

Inspector anxiety bites both buyers and sellers

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Almost all home sales stipulate that a home inspector will evaluate the condition of the house. The person who coined the “fine-toothed comb” phrase may well have had visions of these detectives crawling into places fit neither for man nor beast and ascending high into the heavens shingle by shingle.

Armed with more devices than Neil Armstrong carried to the moon, they can shuck a home down to the cob, as the saying goes. They also are regulated by the state and must be licensed to perform their craft.

They are paid to find everything and they do.

The only problem is that they are required to report anything and everything that they discover and have been schooled and trained as to various oversights or under- disclosures that eventually lead to litigation.

For those unfamiliar with the process, the inspections last about four hours, up to six hours on larger homes and eight on the 8,500-square-foot monsters.

Following the inspection, a report is assembled that includes documentation reminiscent of Arlo Guthrie’s “Alice’s Restaurant” with scores of color two-by-two color photographs with circles and arrows and a paragraph next to each one explaining what each one is and telling all the bad things that the house is doing to itself.

In the front of the report is the dreaded “Repair Summary” that details what deficiencies the inspector feels should be addressed by someone, be ye buyer or seller.

Sellers hate them, and buyers are scared by them.

The problem for the sellers is that the items cited are real. The home inspector did not create them and has photographs with circles and arrows and paragraphs to support his claims.

So sellers reluctantly hire contractors to make the repairs, even some that are totally unnecessary. But “unnecessary” is open to interpretation, and an inspector in Hoboken was sued and lost the case because he did not tell the buyer a particular repair should be made.

Another problem is that contractors and subcontractors are busy and expensive.

During a recent inspection, an inspector cited nails popping from the roof that could lead to leaks and said they should be fixed. He did not identify how many.

By the way, the repair summary allows mandates that the repair be made by a licensed and bonded fill-in-the-blank contractor. When the owner called a roofer, the roofer said he was so busy that he would have to charge \$595 in order to come and evaluate, and they would credit that amount back after making the repairs.



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Upon arrival, he found four nail pops.

Even he, as busy as he was, could not bring himself to charge the \$595, so he reduced his fee to \$400, a mere \$100 per nail.

In the same home, the inspector required the water pressure be reduced. When the plumber arrived, he was concerned about the pressure the inspector demanded, but he did as instructed. The homeowner is now having difficulty rinsing after showers.

There are more stories regarding aluminum electrical wiring and drainpipes at differing angles, etc.

The inspectors are doing their jobs, and very well, the buyers are getting more than they need, and the sellers are getting decimated, but that is only after selling the homes in a matter of hours for more money than at any time in history.

Sale of the Week

The properties in 12South, Green Hills, Sylvan Park, Belle Meade or any of the downtown high-rises such as Adelia, Icon or 1212 carry prices of \$200 to \$500 per square foot, yet a quick trip out I-40 to Old Hickory allows buyers to purchase homes for less than \$100 per square foot.



The home located at 1033 Wyntergrace Farm Road in Merritt Downs subdivision boasts 3,125 square feet and sold for \$284,900 in only seven days after Gina Waters with Coldwell Banker Barnes listed it.

Buyers will shed no tears on the trail to the Hermitage exit and then a slight jaunt down Andrew Jackson Parkway to Merritt Downs.

The sale price was \$284,900, but the buyer's agent – Tiffany Board of Reliant Realty – was able to negotiate the transaction in such a manner that the

seller paid \$6,250 of the seller's closing costs. Even with the gross price of \$284,900, the seller netted \$278,650, slightly less than the \$279,095 he paid in 2006.

However, in a nine-year period with a recession in the middle, he was able to limp out unscathed, but without property, similar to the British after the Battle of New Orleans.

So, while the costs are low, the potential for appreciation is less as well, leading to the question of should houses be viewed as investments or shelter?

Depending on the seller's income and the interest he was paying, he could have saved several thousand each year on income taxes for nine years that could have equaled some \$30,000 in tax savings, so he could have fared better in the deal than it appeared.

The buyer bought a five-bedroom, three-bath home that Waters described as having "a large family room, with a fireplace that opens to a huge kitchen and breakfast bar." She noted a "master suite with a beautiful see-through fireplace."

Considering the Hermitage had no bathrooms, this was a steal.

Richard Courtney is a real estate broker with Christianson, Patterson, Courtney, and Associates and can be reached at Richard@richardcourtney.com.