

Home Inspection Tips For Buyers and Sellers



It's springtime in Portland. The days are getting longer and gardens and lawns all around the neighborhood are starting to green up and blossom once again.

Along with chirping birds and warmer breezes, the arrival of spring typically brings an uptick in real estate activity. If you are considering buying or selling a home, it's important to understand the basics of the home inspection process that occurs as part of any home sale. When properly executed, a home inspection can help both the buyer and seller minimize any surprises that may come up during one of the biggest financial transactions of most people's lives.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you get ready to find that new dream home, or prepare to put your house on the market.

The inspection period begins once a purchase agreement is reached between buyer and seller. Terms of the inspection period vary, but 5-10 days is typical. During this time, the buyer will arrange a general home inspection by a licensed professional home inspector. The inspection is designed to give the prospective purchaser a methodical way to detect some of the common flaws or deficiencies in the significant components and systems of a home. Typical exterior components that are inspected include the roof, chimneys, gutters and downspouts, windows and doors, foundations and the yard around the home. On the inside of the house, the condition of basements, floors, walls, ceilings, bathrooms and kitchens, and electro-mechanical components like wiring and heating and cooling systems are carefully noted.

In addition to these standard inspection practices, many home inspectors also offer assessments of other important specialty items, which often require a separate license and specialized testing equipment, such as asbestos, radon gas, lead paint, toxic mold and pest control. Specialty contractors are often brought in for addressing such issues as radon gas, sewer scoping and underground oil tank sampling.

It is important for the prospective home buyer to be present for a general home inspection so that if any problems are found, they can have a better grasp of the complexities and circumstances of the situation, making it easier to understand the potential costs and the time needed for any repairs.

When issues are discovered during a transaction based home inspection, the seller's real estate agent is bound by their Oregon Real Estate Agency license to disclose said issues to all prospective buyers and agents.

Both buyers and sellers should be fully aware of the outcome of inspections, because if repairs are going to be performed, it will help them have a better understanding of what the financial ramifications of those repairs will be. This information can then be used to negotiate a final agreement that is fair and reasonable for all parties involved.

When you're involved with a home inspection, it's helpful to keep these wise words from Benjamin Franklin in mind: An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.

— *Tony Bustamonte is principal and co-founder of Soil Solutions Environmental Services, a full service environmental consulting and construction company based in Southeast Portland*