



EXPANDING OR RENOVATING VS. MOVING HOUSE IN THE WNY REAL ESTATE MARKET

Betty L. Harris*

A question we often hear from homeowners in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls Region of WNY is "Should we change our home or is it more cost-effective to move?" I wrote this article to help YOU make YOUR best choice for YOUR particular needs, aims and situation.

Should You Stay Or Should You Move?

Growing families face this common question when they feel the need to expand into more living space. Homeowners with older properties face this question when they feel the urge to renovate their home or upgrade to take advantage of the durability, lower maintenance, and energy efficiency of modern building materials and techniques. Even homeowners in newer homes will often initiate major remodeling projects in order to change the traffic flow around their house, or otherwise adjust the functionality and feel of their living space.

Exploring the major decision to change your current home or move to another home needs some research, if You are to make Your best choice. This will yield maximum total benefit (improving Your lifestyle & maximizing Your total equity) at a cost (in time, effort, and \$) that You are comfortable with.

Changing Your Existing Home

First You must define Your needs. Draw a preliminary site plan, floor plan, wall plan, cabinet plan, etc. – preferably to scale. Consider 'traffic flow' through the proposed new layout.

Do NOT over-improve for your community. A home that is valued significantly higher than the neighborhood average might never give you a full return for you investment. Up-grades that help re-sell a home when You do decide to leave include, kitchen make-overs, in-law quarters, family room, office additions, bedroom expansion-addition, window up-grades, patio enclosures / sunrooms, and extra storage/garages. Curb appeal is the biggest factor, so landscaping is also usually a good investment.

Decide if You can or want to handle some, any, or all of the work. Local building code will probably dictate who is certified to perform electrical, plumbing and structural work. Talk with Your town building department and building inspector.

When choosing contractors get referrals from family, friends and colleagues at work. Your experienced local Realtor should also be able to recommend good and reliable contractors. Check references, and for major projects visit the contractors previous clients to view their work first hand. Make sure that all contractors are fully licensed and insured.

Find out if Your contractor will be using sub-contractors or doing all of the work themselves. If it's the former they may lose some control over the project timeline, if it's the latter make sure they have the necessary qualifications. Additionally, make sure they have all the required approvals, and will get all necessary permits for the work to be passed by Your local building inspector.

Get 3 written cost estimates for the work from reliable contractors, and be very careful to define what materials will be used and understand exactly why the estimates vary in price. Make sure You understand how long the work will take for completion, and that it will be done continuously from start to finish. Some contractors prefer to work on several projects sporadically at the same time. This can become very inconvenient and tedious to all the homeowners involved.

Timing is also important, contractors are often busier in the spring and summer months. Shopping "off season" can save a lot of money. Make sure any written estimates carry into the season when the work will be done, or list a time for prices to be honored.

After getting cost estimates for the work, bank loan interest rates, equity figures, etc., check with your local building department and get an idea of how the improvement will effect your square footage-and ultimately your assessed value and new taxes. These facts are critical information You will need to base your comparison against purchasing an existing home or building a new home complete with the amenities that You desire.

Moving To Another Home

If You decide to go this route You should find the best local Realtor to help You:

- Understand what Your current home is worth now
- Understand what it would be worth after Your proposed upgrades
- If applicable - Sell Your current home at the best possible price
- If applicable - Buy the RIGHT new home for the best possible price
- All within a budget and timeline that You are comfortable with.

An experienced local Realtor will save you time, money and stress.

Should You Buy An Existing Home Or Build A New Home?

Download and read this FREE article to help You decide:

<http://www.wny-buffalo-real-estate.com/files/Buffalo-Niagara-Real-Estate-Article-1.PDF>

Some people resist building a new home due to fear of the many different stages involved, or worries about getting a mortgage. Your Realtor can provide information and expertise to help You decide if building a new home would be a good choice in Your specific situation. They should also be able to offer You a complete service, including referral to a suitable builder, and all of the other professional advisors such as mortgage company, lawyer, etc.

When talking with Realtors find an experienced local professional who understands Your specific needs and situation. It shouldn't take months to define which direction is best for you.

Have Your Realtor show you existing properties that have the specific amenities You are seeking: living space, yard size, extras such as up-dated windows, roofing, mechanics, etc. This research plays a big part in your comparison exercise.

Take into consideration moving expenses, utility costs and insurance.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. HOW MUCH is My current home worth? – This probably affects Your budget for downsizing. Contact realtor@wny-buffalo-real-estate.com or call **(716) 472 3739** to get:

- A FREE, no-obligation appraisal or market value study
- Advice on how to get major repairs accomplished quickly, competently & cost-effectively
- The absolute best price for your home - commensurate to selling within Your target timeframe

2. Will I be able to get a mortgage?

Yes – regardless of age! Get an experienced professional to walk You through the mechanics.

Dispelling The Myths:

- Social security is fixed income and banks honor new mortgages with no age discrimination
- SSI, pensions, permanent disability income is also honored as fixed income
- 401K and investment portfolios are assets and credibility toward a mortgage. A good accountant or financial planner can assist in budgeting your income so you CAN downsize to Your ideal lifestyle.

Visit www.wny-buffalo-real-estate.com for more free information, easy to use mortgage calculators, and other useful real estate resources.

3. How do I coordinate the move correctly?

Coordinating the move correctly will avoid significant hassle and expense. Fears of this is often a critical factor preventing people from downsizing. A competent Realtor can advise You about market incentives to help you sell and buy without being forced out of your current home until You're ready.

What are the common issues associated with moving to a nursing home, assisted living, wills, trusts etc.? A competent realtor can give You good practical advice and referral base to local lawyers or financial planners, where necessary.

4. How can I get assistance in closing an estate?

Having to close a home and estate can be a daunting and overwhelming task. Your experienced Realtor can assist with complete handling of estate sales, including marketing Your property, selling Your contents, and referrals to professionals such as estate attorneys, financial planners, accountants etc.

5. What issues will I face when building a new smaller-scaled home?

Building a new home offers many advantages compared to buying existing real estate. Download <http://www.wny-buffalo-real-estate.com/files/Buffalo-Niagara-Real-Estate-Article-1.PDF> for more details. However, many people resist building a new home due to fear of the many different stages involved, or worries about getting a mortgage.

Your Realtor can provide information and expertise to help You decide if building a new home would be a good choice in Your specific situation. They should also be able to offer You a complete service, including referral to a suitable builder, and all of the other professional advisors such as mortgage company, lawyer, etc.

Should You Stay Or Should You Move – Making The Decision

Once You've completed Your research and consulted with any applicable advisors You'll have enough information to make Your best choice.

You need to directly compare the costs (in time effort and \$) and benefits (improved lifestyle and increased equity) associated with each option. It will help if You use a spreadsheet or draw up a table, with each cost and benefit itemized and accounted for.

Finally, simply add up all the costs and weigh them against the benefits. Make the choice that gives You the greatest total benefit – but only if You feel comfortable with it!

If You are not comfortable, You will have to go back and re-work the plan until it makes sense for You.

Betty L Harris



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Grand Island, NY – The Heart Of The Buffalo-Niagara Falls Region*

We hope that you found this information article useful.

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For further advice or guidance feel free to contact me at any time:

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or call me at **(716) 472-3739** to ask any questions about Your particular case.

If you are considering moving out of state, we can locate a real estate broker/owner and give you an idea of property in your price range - anywhere in USA. We can assure you of a successful move with a minimum of stress and complete coordination on your closing. I personally guarantee to locate a real estate owner or broker, interview and then select the person I feel will give you VIP treatment with your selection of a replacement home.