

Valerie M. Blake's  
**DCHomeQuest**

# A GUIDE TO SELLING A HOME in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area



**Compliments of:**

**Valerie M. Blake**

Associate Broker, GRI, SRES

Director of Education & Mentorship

Licensed in DC, MD & VA

☎ 202.246.8602

☎ 202.518.8781

Valerie@DCHomeQuest.com

www.DCHomeQuest.com

📍 therealst8ofaffairs

**RLAH.**  
REAL ESTATE

4600 N PARK AVE #100, CHEVY CHASE, MD 20815 | 301.652.0643  
2420 WILSON BLVD#101, ARLINGTON, VA 22201 | 703.390.9460  
11 DUPONT CIR #650, WASHINGTON, DC 20036 | 202.518.8781  
1108 H ST NE, WASHINGTON, DC 20002 | 240.235.9823



# Greetings!

Thank you for this opportunity to earn your business and to represent you in the sale of your property. I am excited about what lies ahead.

In a world of manufacturers, some make demands, some make trouble and still others make excuses. I make good. My mission is to serve as your marketing coordinator, your skilled negotiator and your trusted advisor.

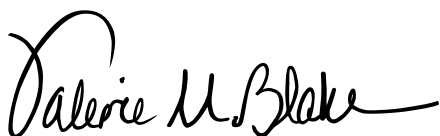
I will listen carefully to what you say, read between the lines, interpret your body language and burrow into your head – whatever it takes to clearly understand your goals and objectives – so that I can to help you achieve them.

The home sale process will involve a variety tasks: planning, coordination, presentation, marketing, negotiation and follow-up. We will be working closely together and you will be an integral part of the team, so if you have any questions or concerns, please bring them to my attention early in the process so that I may address them to your satisfaction.

You deserve much more than just a sign in the yard, flyers in a box and an occasional open house. You deserve an agent who will be at your side, from listing to closing, ensuring that you get the most money possible from the sale with the least amount of disruption to your day-to-day life.

I look forward to being that agent.

With warmest regards,



**Valerie M. Blake**



My real estate business has been built around this one guiding principle:

# It's All About You!

Your needs

Your concerns

Your questions

Your finances

Your time

Your life

My focus is on your complete satisfaction. In fact, I work to get the job done so well that you **will want to tell** your friends and associates about it.

Maybe that's why **more than 50%** of my business comes from repeat customers and referrals.

**Good service speaks for itself.** I look forward to the opportunity to earn your referrals too!

# What To Expect

## **Communication**

I'll communicate in the way that works best for you and keep you apprised of all developments in the sale of your property during the process.

## **Expertise**

I'll anticipate problems, prevent them from occurring when I can, bring them to your attention quickly if I cannot, and provide you with options to solve them.

## **Staging**

Buyers will see your home with its best foot forward. I know what it takes to make a terrific first impression that will get your home sold quickly and for the best price.

## **Pricing**

With a keen understanding of pricing strategies and the latest neighborhood sales data, I will help you price your home competitively so that buyers will flock to your door.

## **Marketing**

From Internet listings on more than 20 sites to professional photos & flyers to email blasts to 4000 agents on my contact list, your home will get the exposure it deserves.

## **Negotiating**

I'll be in your corner negotiating a win-win position whenever possible, working diligently on your behalf to arrive at the best price and terms for your sale.

## **Coordination**

I'll coordinate all the details of inspection, appraisal, settlement and more to guarantee your satisfaction with my representation of your needs throughout the process.

# Why Choose Me?

## **How am I different from other real estate agents?**

I offer my clients a wealth of experience, expert negotiating skills, the highest degree of ethical conduct and world-class service, all delivered with a warm smile and a slightly offbeat sense of humor.

My mission is to serve as your trusted advisor, provide you with the education and counsel needed to make sound, independent decisions when purchasing or selling a home or investment property and facilitate each transaction in a composed, professional and expert manner.

## **DC HOMEQUEST VALUES**

### **Diversity Matters**

If everyone needed the same type of housing, had the same budget, or wanted to live in the same neighborhood, I would very quickly go out of business. I welcome the diversity that keeps me learning, growing and relevant.

### **Creativity Rules**

There is no such thing as one way of doing things in real estate. A fresh, creative solution to a common problem can make the difference between a satisfied client and a dissatisfied one. I will unleash my creativity on your challenges.

### **Humor Diffuses**

A home is the largest and most expensive item most people will ever buy or sell, so there can be times when tensions rise and tempers flare. I will insert humor where appropriate to diffuse a stressful situation and lighten the mood while I calmly listen to and address your concerns.

### **Quality Above All**

Each client deserves personal attention, outstanding representation and exceptional customer service before, during and after a real estate transaction. Your satisfaction is rooted in the quality of service I provide and my business depends upon your satisfaction.

# What My Clients Say:

*"I had the pleasure of working with Valerie when I sold my condo and purchased a house. When we first met, she explained that she works very hard to make sure her clients will never refer to her as "That darn Realtor® who..." as in "...who botched my closing" or "...who will never set foot in my house again." However, Valerie is that Realtor® who...*

*...flawlessly coordinated a house inspection, termite inspection, contractor review and roofing quote with only a couple of instantaneous phone calls and minimal notice*

*...negotiated a laundry list of repair items on the house I purchased in a market where buying property 'as-is' is the norm*

*...finessed real estate nuances that I had never imagined even existed and*

*...kept me sane throughout the entire process."*

**Mark Sleith**

Washington, DC

*"Every time I see the news about home sales and failing mortgages, I think of you and appreciate again how hard you worked to sell my house in a challenging market. You rock!!"*

**John Gates**

Arlington, VA

*"One of the best agents I have ever had the pleasure of working with. Her professionalism is top notch and her warm, personal, hands-on approach is beyond compare."*

**Robert Brooks**

Knoxville, TN

*"I found Valerie through one of those random twists of fate, but after having heard the same "I wish I could recommend my Realtor® to you, but I hate him/her with the burning fire of a thousand suns" from everyone I talked to who had recently bought a house, I can only call it serendipity. She was efficient, thorough, and always had a ready sense of humor about the whole thing. I can't imagine having made it through this process without her!"*

**Shangrila Willy-Slavin**

Baltimore, MD

*"Valerie has set the bar for agent performance. A recommendation alone would not serve her justice as Valerie goes above and beyond for her clients. Not only would we enlist her expertise again, we would also recommend her many times over. She is more than an agent, she is a confidante, a friend, a business partner, a consultant, and more importantly she is in it 100% for you."*

**Jason & Nancy deEstrada**

Washington, DC

*"Valerie's knowledge of the DC real estate system saved me money, time, and hassle. Her advocacy on my behalf never faltered and she's fun! Working with Valerie was a 100% positive experience."*

**Amanda Huber**

Raleigh-Durham, NC

# The Home Sale Process

## Initial Consultation

- Determine your needs and priorities
- Tour your home and note its features
- Make suggestions for repairs, enhancements and staging
- Discuss our marketing plan & establish a pricing strategy

## Design and Implement Marketing Plan

- Stage your home to show its best features
- Carry out scheduled marketing activities
- Show the property to other agents and prospective buyers
- Monitor the results of marketing activities

## Review & Negotiate Offer(s)

- Discuss and clarify proposed terms and conditions
- Prepare a "Seller's Net Sheet" for each offer
- Negotiate via counter-offer or invocation of escalation clauses
- Reach agreement and sign ("ratify") the final contract

## The Paper Chase

- Title company researches property and receives preliminary report
- Inspections take place (home, termite, radon, lead-based paint, etc.)
- Appraisal is completed and Buyer's loan is approved
- Buyer conducts final walk-through of the property

## Settlement

- Settlement documents are signed
- Keys are transferred from Seller to Buyer
- Deed transfer is recorded
- Proceeds are distributed



# Teamwork

When you select me as your agent, we begin to form a team. You receive the benefit of my experience, market expertise, organizational skills and negotiating ability.

## In return I ask the following of you:

- **Please read the material I give you and refer to it throughout the process.**  
Selling a home can be stressful. I have found that the more informed you are, the less likely that you will find something in the process upsetting.
- Let me know if you feel your expectations are not being met so that we can discuss the situation and find an acceptable resolution.
- Maintain your home in ready-to-show condition.
- Be flexible with showing times and lockbox access.
- When you are out of town, let me know how you can be reached.
- Do not allow an unescorted buyer into your home.
- Remove or secure valuables, jewelry, cash and prescription medications.
- Do not be present when the property is shown.
- Secure pets in crates or take them with you.
- Consult with me if there is any change in the property's condition.
- Call me when the number of flyers or other marketing materials on hand is less than ten.
- Above all else, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns that may arise. There is nothing that I can't calmly handle on your behalf.





# Evaluating Your Property

Each property has special features that may interest buyers. Please tell me about your house, so that I may tout specific items in my marketing, address any problems up front and be aware of any items we must disclose to prospective purchasers.

- What are the most appealing features of your property/ neighborhood?
- What features does your property have that differentiate it from other properties?
- What changes or enhancements would you suggest to make your property as saleable as possible?
- Do you have any special terms or conditions that I should be aware of (e.g., items to be excluded, special title needs, coinciding settlement requirements)?
- Is the property tenanted? If so, does the tenant have a lease? For how long?
- Are you aware of any defects that will need to be disclosed to prospective buyers?
- Are there any items that currently require repair? If so, what are they?
- Who will you be living in your household while it is being marketed?
- Do you have any pets? If so, how many and what size? How will they be cared for during showings?
- Is there anything else you feel I need to know?

---

---

---

---



# Staging Your Home

## Three things to remember:

1. You don't get a second chance to make a first impression.
2. A review of over 2,800 properties in 8 cities found that staged homes, on average, sold in half the time that non-staged homes did.
3. Most buyers make decisions about the property they see within the first 15 seconds of entering the home, looking for the attributes below.

Location	Cannot be changed
Size	Difficult to change
Amenities	Can be changed
Condition	Can be changed

Adding cost-effective amenities and improving the general cleanliness and condition of the home is what we call "staging."

When a seller stages his home, one of two things happens:

1. The home becomes more valuable than other comparable properties in that price range.
2. The home gets moved up in price and becomes the lowest priced in the next higher price bracket or category.\*

\*Based on the national best-seller SHIFT: How Top Real Estate Agents Tackle Tough Times by Gary Keller



# Professional Stager or DIY

If a home is being sold while vacant it is usually best to hire a professional stager who has access to furniture, linens, lighting and accessories and is able to put together a cohesive look for the entire home.

Most stagers will charge a one-time fee for set-up and removal of the furnishings and the first 30 days of rent for the items provided. The fee will vary based on the size of the house, the type or quality of furnishings, how many rooms you are staging and whether anything you own can be incorporated into the design.

If you will be continuing to live in your home, we may blend your things and some staging items or I may help you stage your home yourself.

I may ask you to rent a storage room and bring in some of my own accent pieces to complete the setting. At minimum, I will teach you how to make your property "showroom ready" before leaving the house each day.

**Please do not feel I am making any judgment about your taste! I am simply trying to ensure that your property strikes that critical balance of too little and too much so that it appeals to a wide range of buyers. I also want your place to have a little punch of "WOW!"**



# Low Cost Enhancements

There are many things you can do yourself or with the assistance of a local handyman that will enhance any home's marketability.

- Improve your home's "curb appeal" by cutting grass and pulling weeds.
- Take care of minor repairs before you begin showing your home.
- Rearrange and/or store furniture to maximize space in your home.
- Consolidate and remove personal items so buyers focus on the property.
- Clear items off horizontal surfaces to make the home feel more spacious.
- Organize closets, clean windows and add fresh towels & linens.
- Let there be light – raise blinds and turn on lamps.
- And leave your toilet seats down!



**Before**



**After**



# Before and After: How We Live vs. How We List



# Market Value

Let's begin with this direct statement:

**I AM NOT THE ONE WHO DECIDES HOW MUCH YOUR HOME IS WORTH. THE MARKET IS.**

The real estate market is constantly changing, so choosing a price is not an exact science. Rather, your price should be a reasonable figure derived from a number of different sources:

- The state of the real estate market
- Hard facts such as lot size, square footage and condition of your home
- Desirability factors such as location, special amenities and property attributes
- Listing and selling prices of similar homes in your neighborhood
- Competition from homes available in like neighborhoods
- Your level of motivation

The following items **DO NOT** affect the price of your home.

- How much you originally paid for the home
- Your current mortgage balance
- The amount of money you have spent on improvements
- The profit you wish to make from the sale
- What people other than real estate professionals have told you it is worth
- What a similar house sold for more than six months ago

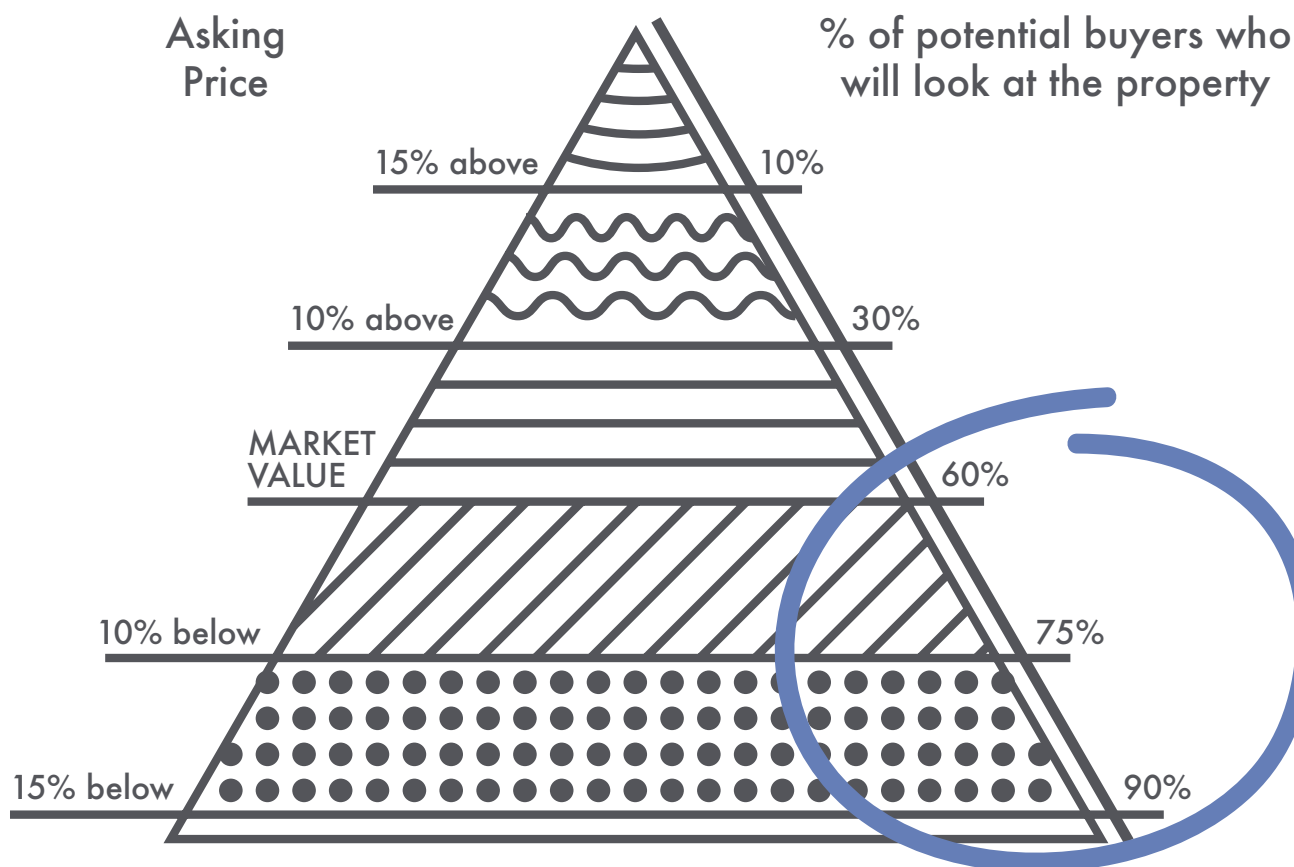
My Competitive Market Analysis (CMA) will help you make informed, judicious pricing decisions.



# Price Right—Attract Buyers

Pricing your property competitively will generate the most activity from agents and buyers. Too high and it may be necessary to drop the price below market value to compete with new, well-priced listings, while too low may attract buyers who can't afford to purchase it.

## The Importance of Intelligent Pricing



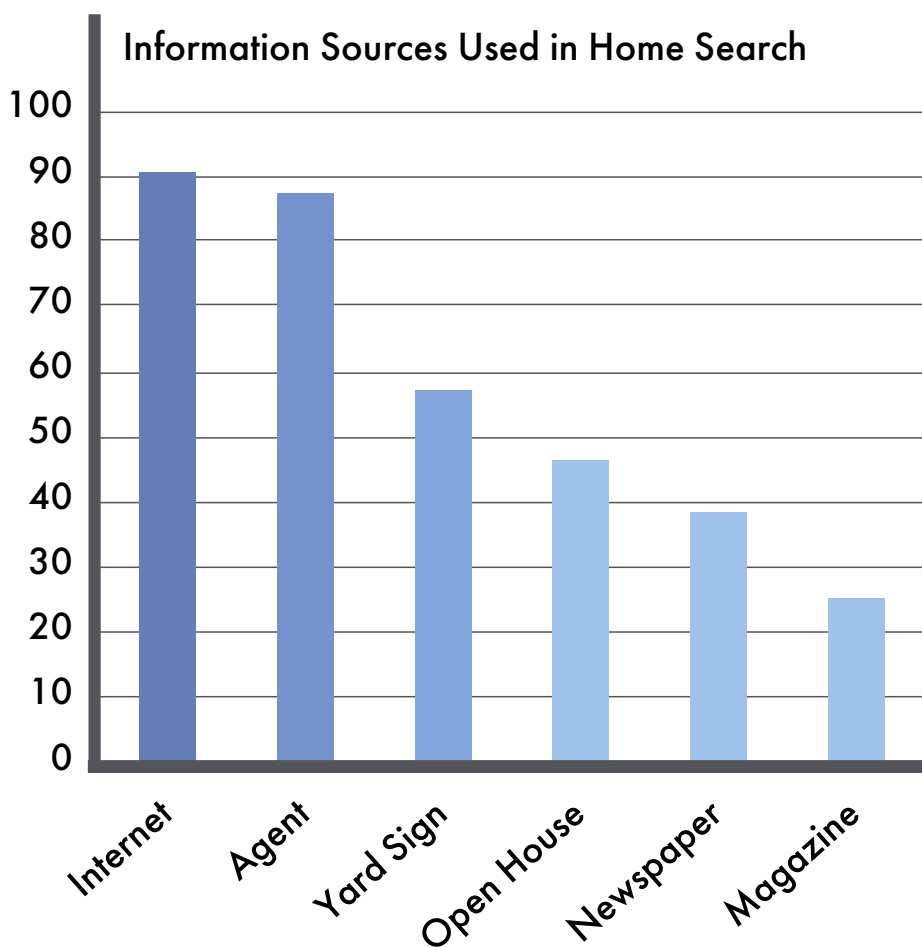
As the triangle graph illustrates, more buyers purchase their properties at market value than above market value. If you price your property at market value, you are exposing it to a much greater percentage of prospective buyers and you are increasing your opportunity for a sale.



# The Buyer Pool

Buyers find the home they purchase primarily by looking on the Internet and by asking real estate agents.

An excellent agent with a terrific Internet marketing program is your best path to a sale.

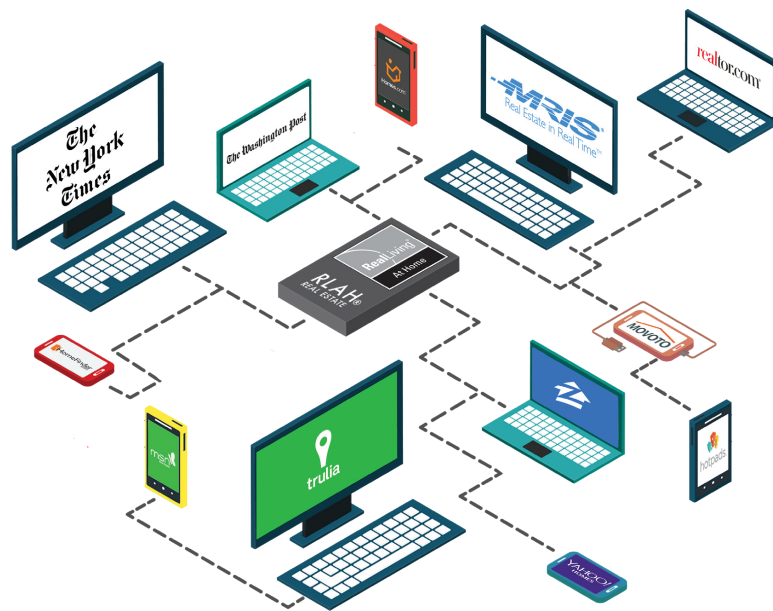


From National Association of Realtors, Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers, 2009

# Marketing Your Home

My role is to market your property in a manner that makes it known to the greatest number of potential buyers and their agents using a variety of methods.

Since we already know that the Internet is the first place most buyers will go to search for homes, I will ensure that your home will appear on these websites and more.



In addition, your home will be featured on my own website, **DCHomeQuest.com**, on six Facebook pages, on my page, **The Realst8 of Affairs**, and via other social media.



# Preparing for Market

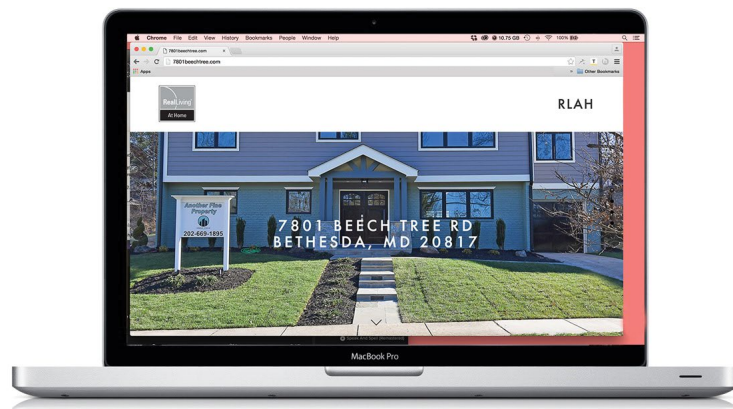
In order to produce a complete marketing program where the benefits of your home are shown to their best advantage, we start with three critical elements.

## Home Staging

Whether do-it-yourself or professionally, staging dresses your home for success and prepares it for professional photography.

## Photos and Virtual Tours

A digital photographic spread using a high-end professional service will form the basis of marketing materials to showcase your home on a variety of Internet and social media sites and in print.



7801BEECHTREE.COM

## Videos, Floorplans and Property-specific Websites

We may also determine that a video of your home may spark additional interest. We can couple it with a website made just for your home to make it stand out from the crowd and even add a floorplan to help buyers mentally move in and decide where their furniture will go.

## Professional Flyers

High-quality flyers will provide potential buyers with the information and photographs they need to make your house the one they will remember and choose to buy.

# Pre-Marketing

My pre-marketing program is designed to make buyers want to see your home before they are even aware of other homes coming on the market. Here are some of the avenues I use.

## **The Top Agent Network**

This group consists of the top 20% of agents who sell in DC, MD and VA. As a member, the network allows me to let the most productive agents in the metropolitan area know in advance that your home will be coming on the market.



## **Facebook Pre-Marketing Groups**

Similarly, I belong to invitation-only Facebook groups in all three states where agents representing all brokerages can advertise properties that will be coming on the market within 30 days to other agents who may have buyers for them.

## **RLAH® Real Estate**

RLAH®'s private Facebook group allows agents with active buyers to indicate what their clients are looking for, often resulting in a match. Our monthly team meetings also provide a venue for discussing new listings and buyer needs.

## **Bright MRIS**

Our multiple listing system lets agents post new listings in Coming Soon status for up to three weeks. Although your home cannot be shown while in Coming Soon status, agents are able to alert their buyers and have them lining up to make showing appointments once the property is changed to Active status.

## **E-Card Announcements & Flyers**

Electronic greeting cards and flyers announce the various stages of marketing your home to my personal network of more than 4000 agents. For example, Coming Soon, Just Listed and Open House are some of the available options.

# Other Marketing Tools

## The Multiple Listing Service (MLS)

Posting your listing in the MLS accurately describes your home's features, highlighting special benefits and providing clear contact information so agents can set viewing appointments.

## Photographs and PDF Documents

Inserting photographs and downloading required disclosures in PDF format into the MLS will ensure that an agent has everything she needs at her fingertips to write an offer on your property.

## Install Yard Sign

My uniquely designed sign will notify neighbors and passersby that your home is for sale. My contact information appears on the sign so buyers can reach me for further information.

## Install Electronic Lockbox

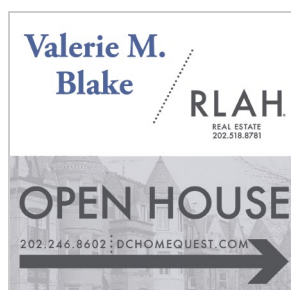
An electronic lockbox will facilitate an agent's ability to preview and promote your home to her clients. Our lockboxes are not only secure, but also provide an electronic time stamp that identifies the agent who showed your home as well as the time of the visit.

## Host Open House(s)

Upon your approval, I will host a public open house and invite other agents to preview the home. If you prefer that your property not be opened to the public, just let me know.

## Follow Up With Agents

Using the information recorded in the lockbox as well as the business cards left by agents when they visit, I will contact the agents who show your property in order to gauge their client's level of interest and seek constructive feedback.



# Reviewing & Negotiating an Offer

The best deal is one in which both parties feel they got most of what they wanted through negotiating. It is my job to educate you about the provisions of the contract and to make creative suggestions for a win-win situation while keeping your best interests in mind.

**When we receive an offer you have only three courses of action:**

- 1. Accept it,**
- 2. Reject it, or**
- 3. Make a Counter Proposal.**

To help you make a decision I will:

- Explain the key terms of the offer to you;
- Point out potential advantages and disadvantages of each offer;
- Prepare an estimate of net proceeds from the offer; and
- Negotiate possible counteroffers and changes of terms to reach a final agreement that is acceptable to you.

**Here are some of the things I look for in making a recommendation to you:**

- Offering price and escalated price, if any;
- Amount of Earnest Money Deposit;
- Buyer's financial stability;
- Type and status of buyer's loan;
- Closing cost subsidies requested;
- Number and type of contingencies;
- Timelines that meet your needs; and
- Any additional considerations that you have indicated may be important to you.

# Estimating Settlement Costs

At closing you will receive a settlement statement that details the payoff amounts of any outstanding mortgage loans or home equity lines of credit as well as the transaction charges associated with the sale.

## Here are some examples of applicable fees.

**Real Estate Commissions & Fees** You will pay the agreed-upon commission and fees as stated in your original listing agreement with RLAH® Real Estate.

**Buyer Closing Costs (aka Buyer Subsidy)** If you have agreed to pay some of the buyer's closing costs, this will be reflected as a deduction from your proceeds.

**Transfer Tax & Recordation Fees** Each jurisdiction will charge state, county, and/or local fees to transfer ownership of the property and record the loan payoff.

**Settlement Fee** The settlement agent/closing agent will collect a fee for his or her services at settlement.

**Termite Inspection Fee** If your contract specifies that you are responsible, then you will pay for the services of a termite inspector to review your property and issue a report.

**Home Warranty** If you will be purchasing a home warranty for the buyer or have ordered a seller home warranty for transfer to the buyer then you will pay for it at settlement.

**Proration of Property Taxes** You and the buyer will split the property taxes for the length of time each owns the property during the tax period.

**Proration of Association Dues** If your property is a condo or coop, or has a homeowner's association, those fees will be split with the buyer on a pro-rated basis.



# Seller's Settlement Checklist

Between the time we ratify the contract and the day of settlement, the following items must be completed.

**Make any Repairs Required by the Contract.** Bring paid receipts with you to settlement to give to the buyer.

**Obtain Power of Attorney, if necessary.** If anyone who holds title to the property is unable to attend settlement, I will arrange for a limited power of attorney so that a representative you designate may sign documents on that owner's behalf.

**Remove Utilities from Your Name.** Call the utility companies to have water, electricity, gas and other services transferred out of your name as of the date of settlement.

Here are some helpful numbers for the DC area. Your service providers may vary depending on where your home is located.

PEPCO (electric): (202) 833-7500  
Washington Gas: (703) 750-1000  
DC Water: (202) 354-3600

**Arrange for Certified Funds or a Wire Transfer.** If you will owe money at settlement, bring a cashier's check or certified check made payable to the settlement company to cover the balance remaining. If you are receiving funds from the sale, you can instruct the settlement company to wire the funds directly to your bank account or have them sent to your next settlement firm if you are purchasing another home.

**Move Out.** Unless otherwise negotiated, you must move out before settlement. Your property must be "broom clean" on settlement day.

**Attend Settlement.** Bring any remaining keys and photo identification, such as a driver's license or passport, to settlement. The entire process should take about an hour.