

Ask the expert

What's the best way to price a house for quick sale?

Most sellers have an emotional connection to their home and feel it deserves top dollar when being sold. Everyone naturally wants to get the most money, but “sellers must not be hasty with this all-important decision,” cautions real estate expert Robert Jenson, founder and chief executive of The Jenson Group, sellers of luxury real estate in Las Vegas. “The most common mistake that causes sellers to get less than they hope for is listing the sale price too high.”

Listings reach the greatest proportion of potential buyers within the initial days and weeks after hitting the market, Jenson explains. “If a property is overpriced early on, it will be dismissed — or outright missed — by prospective buyers and may result in price reductions that will reflect poorly on the listing. Overpriced properties languish on the market, and most end up selling at a lower price than would have been realized had it been priced properly in the first place.”

To help would-be sellers foster maximum profits with their real estate transaction, Jenson offers these insights on the various elements that must be considered when establishing a fair, competitive and marketable sale price for a house:

1. Total square feet is an important consideration when establishing a sale price, but it's usually just a starting point for buyers who use it to narrow the field but make an actual purchase decision based on many other factors. There are general rules to know when considering a home's price per square foot, such as smaller houses generally get a higher price per foot than large houses, and single-story houses will sell for a higher price per foot than a two-story house.

2. Houses that back up to a busy street get, on average, 10 percent to 20 percent less than houses elsewhere in a neighborhood.

Anticipate this type of obstacle and factor it into the original sale price to avoid inevitable price reductions down the road. Quiet cul-de-sacs, golf or water frontage, and lots that offer privacy are value contributors that can certainly justify a higher sale price than other houses in a community — or be leveraged as an advantage against competing listings.

3. Whether it's a downtown skyline, mountains, water or some other desirable landscape, buyers are willing to pay a premium for views, and a house should be priced accordingly. Just be realistic. A view that can only be had by standing on the counter from the second story looking out the window to the left doesn't count, and it's inadvisable to dupe a prospec-

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tive buyer by adding this to the listing's description.

4. For a house to sell quickly at the price desired, it must be “finished” with as many structural and interior design upgrades as possible. Nothing's too small to leverage in establishing a house's price point. Crown molding, faux painting, door and cabinet handles with modern finishes, upgrades such as appliances, windows, counters, cabinets and floor treatments, luxuries like swimming pools and surround-sound wiring, all are considerations in establishing its true value and strategic sale price.

5. Gated communities or those with amenities such as a clubhouse, swimming pool and fitness center are elements that raise a house's price per square foot.

When pricing a house without these benefits, know whether you are competing against other houses that do offer such benefits so you can price yours as aggressively and competitively as possible.

6. Reference comparable sales: Check the price per square foot of other houses that have already sold in your community in the past three months, but looking beyond three months is not



a realistic portrayal of current market conditions and may steer you in a wrong direction. It's also important to compare your listing to other houses on the market. It's the best tool for honing an effective pricing strategy, particularly for highly motivated sellers.

7. Sellers often frown on the idea of paying for an appraisal before there's an offer on the table, but doing so is one of the most important things a seller can do in pricing a house relative to current market conditions.

Want to sell a house quickly? Price it at or below the appraised value, as educated buyers will recognize your fair price and be more apt to pay it with less haggling.

8. Many lenders now require higher credit scores coupled with higher down payments, which can handicap some buyers. A savvy seller will understand the mortgage industry's impact on the buyer and will price accordingly.