

Avoiding the 7 Downsizing Disasters

Although we focus on The Upside of Downsizing(TM), we also know that the road to freedom may have a few bumps along the way. Planning ahead is the best way to avoid the financial, emotional, and physical roadblocks that prevent a smooth transition to more freedom and time to enjoy life to the fullest.

- 1) Do the math. Figure out the costs and expenses of your new residence before putting your home on the market. Change is traumatic enough, without finding out too late that you can't afford the new living situation long term and have to move again. A financial advisor can help you with a budget and an attorney can assist you in evaluating any contracts.
- 2) Make sure both oars are in the water before leaving the shore. That means both spouses are in agreement about the transition before putting your home on the market. No matter how wonderful your new living situation, if one spouse has regrets, neither of you will be happy.
- 3) Flying by the seat of your pants prevents a smooth landing. Prepare an outline of every step in this journey from the decision to downsize, all the way to settling into your new home. Think ahead about future needs as well as current issues of health, proximity to family, friends and other important social activities. Set priorities such as access to healthcare if you are currently facing a health issue or activities such as if you are an avid golfer. The most lovely residence cannot compensate for losing some of your most essential support and social systems.
- 4) Not involving your children in the decision to downsize. Even if your children left their family home decades ago, they may react very negatively at the thought of losing the home and the treasures of their childhood. Sit down and explain the reasons for wanting to downsize and how this frees them as well as you, even though you will all experience a sense of loss.
- 5) DIY is a wonderful TV channel, but not a great way to sell your home. While it may be tempting to "save" money by selling your home yourself, it may cost a lot more in the long run. Selling homes has become more complicated with new taxes, new regulations and potential future liabilities if proper disclosures were not made at the time of sale. A real estate broker will protect you and the major investment you have in your home.
- 6) Don't let a real estate broker see your home until it's staged for sale. First impressions are essential. You need to "sell" the home to the broker before the first potential buyer walks in the door. The amount of effort he or she will make to sell your home and maximizing the listing price depends on the "Wow" factor that has the broker running back to their office to tell everyone about your home.
- 7) Professional home staging doesn't cost, it pays. Trying to prepare your home by yourself for today's tough real estate market is a huge mistake. Real estate brokers will be taking potential buyers to a number of homes. You want your home to be the one they remember. Let the stager determine what stays and what goes, so don't start selling or giving away furniture and accessories. Allow the stager the chance to "shop" in your home for those special touches that will get a SOLD sign on your home in the least amount of time.

Mary Spann
President
The Upside of Downsizing™