

Don't let foundation issues scare you away

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The act of getting a home under contract in our current residential real estate market environment is considered by most buyers as a significant achievement.

As was the case in the home featured in the "Sale of the Week," many homes are selling for more than list price in bidding wars. In order to get to that point, the buyers had to identify a home that met their needs in an area they found desirable. That's no small task.

Even with demand high and numerous homes being sold "as is," almost all contracts include provisions for home inspections. During these inspections, any number of deficiencies can be found.

There are usually a few open junction boxes, wet areas that are missing ground fault circuit interrupters, an occasional ungrounded plug, boots on roofs are in need of caulking and other minor issues. All of these are nothing to get hung about.

But if the inspector utters the words "structural issues," a pall is cast. Blood drains from the faces of the buyers and the Realtor texts his office to prepare a termination notice. No joy in Mudville.

Ironically, mud is often at the base of the problem, more specifically, the water that transforms the dirt into mud.

While the term structural issues conjures images of houses falling off of their foundations and splattering across the yard, the fact is most structural issues can be remedied for less money than a new roof or HVAC system.

Michael Marchetti, the founder of the Marchetti Company, is one of the few, if any, people in the city who is a licensed contractor, architect and structural engineer. He noted that "most structural issues begin with water," citing poor drainage as the most-likely culprit.

If rainwater runs from a roof into gutters and downspouts, it must be diverted away from the foundation.

When the water pours from the downspouts onto the ground below, Marchetti notes, it will, over the course of time, compromise the foundation. That can cause mortar to disintegrate, followed by settling, and the house begins to shift.

He says settlement cracks that often horrify buyers are harmless in their own right since "the bricks are not really structural," but a veneer or covering.

As the foundation of a home erodes, the lumber, or the framing, tries to hold the house together, he continues.

In order to rectify the situation, the location of the slippage must be identified. Then, Marchetti says, there



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are many solutions, depending on severity.

In the worst case, he adds, there are companies that drill until they strike rock, not an uncommon element in the Nashville sub terrain. They then stabilize the structure and, in extreme cases, raise the structure in a manner similar to jacking up car.

If a section of the home is in need of being elevated, that could lead to some plaster or drywall repairs, painting and other cosmetic tasks.

Nashville's beautiful rolling hills can create drainage issues, as the water running off of the hills onto a foundation can provide the same and often more dramatic issues.

Oddly, flat lots are drainage nightmares since there is no easily identifiable place for water to go. Often swales and French drains must be installed in order to guide the water away from the home.

Marchetti is quick to stress that it is possible to mitigate any and all of these issues, and the costs are not as prohibitive as most would think.

Looking for a bargain? Find a home with structural issues. They are the ugly ducklings swimming around in the rainwater under filled gutters and unpiped downspouts. Flip a few and head over to the Swan Ball.

Sale of the Week

The prices in Crieve Hall and its Caldwell Hall neighborhood continue to skyrocket.



316 Wauford Drive

The home at 316 Wauford Drive sparked a bidding war and, after being listed at \$295,000 by Crieve Hall guru Tiffany Fykes with Keller Williams Realty, the house sold for \$313,000. MacKenzie Strawn with Scout Properties delivered the buyer, who won the battle of the bucks.

The 1,450-square-foot home commanded \$215 per square foot, the latest to exceed \$200-per-square-foot.

While the sellers performed considerable updating, they had to be pleased, grossing \$95,500 on the home they purchased for \$217,500 in 2012.

Among the updates were the kitchen, the master bathroom, built-in bookcases and "an amazingly peaceful screened-in porch," according to Fykes, who has become a dominant force in the Crieve Hall real estate sales, joining veterans such as Pam Morris.

Built in 1960, the ranch style home offers one-level living and efficiently incorporates four bedrooms.

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