

GUIDE TO SELLING A HOME IN THE GEORGIAN TRIANGLE



LOCATIONS **N**ORTH

BROKERAGE



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GUIDE TO SELLING YOUR HOME IN THE GEORGIAN TRIANGLE

Overview

If you're like most people, your home is your single biggest piece of equity and, as such, the financial foundation of everything you hope to do today and in the future. Perhaps even more importantly, your home may also be a living storehouse of memories that mark the passage of life for you and your loved ones.

For these reasons and others, the process of selling your home – whether it's your first time or you've sold many – can be one of the most emotional, and also stressful, experiences you ever go through. There are many factors to consider and decisions to make.

That's why we hope this Guide will provide helpful info about all the most important aspects of selling a home, including:



- Determining why you're selling and setting your objectives
- Interviewing one or more REALTORS® and selecting the one you wish to use
- Strategically setting an asking price
- Preparing your home in a variety of ways so that it is attractive to buyers
- Effectively marketing your home through a variety of online and traditional methods
- Staging your home so it looks its best during open houses and showings
- Negotiating the best possible deal with the buyer
- Completing the transaction

That said, this information can only supplement the help of an experienced and trusted REALTOR® who will provide you with expert consultation at each step of the sales process.

One benefit of working with Locations North is that each of our offices includes many REALTORS® with extensive knowledge and experience of all aspects of selling. In addition, Locations North has the largest online, mobility, print and radio marketing budget and presence among Georgian Triangle brokerages.

All this and more is why we are the Georgian Triangle's #1 brokerage overall, as well as in each of the primary markets we serve: Collingwood, The Blue Mountains, Thornbury and Meaford. So we do hope to hear from you when you decide to sell.

Know Why You're Selling, Make Your Plans

Regardless of the real estate market and economy, it's important for you to clearly understand why you're selling because it will affect everything from your asking price, to how much time and money you invest in preparing the home, to how the home is marketed, to how you approach the negotiations.

And from the get-go, clearly defining your reasons will help you set your goals, research your options and make your plans. Key questions whose answers will shape your entire strategy include:

1. Are you selling because you *want to sell*, or because you *have to sell*?
2. Are you buying another home? If so, will you be "moving up" (perhaps due to a growing family), or moving into a smaller home (perhaps due to becoming an 'empty nester')?



3. What are property prices doing in your area? What is the listing-to-sales ratio and the average days-on-market for listings? Is this the time to sell? What is more important to you: the money you walk away with, or the length of time your home is on the market?
4. What are your baseline sale price requirements?
5. What are your “must-have” and “like-to-have” conditions and terms?
6. Are you in a position to offer a buyer some form of financing?

You may want to answer these questions on your own, but you may also benefit by consulting an experienced REALTOR® right from the start. That said, once the sales process begins you should not share your motivations for selling with anyone other than your REALTOR® or the trusted financial professionals you work with.

Strategically Pricing Your Property To Get Top Market Value

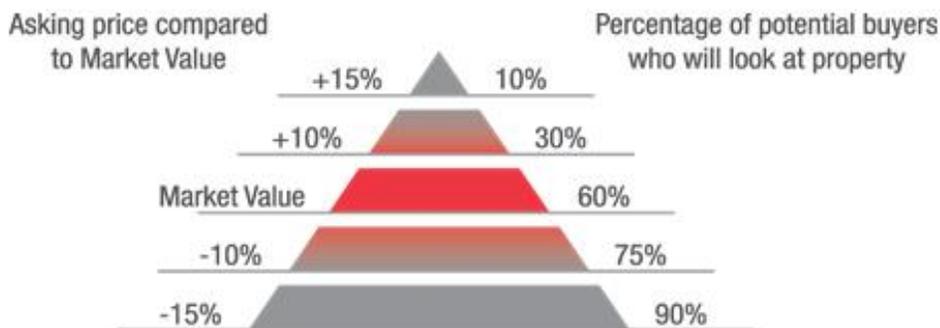
Determining the best asking price for a home is one of the most challenging, and also important, aspects of selling it.

In fact, it's a balancing act. On the one hand, you don't want to set a price so high that it discourages showings and serious offers from the qualified, motivated buyers who would otherwise determine your property's top market value.



On the other hand, you don't want to set a price that's so low that it attracts lots of interest, but sets the stage for offers and negotiations that will get you less for your home than you could if your pricing was a little more aggressive. This balance,

which corresponds to your home's true value in the marketplace, is depicted in the following **Pricing Pyramid** diagram.



1 – So What's Your Home Really Worth?

In a perfect world your home's value would be everything you need it to be to fulfill your plans and financial goals. Ultimately though, your home's value is not determined by you, but by what the market – founded upon supply and demand – is willing to pay for it at a given time.

These days, the "market" increasingly refers to buyers who have researched property values online for at least a year, have already viewed 10 homes and aren't under any pressure to buy. This is particularly so in the Georgian Triangle, which includes so much recreational and luxury real estate, such that buyers often contemplate buying for years before they finally do.

To determine your home's true market value, as well as set expectations for what you're likely to sell it for, you should:

- **Try to be impartial.** Unfortunately, the "market" isn't interested in what you originally paid for your home, or how much you need to sell it for to buy your next home and meet your financial goals. In addition, your home may have features that you highly value, but which might actually reduce its market value by limiting the number of potential buyers who'd be interested in purchasing it.

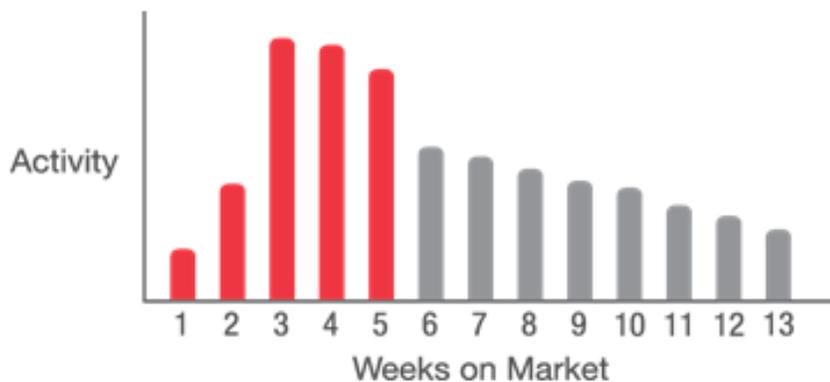
- **Remember why you are selling.** Do you want to sell or do you need to sell? Is a faster sale important to you?
- **Consider the market itself.** Are area home prices trending up, down or leveling off? Is there still a lot of listing inventory with high days-on-market numbers? Doing your own online research here at LocationsNorth.com or elsewhere will help keep you informed.

While these considerations will yield an approximate market value, the best way to determine your home's value will be get a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) from an experienced REALTOR® who lives the market day-in, day-out. We have over 55 REALTORS® in our four offices who'll be happy to provide you with a CMA, so please contact us when you'd like one.

2 – Price Your Home To Sell When Its Market Exposure And Buyer Interest Are Highest

As noted in the previous section, the key to getting top market value for your home is: on the one hand, to avoid overpricing it such that you get few showings or serious offers from qualified, motivated buyers; and on the other hand, to avoid underpricing it such that you get lots of showings along with offers that are less than what you can and should could get.

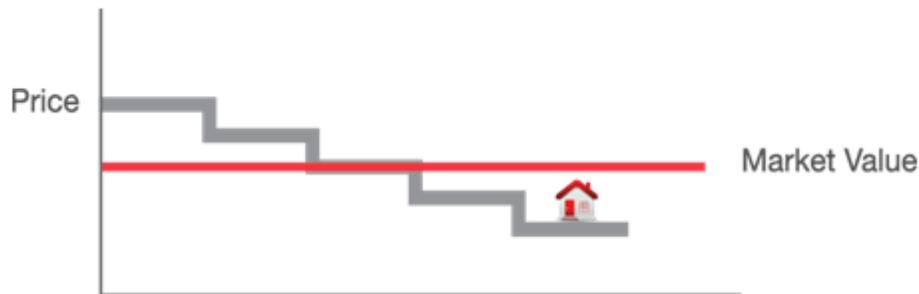
Another way to view this balancing act is in terms of how long it takes your home to sell after you list. Real estate sales analysis has repeatedly shown that you'll get top market value if you sell when your home has its maximum market exposure, buyer interest and showing activity. With the exception of hot sellers' markets, this "window of opportunity" usually occurs about 2-5 weeks after you list, as depicted in the **Activity-To-Time-On-Market** diagram below.



So in short, timing is crucial to getting top dollar for your home. This means that you need to price it so you get a firm offer during weeks 2-5 of the listing. This, in turn, means that you need to price your home realistically right from the beginning.

3 – The Dangers Of Overpricing Your Property At The Time You List

The strategy of overpricing your home when you list – knowing that you can reduce the price later – might seem to make sense at first glance. However, it seldom works. In fact, sellers who overprice their homes (even just 10% above market value) and then reduce the price one or more times often end up getting less than they would have if they had priced it realistically from the start. And as depicted in the following **Consequences Of Overpricing** diagram, this may mean that you actually end up getting less than market value for your home.



There are many reasons why:

- Fewer buyers – even if they like your home – will respond to your marketing if they think your home is overpriced.
- Fewer REALTORS® will show your home to their buyers if they know it's overpriced.
- The right buyers – i.e. those looking to buy a home like yours – may never view it because they'll confine their search to a lesser price range where yours should be.
- You'll attract the wrong buyers – i.e. those looking in your price range – who won't be interested in your home, having viewed others truly worth what you're asking.

- Your overpriced property will make others look better, so you'll actually help to sell your competition.
- You'll get fewer, if any, serious offers because buyers may consider it a waste of time.
- Even if you do get a serious offer, the excessive price can lead to a mortgage rejection for the buyer if the lender has a professional appraisal done on your home. This leads to critical lost time waiting for finance approvals that never go through.

And the result?

- Beyond about six weeks, your home will increasingly be viewed as a "stale" listing – i.e. as a commodity with a history of being rejected by other buyers.
- There will be less market buzz among both buyers and REALTORS®, less showings, less offers and less likelihood that you'll get your asking price.
- When you eventually do reduce the listing price it won't generate as much interest as if you'd priced it right from the start.
- As it happens in many cases, after repeated price reductions you'll end up getting less than if you'd priced it right from the start.
- You'll go through the inconvenience and stress of having your home listed for longer and not selling it.
- On account of not selling your home, you may miss great opportunities to purchase that next home you really want.



Now these may be unpleasant facts for some potential home sellers reading this. However, they are the facts, and they play themselves out all the time in every real estate market.

At Locations North our REALTORS® are committed to getting you top market value when you sell. They know the Georgian Triangle market inside and out, and the fact that we're the area's #1 Brokerage is largely due to our REALTORS® get so much repeat and referral business from satisfied clients. That's why when you decide to sell your home, we hope you'll list with us.

Preparing Your Home To Sell

When presenting your home to buyers, first impressions are crucial. Buyers begin judging your home the moment they see it and, unless they're looking for a 'fixer-upper' they prefer homes that are well-maintained, clean and clutter-free: homes they can picture themselves living in.

That's why sometimes even a small investment in home improvements – particularly if they anticipate buyer needs and wants – can boost your home's saleability and price, as well as give you a big edge over your competition.



Before



After

Generally, three kinds of improvements will impress buyers and help you sell for top market value: renovations; upgrades and repairs; re-organization and maintenance. What follows are a few cost-effective ideas that will help your home look its best.

1 – Renovations: Which Ones Are “Market-Smart”?

Generally, few home owners renovate their homes to sell because they know they won't recoup the full cost of the renovations. However, in some cases minor renovations can really

improve the overall impression of a property's quality and character, and so will more than pay for themselves. Here are a few cost-effective renovations that you might consider:

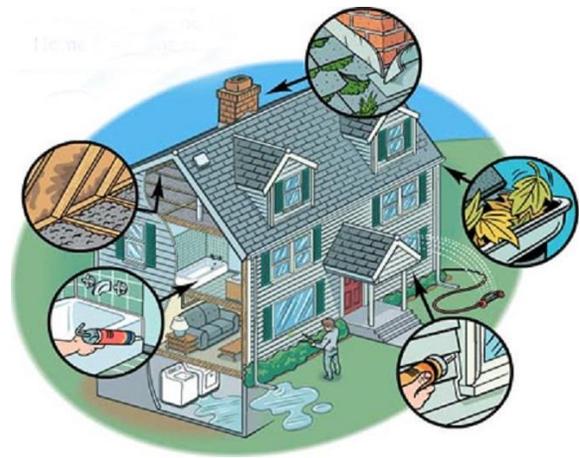
- **Kitchen** – New flooring, cabinets, countertops, appliances and lighting can be costly, but buyers typically look for updated kitchens, and you'll recover a large percentage of your expenses on resale. Even a minor facelift – e.g. new paint, floor covering, cabinet doors and hardware – can pay off in a faster sale at a better price.
- **Bathrooms** – As with kitchens, bathroom renos can pay off in terms of both value and marketability, especially in older homes. Opt for good lighting, large mirrors, attractive fixtures and materials, plenty of storage and neutral colors.
- **Energy-Efficient Improvements** – With everyone “going green” these days, energy-saving upgrades and repairs that reduce fuel bills can be a real selling point. There are many options so do some online research and talk to a home products professional to find those improvements that best fit your plans and budget.

That said, there are two rules of thumb: don't over-renovate, and don't do renos which please you, but which might turn off buyers. See **The Value Of Home Improvements** on **page 24** for a list of renos with estimates of what percentage of their cost you'll recoup when you sell.

2 – Small Upgrades And Repairs Can Make A BIG Difference

There are few things that put buyers off more than viewing a home that looks uncared for. Sometimes it's the little things, sometimes the bigger ones.

The bottom line: if you want to get top dollar you might need to make some minor upgrades, but you'll definitely have to make all necessary repairs – even those “out of sight and out of mind”. See **Home Upgrades And Repairs** on **page 26** for a list of minor upticks that can improve how buyers view your home.



3 – Re-organization & Maintenance: The OBVIOUS That Needs Doing

Similar to necessary repairs, basic re-organization and maintenance tasks are “must-dos”. While buyers might not notice such work when it’s done, they’ll almost certainly notice when it isn’t. And this impression of neglect will make it harder for them to comfortably project themselves into your home’s living space. See **Home Re-organization And Maintenance on page 27** for a list of tasks that will improve your home’s curb appeal and interior “homeyness”.

Also, please bear in mind that all our REALTORS® here at Locations North know what today’s discerning buyers are looking for, and they can provide you with many ideas that will maximize your home’s appeal and saleability. Additionally, they will be able, if necessary, to recommend trusted, local home service providers who do excellent work at competitive prices.

Staging Your Home For Open Houses And Showings

Having invested money, time and work in some of what is described in **Preparing Your Home To Sell**, you’ll certainly want it to take full advantage of it when buyers and REALTORS® come by for open houses and showings.

That’s why – to give yourself a competitive advantage that could get your home sold – it will be important for you to:

- 1) Make sure your home always looks its best at every showing.
- 2) Maximize your selling opportunities by keeping your home both as **AVAILABLE** and **READY** for showings as possible.



Also, keep in mind that many of our REALTORS® at Locations North have, through education and experience, mastered the art of home staging. So you will be able to make the most of their skills – and impartiality – to create that “buying feeling” in your home.

1 – Time-Proven Tips For Showcasing Your Home

Here are a few ideas that will help you maximize your home’s attractiveness to buyers:

- Ideally, you should be absent so buyers feel comfortable making comments.
- Make sure your home highlight sheets are easily visible.
- Open drapes during daylight hours to let in as much light as possible, but screen out unappealing views.
- Light the whole house, especially dark corners and hallways.
- Turn off the television, play background music.
- Place fresh flowers where they’ll stand out.
- If you’ve re-painted in neutral tones, add bold splashes of color (with throw pillows, crockery, and pictures, etc.)
- Showcase your home’s best features.
- Light (or turn on) the fireplace.
- Open all doors between rooms to give an inviting feeling.
- If possible, open windows beforehand to circulate fresh air.
- The kitchen & bathrooms should sparkle.
- Bake cookies or put a pan of cinnamon in the oven to create a warm & inviting aroma.



- Pick up toys, remove all clutter, ensure beds are made, clothes put away.
- Floors should be clean, carpets and rugs vacuumed.
- Trash and recycling bins should be tidy and odor-free.
- Ideally, pets should be unseen (or kept outside). Pet areas should be clean and odor-free. Not everyone may share your love of animals, and some may be allergic to them.
- Be sure to lock away and hide all cash, jewelry and small valuables.

2 – Make The Most Of Each Open House And Showing During The ‘Golden Window’

Particularly during the first month after you list, REALTORS® will want to show your home to clients. That’s why it’s crucial in this “golden window of opportunity” — when buyer interest and activity are at their highest — that you make your home available. Occasionally, this may pose an inconvenience, but it’s important to maximize the number of motivated buyers who see your home. You never know when the right person is going to look at it!

Successfully Negotiating The Deal

With rare exception, negotiating the transaction is the most complex part of selling a home. At the same time, it’s the one that can involve the most creativity. That’s why it helps to have an experienced and savvy REALTOR® who has successfully worked through many different transaction scenarios.

What follows is, first, a brief description of the negotiation process; and second, a few strategies for negotiating the best deal you can, each of which involve: keeping your priorities and needs in mind; not giving your situation away to the buyer



and buyer's agent; trying to understand and respect the priorities of the buyer; being creative and, where necessary, willing to compromise to get the deal done.

1 – The Basic Process

When a buyer, typically with the help of a REALTOR®, makes an offer on your home they'll do so using a contract that has been developed by your local real estate association in conjunction with legal counsel. These contracts enable the buyer to suggest a sale price, as well as include many clauses for specifying various terms of purchase, such as the closing and possession dates, the deposit amount, and a variety of other conditions.

The buyer's REALTOR® will then deliver the offer to your REALTOR®, who'll present it to you. You should closely review every detail of the offer with your REALTOR®, who'll be happy to address all your questions about the offer and the process itself.



Basically, you can then accept the offer, reject it, or counter it to initiate the negotiation process.

Successive counter-offers, each with deadlines for responding and meeting various conditions (for example, the buyer securing financing, a home inspection), will be exchanged between you and the buyer until a mutually-satisfactory pending agreement is reached, or the negotiations collapse.

2 – To Accept Or Not To Accept – It All Goes Back To Why You're Selling

What you ultimately view as an acceptable offer will depend on your priorities, needs and wants. Here are some questions that will provide a realistic framework for defining them:

- What are your baseline sale price requirements?
 - What are your “must-have” and “like-to-have” conditions and terms?
 - How long has your home been on the market? Has your listing become “stale” in the eyes of buyers and their agents such that you’re not getting many showings now?
 - How many offers have you had? How does this offer compare?
 - What are home prices doing in your area? If trending up, how much might accepting an offer cost you; and if trending down, how much might not accepting an offer cost you?
 - Have you made an offer on another home that’s subject to selling yours?
 - Should you risk tying up the listing by negotiating with someone who is not pre-qualified to buy, or whose offer is conditional upon the sale of their property?
- Generally, you should only deal with buyers who are pre-qualified and, ideally, only with buyers who have a firm pending agreement to sell their current home.

While some of these questions only you can answer for yourself, for others you can rely upon your REALTOR® to provide experienced and trustworthy counsel.

3 – Don’t Show Your Hand

As a seller it’s crucial to keep certain aspects of your situation (e.g. your finances, why you’re selling, your urgency) concealed from the buyer and buyer’s REALTOR®. Remember, it’s the job of the buyer’s REALTOR® to get the best deal they can for their client, so any vulnerability you show could end up compromising your position and costing you thousands of dollars.

However, this is not the same as clearly expressing your priorities throughout the negotiations. Properly done, the firm statement of your priorities will strengthen your position.



4 – Look Beyond The Price

While your home's sale price will be the focus of negotiations, often both you and the buyer will have specific needs such that the terms of purchase significantly influence the final deal.

Additionally, it is in relation to the terms – which can represent thousands of dollars in value – where you can get most creative when it comes to resolving the obstacles to transacting. Here are some elements in the purchase agreement that you and the buyer might want to consider:

- An all-cash offer by the buyer
- Your offer to provide financing or an interest rate buy-down
- The amount of earnest money deposit the buyer provides
- Closing and Possession Dates
- The inclusion of furniture, fixtures, etc., not considered part of the property
- Payment for repairs required by the buyer's lender
- Payment of taxes, utilities, title search and insurance, survey, inspections and attorney's fees



If you do offer buyer incentives or other special terms, the key is to get it all in writing within the purchase agreement. These terms must be carefully reviewed and clearly understood by both you and the buyer so that you're on the same page and the negotiations move forward.

5 – Have You Really Found The Right Buyer? If So, Make The Deal Happen

Depending on your situation, you might want to make a few compromises to seal the deal. You never know when the next serious offer will come along, or what it will cost you to wait. Here are some basic principles of successful negotiation if you're committed to completing the sale:

- **Remember your priorities, respect the buyer's.** Don't let small things get in the way of your better judgment. If necessary, meet halfway and split the difference or defer until later. Consolidate your agreement on big issues and come back to the small ones.
- **Disclose everything.** Smart sellers go above and beyond legal necessity to disclose all known defects to buyers.
- **Ask questions.** Offers may contain complex terms. Your REALTOR® is there to clarify everything for you.
- **Stay cool and be patient.** Keep communication civil.
- **Take care with all of the contingencies.** Your signed acceptance of an offer is your contract.
- **Rely on your REALTOR®.** It's his or her responsibility to represent your best interests every step of the way. Your success is their success.
- **Remember:** Where there's a will there's a way.



Completing The Transaction

If you and your buyer have each efficiently taken care of your contractual obligations, the process of completing the transaction, or “closing”, will go smoothly with no surprises.

1 – Fulfilling Contingencies And Special Conditions

As noted in **Successfully Negotiating The Deal**, a pending sales agreement nearly always includes contingencies and special conditions which must be fulfilled by the buyer and seller by the closing date. Typical contingencies and special conditions include:

- The buyer's securing of financing.
- A Title Search – an historical review of all legal documents which relate to ownership of the property to ensure that there are no claims against the title. The purchase of Title Insurance in case the records include errors or the review process includes mistakes.
- A professional appraisal of the home, requested by the lender in order to ensure that the home's actual value justifies the loan amount.
- An independent inspection of the home's structural and functional condition.
- A final walk-through – the buyer is given the chance to look at the home to make sure that it's in the same condition as when the sale agreement was signed.
- Any additional contractual promises you have made to the buyer.

It's important to review the sales agreement with your REALTOR® so you understand your obligations. Any mistakes at this point can be very costly. Your REALTOR® will remind you of these obligations, help arrange for their fulfillment, and prepare you for the closing generally.

2 – Closing The Deal: Making Sure Everything's Signed, Sealed & Delivered By Closing Day

Generally, a third-party professional – usually a lawyer – reviews the sales agreement and does the following:

- Determines the total amount due from the buyer and collects the check.
- Calculates the adjustments (e.g. seller prepayment of taxes, utilities, etc.) and ensures that they're factored into transaction.
- Assures that the transaction costs (closing costs, legal fees, title search, transfer taxes, etc.) are paid.



- Determines the seller's payments, credits and adjusted net proceeds.
- Witnesses the seller's signing away of the property title and all other documentation associated with the transaction.
- Collects the keys and any other necessary items from the seller.
- Provides the seller with the net proceeds as well as copies of the documentation pertaining to the sale.
- Ensures that the buyer's title is properly recorded in the local records office along with any mortgage liens.

And that's it! In most cases, the buyer's Possession Date will fall within a couple days of the Closing Date, at which point your former beloved home will have a new occupant.

Home Seller's Glossary

When selling a home it's important to understand the key concepts and terms. Throughout the selling process, each of our knowledgeable and experienced REALTORS® at Locations North will be happy to explain any unfamiliar terms you encounter. That said, here is a short list of terms for reference purposes:

Abstract Of Title – A complete historical summary of the public records relating to the legal ownership of a particular property from the time of the first transfer to the present.

Adjustable Rate Mortgage – Also known as a variable-rate loan, an ARM is one in which the interest rate changes over time, relative to changes in the lender's prime interest rate.

Agreement of Sale – Also known as contract of purchase, purchase agreement, or sales agreement according to location or jurisdiction. A contract in which a seller and buyer agree to transact under certain terms spelled out in writing and signed by both parties.

Amortization – The process of reducing the principal debt through a schedule of fixed payments at regular intervals of time, with an interest rate specified in a loan document.

Appraisal – A professional appraiser's estimate of the market value of a property based on local market data and the recent sale prices of similar properties.

Assessed Value – The value placed on a home by municipal assessors for the purposes of determining property taxes.

Closing – The final steps in the transfer of property ownership. On the Closing Date, as specified by the sales agreement, the buyer inspects and signs all the documents relating to the transaction and the final disbursements are paid. Also referred to as the Settlement.

Closing Costs – The costs to complete a real estate transaction in addition to the price of the home, to include: points, taxes, title insurance, appraisal fees and legal fees.

Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) – A REALTOR®-prepared document, typically included in a listing presentation to a prospective seller, designed to help the seller set a strategic asking price for their home. Drawn from the local Multiple Listings Service (MLS), a CMA presents pricing and property information for homes similar to the seller’s that recently sold, failed to sell, or are currently on the market.

Contingency – A clause in the purchase contract that describes certain conditions that must be met and agreed upon by both buyer and seller before the contract is binding.

Counter-offer – An offer, made in response to a previous offer, that rejects all or part of it while enabling negotiations to continue towards a mutually-acceptable sales contract.

Debt-to-Income Ratio – A ratio that measures total debt burden. It is calculated by dividing gross monthly debt repayments, including mortgages, by gross monthly income.

Down Payment – The money paid by the buyer to the lender at the time of the closing. The amount is the difference between the sales price and the mortgage loan. Requirements vary by loan type. Smaller down payments, less than 20%, usually requires mortgage insurance.

Earnest Money – A deposit given by the buyer to bind a purchase offer and which is held in escrow. If the property sale is closed, the deposit is applied to the purchase price. If the buyer does not fulfill all contract obligations, the deposit may be forfeited.

Equity – The value of the property, less the loan balance and any outstanding liens or other debts against the property.

Easements – Legal right of access to use of a property by individuals or groups for specific purposes. Easements may affect property values and are sometimes part of the deed.

Escrow – Funds held by a neutral third party (the escrow agent) until certain conditions of a contract are met and the funds can be paid out. Escrow accounts are also used by loan servicers to pay property taxes and homeowner’s insurance.

Fixed-Rate Mortgage – A type of mortgage loan in which the interest rate does not change during the entire term of the loan.

Free Market Evaluation – An offer by a REALTOR®, usually presented in marketing materials, to provide a complimentary assessment of your home's current market value.

Home Inspection – Professional inspection of a home, paid for by the buyer, to evaluate the quality and safety of its plumbing, heating, wiring, appliances, roof, foundation, etc.

Homeowner's Insurance – A policy that protects you and the lender from fire or flood, a liability such as visitor injury, or damage to your personal property.

Listing Presentation – A presentation given by a REALTOR® to a prospective home seller in hopes that the seller will allow the REALTOR® to represent their interests throughout the sales process. Typically delivered in the seller's home, the presentation includes the REALTOR'S® pricing, marketing and showing strategies, as well as a suggested asking price.

Lien – A claim or charge on property for payment of a debt. With a mortgage, the lender has the right to take the title to your property if you don't make the mortgage payments.

Market Value – The amount a willing buyer would pay a willing seller for a home. An appraised value is an estimate of the current fair market value.

Mortgage Insurance – Purchased by the buyer to protect the lender in the event of default (typically for loans with less than 20% down. Available through a government agency like the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) or through private mortgage insurers (PMI).

Possession Date – The date, as specified by the sales agreement, that the buyer can move into the property. Generally, the it occurs within a couple days of the Closing Date.

Pre-Approval Letter – A letter from a mortgage lender indicating that a buyer qualifies for a mortgage of a specific amount. It also shows a home seller that you're a serious buyer.

Principal – The amount of money borrowed from a lender to buy a home, or the amount of the loan that has not yet been repaid. Does not include the interest paid to borrow.

Purchase Offer – A detailed, written document which makes an offer to purchase a property, and which may be amended several times in the process of negotiations. When signed by all parties involved in the sale, the purchase offer becomes a legally-binding sales agreement.

Title – The right to, and the ownership of, property. A Title or Deed is sometimes used as proof of ownership of land. Clear title refers to a title that has no legal defects.

Title Insurance – Insurance policy that guarantees the accuracy of the title search and protects lenders and homeowners against legal problems with the title.

Title Search – A historical review of all legal documents relating to ownership of a property to determine if there have been any flaws in prior transfers of ownership or if there are any claims or encumbrances on the title to the property.

The Value Of Home Improvements

The following should be used only as a general guide to ranking the importance of any home improvements you are considering. Please keep in mind that many factors will affect an appraiser's opinion of these improvements, including: location, the home's age and value, market trends, and the quality of the given improvement.

Remodeled Kitchen – A kitchen update can reward a seller with a sizable payback. Just remember though; splurging on fancy finishing materials or sophisticated equipment may cut into your profit. Keep it simple. **100%**

Revitalized Lawn and Garden – A verdant lawn and a modest but colourful flowerbed will entice potential buyers. The few hundred dollars invested may yield several thousands in profit. **100%**

Fireplace - Especially if it is energy efficient, such as a gas-powered model, a fireplace holds the promise of cozy family gatherings around the warmth of the hearth. **90%**

Second Bathroom – All it takes is a simple 5x9 foot extra bathroom to make mornings more civilized for most families. But don't count on a return on extras like a heat lamp or whirlpool tub. **80%**

Room Addition – For the most attractive return of your investment dollars later on, the added room should be today's popular family room or a third bedroom. **80%**

Remodeled Bathroom – A master bathroom is on many buyer's list, so invest here. If you own only one bathroom, install two sinks or a double vanity to handle the morning crowd. **70%**

Expanded Master Suite – To keep costs down, try to find extra space to create this wish list item by combining existing rooms and spaces. Heavy structural work entailed by adding square feet diminishes your return. **70%**

Deck - Outdoor living space is a desirable asset no matter where the locale. No maintenance decking material leaves lots more leisure time, too. **50%**

Exterior Paint – Sprucing up tired siding, trim, etc., can take years off the look of an older house. **50%**

Finished Attic – You can expect to recoup more of your investment if you make sure the renovation does not detract from the aesthetics of your home. It is especially attractive as an extra bedroom in a small house. **40%**

Finished Basement – This is a great way to gain added living space without building a costly addition. If the basement has an access door to the outdoors, the project becomes more valuable. **40%**

Heating Systems – Replace it only if your old system is dysfunctional. Depending upon a buyer's priorities, a new energy efficient furnace may or may not be a selling advantage. **35%**

New Windows and Doors – Buyers appreciate changes that improve the look of a house, so attractive new French doors, for example, may be a plus. Energy efficient units are an ecological boom, but may be a resale bust. **30%**

Garage - Don't go overboard to blend it into your home's architectural style. Its desirability increases if you live in a part of the country with a harsh climate. **30%**

Swimming Pool – Unfortunately, in the Georgian Triangle — and all areas where it is not generally warm and the sun is not almost always shining — this luxury item can actually detract from your resale profit.

Home Upgrades And Repairs

Generally, buyers like homes in which everything looks well-cared for, if not brand new.

Along these lines, while many small upgrades and repairs are relatively easy and inexpensive, their completion or non-completion can instantly determine whether buyers even want to take a second look at your home, let alone buy it.

Leaving aside major structural and functional matters, here are some relatively minor upgrades and repairs that will really help how buyers perceive your home:

Exterior

- If necessary, fix or replace anything damaged or worn, such as patio and deck, gutters and eaves, windows, shutters, screens, storm doors, light fixtures, porches and steps, walkways and fences.
- Touch up all exterior paint (or if needed, re-paint the house).
- Fix doorbells, tighten loose doorknobs and oil squeaking hinges.
- Clean or paint front door, polish front door hardware, replace Welcome mat if necessary.
- Green-up dry lawn patches, plant extra flowers for color, place potted plants beside the front door.



Interior

- If necessary, fix or replace anything like cracked molding, floor tiles, leaking taps and toilets, loose door knobs, squeaky door hinges, closets or screen doors that are off their tracks, bathroom lighting and hardware, toilet seats, loose caulking or grout.
- Fix and touch-up ceilings, windows, etc.
- Brighten interiors with a new coat of paint in light, neutral colors.
- Shampoo carpets and rugs, or replace them if necessary.
- Make sure major appliances are in good working order.
- Add organizers or shelving for basement and garage.
- Clean water heater and drain sediment, change furnace filter.
- Clean and paint concrete floors/walls.
- Replace switch and outlet plates and register vents with more elegant ones.
- Add closet organizers or shelving to make closets more functional and spacious.
- Buy the furniture you planned for the new home to improve the one you are selling.



Home Re-organization And Maintenance

As well as liking homes that are well-cared for, buyers like homes that are clean and clutter-free. Here are some small details that make a big difference in how buyers view your home:

Exterior

- Mow and rake the lawn, trim hedges and shrubs, weed and edge gardens.
- Clean sidewalks and driveway, remove any litter.

- Remove unnecessary items from the exterior of the house.
- Power wash the porch, siding, deck and patio.
- If you have a pool, make sure it's clean and functioning well or closed in the off-season.
- Clean off your outdoor furniture and remove any in poor repair.
- Clean your air conditioner.
- Clear out the garage of everything but cars. If yours has become a two-car attic, throw out all unnecessary items, and thoroughly organize and clean everything that remains.

Interior

- Clean and tidy the entrance, clear stairs and halls.
- Create space by storing all excess furniture.
- Remove from closets, cabinets and shelves any clothes and other items you won't need until after moving. Pre-pack and store if possible.
- Organize kitchen countertops, removing some appliances if necessary, to make them look as spacious as possible.
- Thoroughly clean everything in and out of sight. Wash and wax floors, shampoo carpets and rugs, wash walls and windows, clean blinds and drapes, light fixtures, baseboards and crown mouldings, all kitchen and bathroom elements, furniture, the fireplace, work and storage and pet areas
- Remove all odors, add air freshener, dishes of potpourri, a drop of vanilla or bath oil on light bulbs for scent.
- Throw out unnecessary items in an unfinished basement and thoroughly organize and clean everything that remains.

A Few Words About Clutter

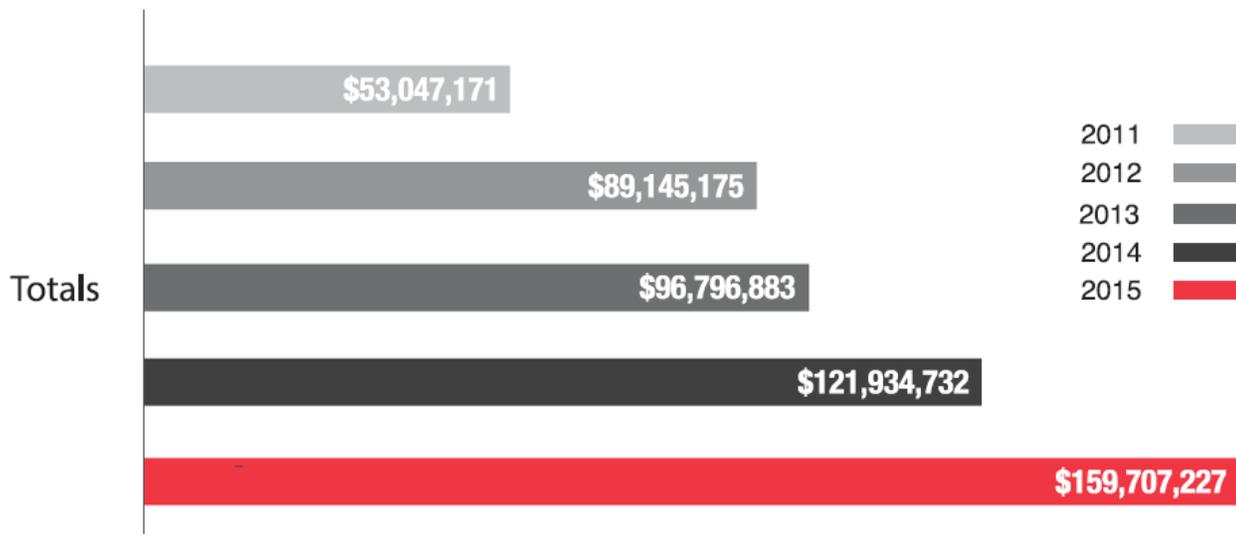
Avoid it. For most buyers, clutter-free homes seem brighter, more spacious, cleaner and in need of less work. They also make it easier for buyers to visualize their own design ideas and the placement of their belongings. This is why it's suggested that, whenever possible, you remove and store all furniture, clothing and other items you won't need until after you move.

Royal LePage Locations North In 2015

2015 was **yet another record-breaking year** for Royal LePage Locations North. We:

- **Broke our own Georgian Triangle record for annual MLS sales – set in 2014 –** with just under **\$160,000,000** – up **31%** from 2014 and **more than tripling** our 2011 sales!
- Sold **47%** more real estate than our nearest competitor
- **Were #1 in each of our primary markets** – Collingwood, The Blue Mountains, Thornbury and Meaford (we only opened our Wasaga Beach office in June, 2015)

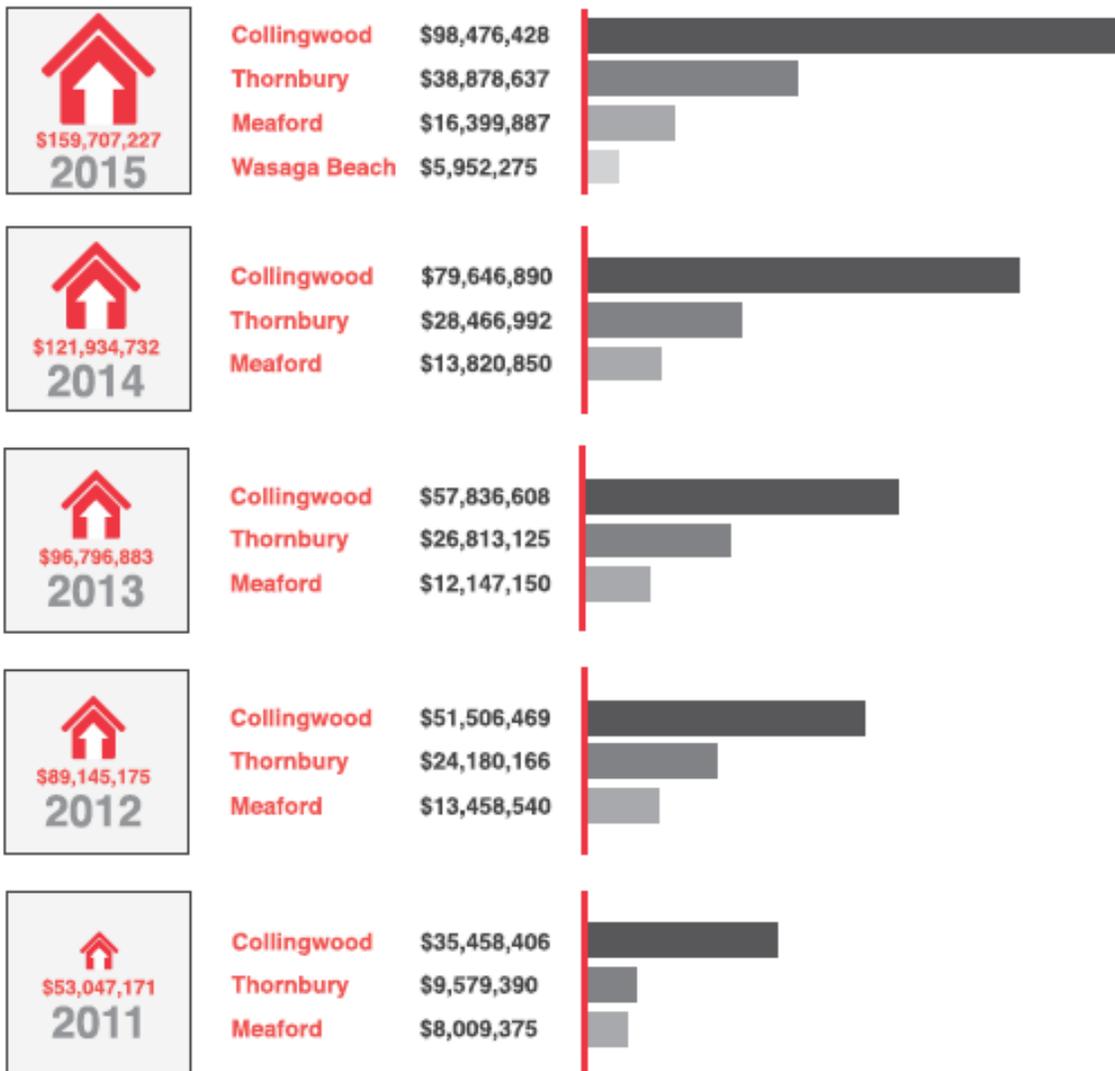
Locations North Sales Volume, 2011 - 2015



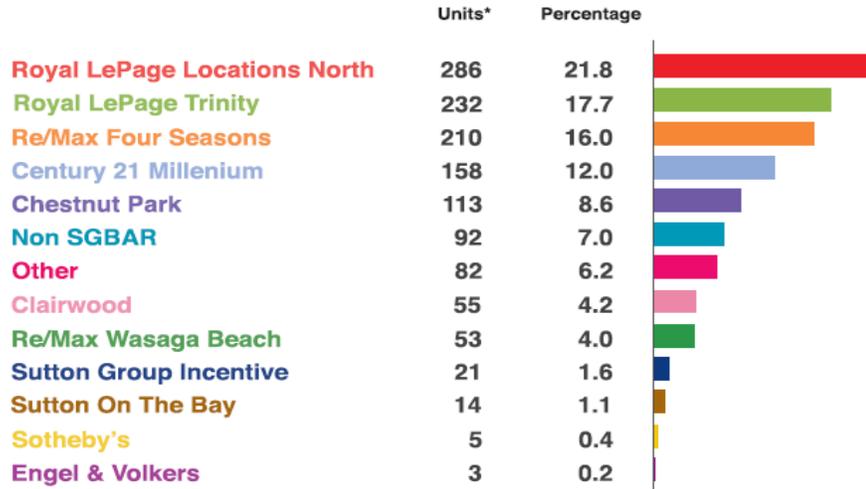
We couldn't have done all this without the trust that our clients have placed in us. **SO A BIG THANK-YOU to EVERYONE!** We look forward to serving you when you decide to buy or sell.

NOTE: All sales data is from the Southern Georgian Bay Association Of REALTORS® MLS®

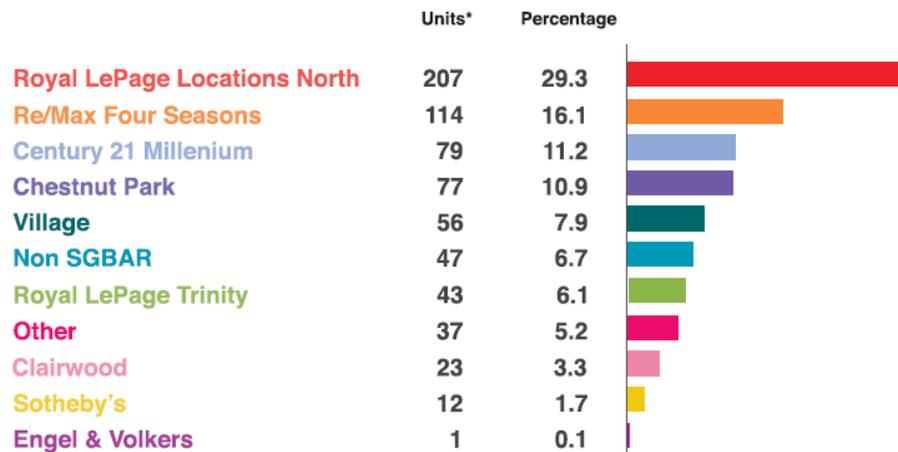
Locations North Sales Volume, By Office 2011 - 2015



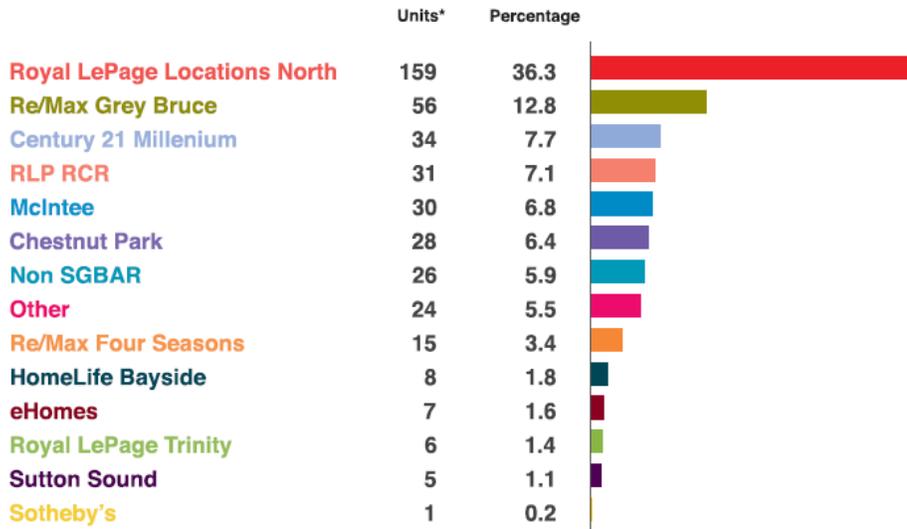
Collingwood Unit Sales, 2015



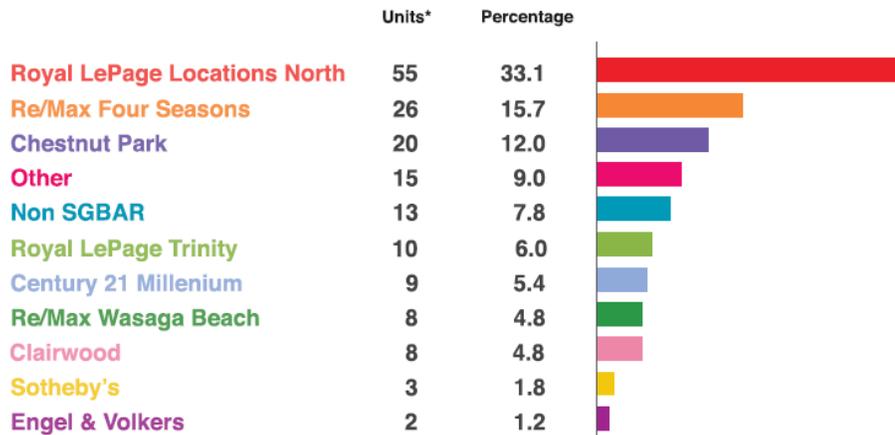
The Blue Mountains Unit Sales, 2015



Meaford Unit Sales, 2015



Georgian Triangle Luxury Homes Unit Sales, 2015



We Give YOU Options

At Locations North, we do everything we can to put **YOU** first – **and that includes respecting your privacy by enabling you to choose your level of engagement.**

[Please check out our video to see how we do it.](#)

Collingwood Office

330 First St.,
Collingwood ON
705-445-5520

Thornbury Office

27 Arthur St.,
Thornbury ON
519-599-2136

Meaford Office

96 Sykes St.
Meaford, ON
519-538-5755

Wasaga Beach Office

1288 Mosely St., Unit 7
Wasaga Beach, ON
705-445-5520

Creemore Office

143 Mill St.
Creemore, ON
705-881-9005

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