market).

Because a CMA compares similar properties, it can give you a pretty clear snapshot of current housing values in a specific housing market. Although the CMA is very important, it cannot be used as an absolute determination of value, since it generally does not put a lot of weight on condition, an obviously important factor.

While the CMA will list homes that are currently on the market as well as those that are pending or have expired, it is those properties that have sold and closed that give the most information. This information is important because it details specifically what buyers are willing to pay (and lenders are willing to lend for specific properties).

Don't make the mistake of putting too much weight on the prices of properties currently on the market. These homes could be wildly overpriced compared to the price for which they eventually sell. Likewise, one of the biggest reasons that a property listing will expire without selling is because it is overpriced. So take the prices of these expired listings with a grain of salt.

A CMA can be your most important tool in negotiation, since it will detail exactly where, price-wise, the house in which you are interested is positioned. Is it underpriced (a bargain), priced "on the money" (a fair price for both buyer and seller) or overpriced (time to either negotiate hard or walk away).

Remember, if you overpay for a home in a strongly appreciating market, the market will eventually cover your mistake. If, however, you overpay in a flat or declining market, you will end up holding the financial bag.





Top 10 Reasons to choose Town & Country Realty for your next move

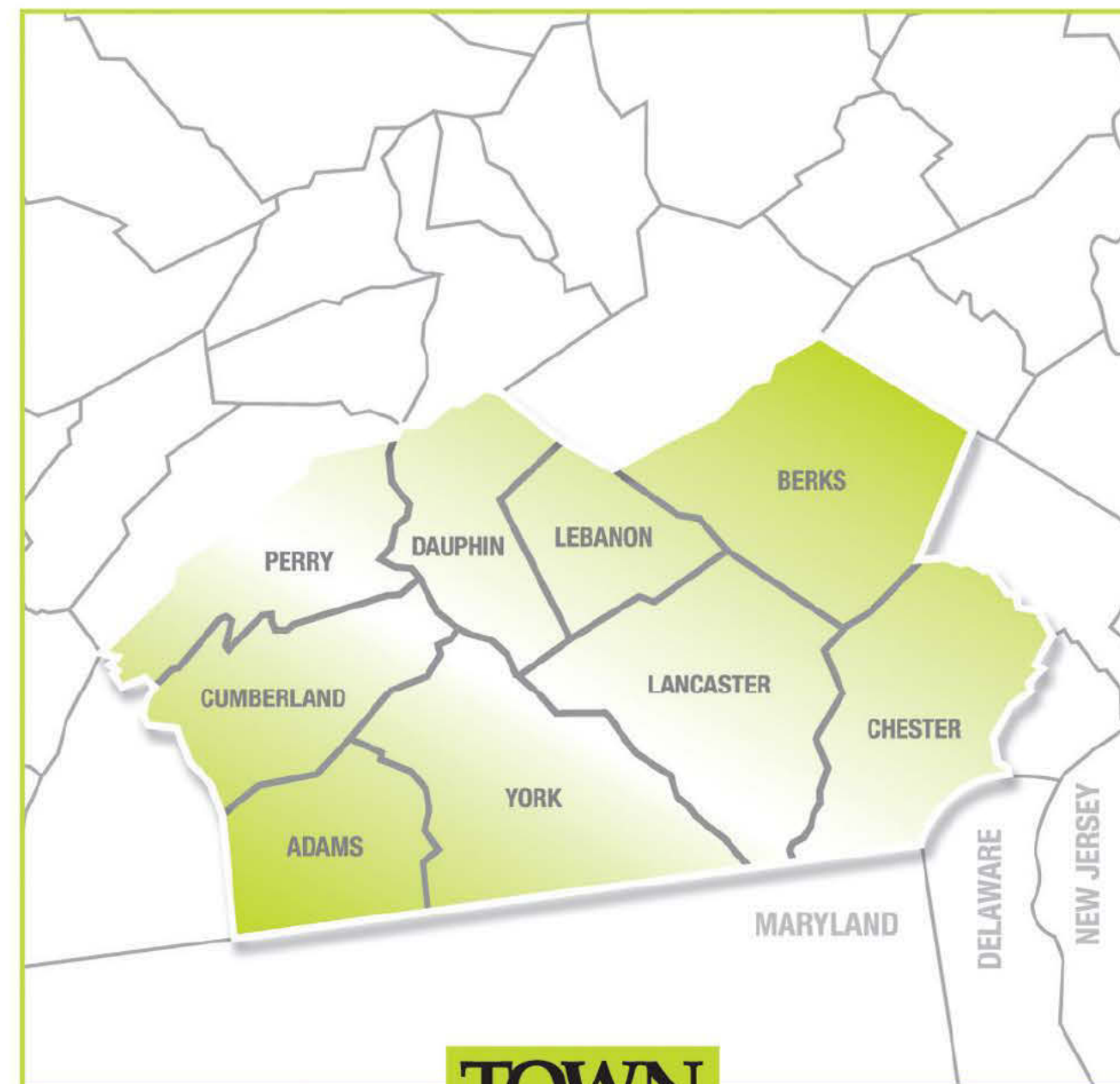
1. **Proven professionals** – We get the job done! We have been in the real estate business since 1966.
2. **Direct representation** – We work for your best interests.
3. **Experience** – We are veterans of the industry with experience that will work for you. All listing inquiries are handled by experienced agents.
4. **Mortgage services** – We work with knowledgeable mortgage specialists that can guide you through every step of the financing process.
5. **Reputation** – A proven reputation in the industry with thousands of satisfied clients.



6. **Relationships** – Good relationships with other real estate firms promotes great cooperation with listing and selling homes.
7. **Technical expertise** – We have the resources to help Buyers and Sellers establish the true value of a property.
8. **Nationwide marketing** – Your listing is available to Buyers and Sellers through various means of advertising including internet marketing.
9. **Competitive commission** – Custom tailored to meet your needs.
10. **Satisfied clients** – We love what we do and your satisfaction is our number one goal.



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