

Ep #9: Everything You Need to Know When Selling Your Home



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With Your Host

Harriet Libov

[Your Real Estate Connection in Westchester](#)

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Welcome to *Your Real Estate Connection in Westchester*. A show for people looking to buy or sell homes in the Northern Westchester County area. Join local real estate expert Harriet Libov as she shares her professional advice on the local real estate market, connects you with knowledgeable community residents, and gives you helpful insights behind the home buying and selling process. Now, let's dive into today's episode.

Today's episode is about selling a home. In previous episodes, we have focused on the buying process and learning about towns in Northern Westchester. As a top producing agent, my business is 50% buyers and 50% sellers. I like it that way. It helps me be a better agent. I can advise sellers on what buyers want and help them present their home in the best light possible.

I look through a buyer's eyes when I market a home with the photography and floor plans and when I set the stage for an in-person tour. It helps me tell the story of the house with appealing copy that buyers want to hear. I advise buyers to think like a seller when presenting an offer. Walking in another person's shoes puts deals together. So if you are a buyer, I would still listen to this episode. It will help you understand the process for sellers before they come to market and understand the emotional rollercoaster that they go on on their journey.

For most sellers, it's a very uncertain and stressful process to put your home on the market. For some, it's where they've raised their family. Lots of personal belongings and lots of memories. Also keep in mind that some sellers may not be listing their home because they want a bigger or seller home or less taxes. But because someone has passed or they're getting divorced or financially it's a prudent decision. It's an extremely emotional journey for sellers.

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Buyers don't need to know a seller's why, and listening agents often keep it confidential if their sellers want it that way. No matter what, it's important to have compassion for a seller. Understand their timing and their needs to accommodate not only price but a desirable timetable. Today's episode is about the process of selling your home.

Of course, the state of the market matters as well. Now entrenched into the 2021 season, I'm bringing properties to market and they are selling immediately because of low inventory and high buyer demand. That is and may not always be the case. Regardless, the process of preparation and listing is the same for a seller whether your home sells in a week or a year.

Being a good seller's agent is not just pricing the house. It's easy for me to price a house in this market because it's a seller's market. If I price a home in the sweet spot, it will likely go over asking and I'm a hero. But there are so many other factors to consider when choosing your agent, bringing your home to market, and preparing your home for sale which we will dive into in this episode.

Today I'll speak to Gail Green. Gail has sold two homes with me in my career. One was the home she and her husband Bob raised their family in. The other was a townhome they custom built when a new Toll Brothers community was built in Pleasantville. We have worked well together. Gail and Bob were smart sellers, and they were successful in their journey. Thanks for being here today. I appreciate you tuning in. Let's settle in. Learn about what's involved in selling a home in today's market and being the conversation.

Deciding to sell your home is a huge decision for most people. Some people are planners and need to speak to me months in advance or at least a year in advance before pulling the trigger and getting ready for market. Others just call and they are ready, and they move fast.

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The following questions need to be considered by their real estate agent when meeting a potential seller. Why are they thinking of selling? How flexible is their timeframe? Is this their first time selling a home? What are their expectations? Are they able to buy first without selling? Or are they selling first and then buying? Finally, will they need further assistance in their relocation process either locally or globally?

As their agent, I will evaluate many factors when meeting with a new client and seeing their home for the very first time. Then I will do my homework learning about their property from information in their municipality. Let's talk about all the factors to consider when selling your home.

First is pricing. That's really what everybody wants to know. What's my house worth? It takes strong knowledge of a community and comparable sold homes that your agent is familiar with to know how to price a home. The condition of a home is also a function of price, which we will talk about later on. The location is a function of price and how desirable of a location it is.

Pricing with the idea of multiple offers will give a seller more options for a particular closing date if that is important to them. Of course market conditions of supply and demand, which can vary in different price ranges. So it really depends on the price of your home. Luxury homes generally stay on the market a bit longer.

The second thing I look at is what distinguishes a home from other homes in the area that may come to market. What are the best features of a home through a buyer's eyes? What are the features that might hinder a sale? Those features also need to be considered and improved upon if possible. Then there is interior and exterior preparation. This is so important deciding what needs to be done to prepare your home for sale and understanding what a seller is willing to do prior to going on the market.

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Sellers may consider a pre-inspection to be a step ahead of the buyers and remedy any problems before the buyer has an opportunity to inspect their home. Some sellers are very in tune with the maintenance of their home and others are not.

I also look at the current legality of the home from reading the building file in the municipality. Is there a finished basement that was done without a permit? Will it come up as a problem in the transaction? Closing costs and other miscellaneous costs are important for a seller to know so that there are no surprises when they understand what they will net when they sell their home.

Finally, the importance of your agent, brokerage, and overall presentation of your home. This is not only to advise you on all of the items I previously mentioned but also because experience matters. A top agent reads every offer, develops relationships with other agents, knows local nuances and red flags when they see them. A top agent can problem solve with a trusted list of vendors for every possible situation may occur.

She or he understands that there are human emotions involved in every transaction. This is not just a financial event. An experienced agent can streamline the conversation with buyer's agents and their sellers to keep all of the big emotions at bay. When I sign up a seller, I'm a seller's agent. What happens if a buyer calls me to see the house? Or I have a buyer that might be the perfect match? My seller comes first when I sign a listing. If a potential buyer is interested, I will refer them to a trusted colleague for buyer representation that way there are no conflicts of interest.

My mantra for selling a home when I meet with a seller is to start thinking of your home as a model home. One that you might see if you were looking at new construction. That's ideally what a home should look like when it goes on the market. Model homes are meant to attract buyers. Deep cleaned,

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decluttered, depersonalized, fresh scented. So no pet or moisture odors in the basement will fly.

First impressions are so important. And very few people enter their home through their front door but rather through the garage. The front door needs to be clean, freshly painted with nice plantings and trimmed for easy entry. Annuals for color and mulch for curb appeal. The mailbox should look great, and a fresh doormat there to welcome the potential buyers when they come to see the house. It sets the stage for a positive showing. Buyers feel they are looking at a well-maintained home before anyone even sets foot in the house.

Ideally, the interior needs to be neutralized with paint color. A fresh coat of paint will cover cracks or a past stain that might indicate a problem such as water seepage. So many times cracks are just settlement or bad taping, but buyers worry. And paint cracks or stains provoke unnecessary questions from a buyer.

Decluttering is a must. I believe in staging if warranted. Potential sellers have to purge items they don't need when they move. So it's better to do it before you move and have the house look great for showings. The level of staging a home is something for sellers to consider. The cost versus the reward. It's usually very rewarding financially and with less days on the market. But not everyone wants to live in a staged home.

Closets definitely need to be cleaned out. The less in them, the bigger they look. A model home would only have a neat closet. White bedding and fresh white towels are always best, and they photograph well. I personally own décor to lend to my clients to show a house. Silk flowers, mirrors, pillows, art, and other items that just add some finishing touches. I have taken staging classes and I have an eye for prepping a home for sale. I

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also work with professional stagers when sellers are open and need help preparing for market.

Staging will be a whole episode itself in this podcast. It's that relevant in today's market. However, all of the suggestions I just mentioned will still prove rewarding and provide great photography even without extensive staging.

Your first showing to a buyer is the presentation of your home photographed online. The goal is to get buyers in the door. Some sellers need the help of a professional organizer. Some sellers need sources for help hauling away junk and a donation site to give away what is still in good shape. A seller should not feel alone in the process. It is daunting. I provide those resources.

Then there is the marketing of your home. Photos, videos, floor plans, an inviting copy telling the story of your home. What you love about it, what the next person will love about it. With great copywriting, that's what gets buyers in the door to experience the magic of your home for themselves. Some of my sellers want to be involved in the copywriting process. We collaborate together, and that's fine with me. Others count on me for my expertise.

In the time of COVID, showing your home comes with supplies, shoe covers, hand sanitizers, and masks are a must. If you are a seller listening to this episode, you could either feel overwhelmed or calmed by knowing what services your agent can provide to present your home in the best light. No matter how you feel, your real estate agent can use good common sense to guide you to make the decisions that are right for you.

If you're only willing to do less than a lower price can reflect the work that needs to be done by an incoming buyer. In past years, buyers only wanted

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a turnkey home. A home that they could envision themselves moving into with no work to do. That's why staging became so popular. Often there were two working parents buying a home who don't have the desire or time to do a kitchen or bathrooms. That's where updating countertops, painting cabinets, essentially a facelift, comes into play.

Also some buyers have absolutely no vision of what a home could look like with some effort on their part to make it their own. Sometimes that facelift that the seller does prior to listing is the magic pill to help the buyers have vision. It all comes back to the importance of the photography of your home online to attract buyers to visit and inquire about the home. Again, price and value can overcome the work of staging and less stylish photography, but that's where price has to become a compelling factor.

Once an offer comes in, an experienced agent will be able to avoid any hiccups in the transaction and will know how to problem solve with pragmatic solutions if they occur. It's truly a gift a seller cannot envision or appreciate until you see it in action.

With all of this in mind, let's talk to Gail Green about her selling experiences as she looks back on the process of selling her family home and then the townhouse they purchased. We worked well together. Gail has been in the talent acquisition business for over 30 years. Her work experience includes leading two corporate human resource departments and developing an internal department for a multisite staffing firm. Gail recently established her own agency called guiding growth. Personally, Gail has a model that her candidates will soar, and her candidates will thrive.

Gail has been married for over 40 years and raised their family in Pleasantville, New York where she lived for 20 years. After they downsized in a townhome in the village of Pleasantville, she spent time in Jupiter, Florida and fell in love. She and Bob now live there full time. They enjoy an

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active lifestyle and the joy of their grown children now and grandchildren visiting. Also welcoming and hosting friends.

Harriet: Hi Gail.

Gail: Hi. How are you, Harriet? Good to see you.

Harriet: And hear you anyways. Welcome to the podcast. I love your motto of soaring and thriving. That works for me as an agent. I can help my buyers soar and thrive. We sold two homes together. Your family home in Pleasantville, which was a big decision. I know you thought about it for a while. Why did you finally decide to pull the trigger and sell that home?

Gail: Well, you know Harriet, it was a big decision. Ultimately it was relatively easy because the way I think of things, you always take your memories wherever you are. That's always been my approach. I've lived in many, many different locations. Those memories went through that front door with me. I knew going forward that would be what happened no matter where we ended up. So we made the decision and we've never looked back and have been happy going forward.

Harriet: It's interesting that you say that because I always tell people my experience when I sold my own home as you think there's so many memories in the house. It's actually still brick and mortar. When you leave, you do have it all. It's a hard thing for a lot of people to understand until they make the move. So I think that's really a great thing for sellers to hear as we're talking about it.

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We did a lot of work on neutralizing, decluttering, depersonalizing. Your home is always immaculate. So that was not a concern. That was not something you had to do. Did you find that part of the process difficult?

Gail: I don't want to sound pollyannaish, but I actually found it very liberating. I've always been more of a minimalist, and my husband even more so. So it made him extremely happy to see no clutter. I mean nothing anywhere. It was actually very peaceful.

Harriet: That's interesting. Okay. A lot of people do say that also after the fact. In fact when they look at their photos of their home when I list it, they always say to me, "Why didn't I do this while I lived here? Because my house looks so amazing." We sold in a very different market when you sold your first home and the second home. Homes didn't sell in a weekend like they are now. It is a rollercoaster for a seller preparing your home for sale and showing and having patience through the process. Do you have any words of advice for sellers with that regard?

Gail: Oh, well I think ultimately the mantra that it only takes one person is really the truth. It's really the way it's always been when I sold a home. You may only have very few showings, and that may seem to be disappointing or frustrating. My experience has been when that one right person walks through the door, it will happen. If you don't get too emotional about every time that you have a showing and don't personalize it, you realize that ultimately, it's going to sell. It will be the right person. That's the way you have to look at it. I'm a big believer in karma. So maybe that's why.

Harriet: Right, no. I agree with that too. So after we sold your family home that you customized. I think you were the first contract in that community, right. When you and Bob bought?

Gail: Right.

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Harriet: How was the process for you as a seller that time around?

Gail: There was more of an urgency to sell because we were looking forward to making a move. So I think we were more anxious to get it on the market and get it moved quickly, which you did beautifully. I don't even think even in that market, which was not that strong of a market for sure. I don't think we were on the market much more than three to four weeks. We also weren't in a situation where we were, again, other new construction. Like I said, we found the one right person wanting exactly what we had.

Harriet: And appreciated the upgrades that you made. That's correct. You're right on. Not everybody wants to live through a new construction. So that was actually perfect. They got the best of both, I think.

Gail: Yeah. I agree. It worked out perfectly for us as well. This was a lifestyle decision. So there was a lot of excitement and joy in that sale.

Harriet: Right. You also had your eye on something. So that's what you were saying when you wanted to do it quickly because you wanted to accomplish a goal of being able to purchase something you had your eye on.

Gail: That is correct. We did it thanks to you. I appreciate it.

Harriet: So I remember because you do so much work in Google search, and you do a lot of writing for your own work that we collaborated in writing the copy. That was very easy for us to do together. I do think confidence in your agent is so important. What about the home selling process did you not really understand where my experience guided you? Can you think of any examples of what an agent brings to the table? I know you had sold homes before but.

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Gail: Absolutely. I think the main thing was the fresh pair of eyes on what somebody visualizes as they walk through your front door. Your ability, which was phenomenal, on getting us to have, particularly our large home. Our townhome was pretty new and didn't need as much work. But our large home that was 20 years old was definitely dated. By making some tweaks that you say, "I don't really want to refinish a floor. I don't want to do the stairs. I'm moving out."

With your guidance, we realized that by doing these really very minimal things it changed the entire personality of the home. Which allowed it to sell to a younger person because they didn't see it as dated and insurmountable in the amount of work that needed to be done. Really from a cost standpoint it was really a very good investment.

Harriet: Right. Right. No, thank you for that. Because that's actually something I'm talking about today, which is how important it is to work with buyers and sellers as an agent. Because you do have different eyes. What else do you think might be important for a seller to consider when choosing an agent to have a successful outcome?

Gail: I have to tell you. That's a perfect question for me. Because I spoke with many different people before selecting an agent. I actually had friends within the business that I spoke with and had to make some tough decisions. Because ultimately this is a huge investment that you've made. You want to protect that investment and maximize it. So you need to be comfortable with the intelligence of the broker you're working with, I think. You have to think that they have the ability to negotiate on your behalf well.

Harriet: Can you see my smile? Can you see my smile?

Gail: I can see it. I can. You can't see me, but I can see you.

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Harriet: Okay.

Gail: But it's the truth. It's not a matter of somebody that you like, which is a nice plus. Ultimately it cannot be your best friend that you put in your role if you don't feel that necessarily are going to represent you in the most effective way.

So, you know, it's not always an easy decision because we all know people in the business, but we really need to evaluate an agent's track record. You have to evaluate whether or not they're able to deal with other agents in other offices effectively. Do they have a good reputation in your community? Are they honest and someone that you're comfortable with and know that you can trust them with what is probably one of the largest investments you've ever made?

Harriet: I thank you for that. Because as your agent, it's a huge compliment. But also it is a successful marriage of personalities. That's the other part. You are in this person's life for six months in a normal transaction. Not today. Today it's probably three months, but you have to like the person. I find that I really love all my clients because we click. That's what makes it work. So I was very happy to be your agent and your friend. I thank you for that.

Gail: I feel the same. Whoever's listening, you know, you would not make a mistake going with Harriet. She's just really top notch.

Harriet: Okay, well this is not an advertisement for me, but thank you. I appreciate you joining me today.

Gail: You can do what you need there.

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Harriet: I hope I see you in sunny Florida or in New York sometime soon.

Gail: All right.

Harriet: All right. Thank you so much Gail. I really appreciate it.

So here's the takeaway. There's preparation in thinking about selling your home. Of course, number one is where you're going to go and will selling your home help you accomplish your goal. Once you decide to sell, you really need a listing agent who is experienced in your market and knows how to get the job done.

The online marketing of homebuying has made it much more challenging to list and sell a home today. It's not just as simple as picking an agent and listing your home. The guidance you receive from a real estate professional is so important to decide how much preparation you want to do and how to get the best price for your home whether it's time to sell or not. When it's time to sell, choose your agent carefully.

If it's in Northern Westchester, I'd love to help you and be your partner in this journey. If it is in other parts of Westchester or Connecticut, please reach out to me for a recommendation of a local expert in the time where your home is located. If your property is beyond Westchester and Connecticut, I will find an agent for you through our relocation network and personally interview them for you to get the best advice. The right agent is a game changer when selling your home.

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