



What Many Realtors Won't Tell You

By
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1. I don't know the area. If a realtor hasn't worked in the area and neighborhood, he or she simply doesn't know a lot of the critical details, like shopping locations, commuting times, taxes, zoning, deed restrictions, association fees and so on. You could waste a lot of time looking at houses based simply on your price point. A home is a lot more than an affordable mortgage.

This lack of realtor knowledge can also hurt you when you're selling. An experienced realtor who knows the area can quickly help you determine the absolute best price and market the property most effectively for a quicker, smoother sale.

2. I've never seen that before. If a realtor is just starting out, they don't know all the things that can go wrong - and how to fix them. Nothing against them - but experience *does* count.

3. You can't afford this house. One of my personal peeves is realtors who *routinely* show clients homes above their stated maximum price limit. Or, they set up a first-time buyer with a 100% financing ARM (Adjustable Rate Mortgage) that means the payment will go up *dramatically* within a year or so - a hard fact that can get lost in the excitement and fine print. I look my clients in the eye and tell them the truth - and what they *can* afford. (One of my clients laughingly refers to this as "Donna's hairy eyeball look.")

4. The house is great - the neighborhood is bad. Sure, you live on the inside, but you also want to feel safe walking down the street. And, resale value may just not be there - at least not any time soon. (Tip: Not sure? Call the police; they've got crime statistics. Also, in an "up and coming" neighborhood, drive around and count burglar bars.) Of course, some great homes are in some not-so-great reviving areas - but make an *informed* decision.

5. Renovations usually cost a lot more and take longer than you planned. Think twice, even three times before taking on a "fixer upper." A realtor can say "Oh, that's an easy fix." After all, he or she isn't the one who'll have to do the fixing. That's you. So, how "easy" will it *really* be?

Do you truly want to give up your nights and weekends for weeks, months, even years? A "fixer upper" *can be* a great deal (I've bought a few myself). However, don't buy a wreck and expect it to become a mansion in a month - unless you have the resources and staff of one of those home shows, such as *Extreme Makeover* or *Hidden Potential*. As much fun as such shows are to watch - they set unrealistic expectations for real-world renovations. I've laid flooring, for example, and it's not nearly as easy as it looks on television.

6. Your house isn't ready to be shown. A good realtor will give you some tough love. Mop the floors. Clean the closets. Rip up the stained carpet. Mow the yard. Make those repairs now! I've seen many homes that - with some elbow grease - *could have* sold quickly. But, they languished on the market because the realtor didn't care enough (or know enough) to be tough with the seller.

7. You can't sell your house for that price. People put a lot into their houses and they understandably want a return. However, your house is only worth as much as a buyer is willing to pay. You also have to factor in carrying costs, particularly if you've already bought another home. How long can you afford to carry two mortgages? It could be better to swallow hard and take less up front and move on. For example, if comparable properties in the area are selling for \$250,000 and you're adamant you *absolutely must have* \$400,000 - you're going to be really frustrated - *and* a seasoned realtor won't list your house.