



BROUGHT TO YOU BY:
Ann Van Zandt, Broker, ABR, CRS, GRI, SRS, Green
(512) 629-3081
ann@bastrophomes.com bastrophomes.com



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A Note from Ann:

Good News! Well sort of.... Bastrop County has proposed to lower the property tax rate by 2 cents for the 2016-17 fiscal year. This is indeed great news if they adopt this proposal. However with the higher appraised values you probably won't see a true drop in taxes. But every bit helps - right?! The upside is your property is worth more!

August is traditionally a slow month as everyone tries to squeeze in that last summer vacation and prepares for the upcoming school year. Everyone will soon settle into their new routines and I expect the market to rebound right back where it was.

I hope you are enjoying the newsletter. If you would like the statistics for another area we will be happy to provide them, just shoot us an email with what area you would like. We can pull them by zip code, city, county or MLS area (I can send you a map of these if you like). We are always open to your comments and ideas, feel free to give us feedback.

I hope you all enjoy the long Labor Day weekend. As "summer" winds down, keep in mind that fall is a great time to list your home for sale. The weather is cooler and people tend to enjoy being outdoors before the cold sets in.

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Bastrop Area Monthly Statistics

Below are the current statistics for the Bastrop Area. The average home sale price for August 2016 was \$202,030, which is up +5.64% from the previous year. The average home sale price for 2016, so far, is \$196,958, which is up +9.10% from 2015. Although August was a slow month in closed sales, these numbers are a more fitting indication of the trends we are currently seeing in the housing market.



Around Town



Upcoming Events

September 10th - YMCA Burning Pine Run

5k and 10k runs in Bastrop State Park commemorating the anniversary of the devastating 2011 Texas wildfires. Come support the land and your fellow Texans! To register and for more information, [click here](#).

September 16th-17th - Lost Pines Regional Art Conference

2nd annual 2016 Lost Pines Art Conference held in historic downtown Bastrop with various art classes including digital media, painting, pottery and clay, metal work, and so much more! To register and for class details, [click here](#).

September 25th - Bastrop River Rally

Keep Bastrop County Beautiful is hosting their 3rd annual river clean-up of the El Camino Paddle Trail. Come paddle, run, learn, and have fun along the river with the whole family! For more information, [click here](#).

The Truth About How Sellers Choose Their Buyers (It's Not Always the Highest Bid!)

By: Lisa Kahn

How you negotiate when buying a home isn't just about the price. It's about being nice.

Touring prospective houses can feel like wandering through an infinite, imaginary desert: You're tired, you're cranky, and you're not sure if the experience is EVER. GOING. TO. END.

So when you've finally found "The One," it's an amazing feeling. You can already see your family celebrating holidays by your dream home's stately fireplace and savoring countless brunches in its adorable breakfast nook.

But wait. Before you summon the moving truck, your dream home's seller has to pick you, too. Luckily, the key to locking down your ideal abode doesn't always mean offering the most cash. Here are five ways to tip the odds in your favor.

1. Negotiate with a Smile

Unlike most commercial real estate transactions, the buying and selling of a home is complicated by all kinds of emotions, explains Sara Benson of Benson of Benson Stanley Realty in Chicago. Often, how the seller feels about you can be more important than your offer.

"People tend to do business with those they like and trust," she says.

One of Benson's favorite examples of this phenomenon occurred when one of her clients was second in line for a home. While the first-place bidders were negotiating their contract, they whipped out a long list of unreasonable demands for the seller.

"This infuriated the homeowner, who finally told them, 'My property isn't for sale to you at any price!'" Benson recalls. The seller ended up offering Benson's clients the house, even though their bid was \$10,000 below that of the first buyers.

Lesson learned? "Don't a nickel over items that are insubstantial, like a lawn mower or a \$50 valve on a hot water heater," says Benson. "This will anger a seller more than anything." And that, she says, could be a deal breaker.

2. Get Personal

Bruce Ailion, an agent with RE/MAX in Woodstock, Ga., agrees that profit isn't always the seller's primary motivation. He recalls a recent deal in which he was representing an older couple selling their long-time family home.

"We had two offers: one from an investor paying cash, the second from financed first-time buyers."

Despite Ailion's recommendations, the sellers chose the first-time buyers, even though the cash offer was higher and would have been a much simpler transaction. Ultimately, what mattered most for Ailion's clients was to pass their beloved home on to a deserving young family.

3. Figure Out the Seller's Unique Motivation

Understanding why the sellers have put their home on the market is yet another powerful tool a buyer can bring to the negotiating table, says Ailion.

"Some sellers want a quick sale; others need time to find a home. Some are focused on price, others on certainty," he says. "There are so many intangibles. It takes a deep understanding to make a good deal for everyone."

See what information you can glean about the seller -- from your agent or even from the seller's neighbors -- to arm yourself with as much information as possible.

"The more flexible a buyer can be on closing and possession, the more likely they'll be able to negotiate a lower price," agrees Benson. "They're giving the seller peace of mind and the comfort of not having to rush out."

4. Write a Love Letter

Sometimes, a heartfelt note from a potential buyer can make all the difference, even when the chances seem pretty slim.

Darcey Regan, a Chicago-based HR executive, had already bid on another home when she and her husband stumbled upon a gorgeous old Victorian. Instantly, they were smitten. "I grew up in an old house, and the sellers had done a really great job of maintaining and renovating this one," she says.

Unfortunately, multiple people had already placed offers on the house, including several developers who were planning to demolish the property. Regan felt her only hope was to write the sellers a letter. In it, she talked about growing up in a similar house, and how much she respected the owners' efforts to preserve their home.

Within 24 hours, the sellers told her the house was hers. "It turns out they really wanted someone who would keep the house rather than tear it down," she says.

Though it felt like a long shot, Regan believes her note was successful because it was genuine. Her advice? "Write a letter only if you're really in love with the house, not because someone told you to."

5. Work With a Pro

It also helps to have a knowledgeable, well-respected pro on your side -- someone who understands market realities and who will work well with the seller's agent.

How do you find that seasoned pro with the sterling reputation? "Ask for referrals from your personal and professional network, and interview at least three different [agents]," advises Benson.

Residential real estate is a game of both head and heart. Smart buyers who employ both are the ones most likely to win the home of their dreams.

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Color Your World

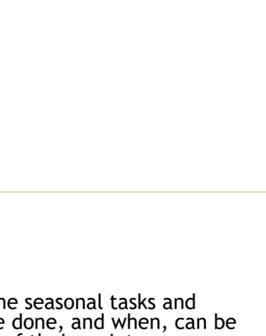
With autumn just around the corner, you want to give your home a fresh look for the season. *Better Homes and Gardens* reports that brushing on a new coat of paint is an obvious first step, but by adding small splashes of color to your home's exterior, you can improve curb appeal and entice buyers to walk through your door.

If you don't have the time or the budget to repaint the entire exterior, focus on one or two areas, such as the front door, window shutters or the roof. Look for doors that come ready to be painted and choose high-quality acrylic latex paint. If your budget allows, decorative glass inserts add more visual interest, and often complement a range of housing styles.

Painting the roof can have a big impact on your home's overall look. For best results, choose a tone in the same color family as the home's paint or siding color, or pick a color that's close to the hues in the brick or mortar.

Don't feel like painting? Changing out the hardware and lighting in your front entrance -- from the door knockers and house numbers to the porch lights and mailbox -- adds character to your home's appearance, while plants such as coleus and bigroot geraniums are lower-cost and colorful options for your landscaping. These plants also thrive in shady areas and are easy to care for.

With a little creativity, you can turn your home into a neighborhood show-stopper.



Fall Tune-Up Checklist

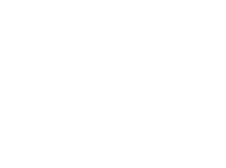
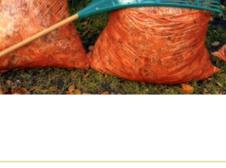
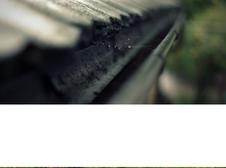
Homeownership comes with its share of routine seasonal tasks and chores. But keeping track of what needs to be done, and when, can be a challenge. To help homeowners stay on top of their maintenance projects, home improvement retailer Lowe's offers easy to follow checklists for each season of the year and covers both inside and outside chores. Get your home ready for fall and winter with these tasks:

Indoor Tasks

- ◆ When you turn clocks back, change the batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- ◆ Install weather-stripping where needed around the windows.
- ◆ If needed, set traps for rodents.
- ◆ Dust blinds and vacuum curtains throughout the house.
- ◆ Clean kitchen and bathroom cabinets and throw away outdated food, medicine and cosmetics.
- ◆ Clean kitchen appliances inside and out, including refrigerator coils.
- ◆ Maintain clean drains by adding one-half cup of white vinegar. After 10 minutes, flush with boiling water.

Outdoor Tasks

- ◆ Clean gutters and downspouts.
- ◆ Inspect the roof and chimney for cracks and damage, and have them repaired.
- ◆ Rake and shred leaves to use as mulch or dispose of them.
- ◆ Close or install storm windows.
- ◆ Remove hoses from spigots and drain, and store indoors, coiled and flat.
- ◆ Store outdoor furniture and cushions.
- ◆ Walk around the house to check for open crawl space vents and close them before cooler temperatures set in.
- ◆ Cover your central air conditioning unit, and remove and store window air conditioners.
- ◆ Clean and store garden tools.



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