

Ask an Agent: What to do when sales cool with the season

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With fall around the corner and homebuyer tax incentives a memory, we asked agents at **J.B. Goodwin Realtors** for advice on how to move a home that's been for sale all summer and to give us their perspective on the market.

The Austin-area market

"Currently there is 7.4 months of inventory, which is high for our market. (An average, healthy market is about six months.) Homes that are in good condition, in a good location and are priced right are still selling. Buyers were looking for a deal; now they seem to be looking for a steal."

— Tish Darey

"We are definitely in a buyer's market and an investor's market. Midrange home prices have slowed due to high economic uncertainty and high unemployment rates. (Sales of) higher-priced housing — more than \$500,000 — (have) improved as higher-income groups with job stability are taking advantage of low interest rates and many homes to pick from."

— Tammy Gardner

"Our market is strong and active with the low interest rates and so many people moving to Austin because of our job market. The tax incentives were good but increased home sales in the lower-priced homes instead of the market over \$250,000. The market above that remains unaffected."

— Robin Curle

"What I noticed for the month of May to mid-June was that there seemed to be a drastic break in sales. It seemed that there was a temporary lack of motivation, both buyers and sellers were very cautious about their investments or making one. As of that point I have noticed that it is starting to pick up again. My buyers have more confidence, though they are still very conservative on their offers due to the uncertainty of the projected recovery time of our current economic structure. My sellers are understanding that this will not be a quick recovery and have re-evaluated their situations and whether or not this is a good time for them to sell/lease or stick it out for a while longer."

— Leisa Ormsbee

"There was a flurry of activity a couple of months after the tax credit expired. Now, folks are usually distracted by school starting ... and, of course, Texas football! By the second week of September, buyers will start looking again. They'll remember the great interest rates and will have settled into their fall routine."

— Peggy Little

If your house hasn't sold by fall

"If sellers do not need to sell, then now is not the time. If they must sell, positioning their home to be the most attractive on the market is a must. This means 'model home' perfection. Price will eventually overcome all obstacles, but sellers must do everything they can to catch the eye of that next potential buyer."

— Tammy Gardner

"Price will overcome all objections (sellers) have been hearing over the summer."

— Tish Darey

"I always tell my clients to spend some money to make the home feel updated and neutral. In our economy, granite, for instance, can be installed very inexpensively and paint is cheap. Labor is reasonable, and so get rid of the shocking pink girl's room and the blaringly blue boys room. If people want to do floors, ask for discontinued tile or carpet, as it is much less expensive. Homes with some remodeling touches sell faster. ... Also, keep the house show-ready all the time. I went into one with my clients and there were clothes all over the boy's room and dishes in the sink. Ninety-five percent of buyers have no vision as to what it could be."

— Robin Curle

"Most lawns and flowers have taken a beating this summer. Some flower beds will need to be replanted in the next few weeks. ... I also tell folks to keep their homes cool. Even vacant homes need to be cool. Nothing moves a potential buyer faster through a showing than a hot house. It's a good idea to have your windows professionally cleaned. ... Sellers will want to be patient this time of year."

— Peggy Little

"Start thinking about getting the home ready for the fall showings. ... First and foremost, spruce up exterior front areas. ... If you can get buyers to the front door to turn the key, your chances are far better in getting it sold. Within the next month is the time to warm up the home with a fall wreath, fresh mulch, warmer annual colors. ... Continue inside with fall accents like cinnamon or apple pie plug-ins or candles, highlight fireplaces and use cozy throws as accents on chairs and couches. ... Think about putting fresh pumpkins and chrysanthemums out on display as well. As soon as you have refreshed and restaged, be sure to update your photos on your listing ."

— Leisa Ormsbee

Do you have something you'd like to ask a real estate agent? Send questions to Nicole Villalpando, nvillalpando@statesman.com; 912-5900.

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Courtesy of JB Goodwin