

## Should You List Your Home During the Holidays? The Answer May Surprise You

The national real estate media and blogs have finally caught onto something I've been saying for several years — that winter, even during the holidays, is a great time to put your home on the market. The lead article this week on RSImedia's "Housecall" blog, for example, promotes listing homes during the upcoming holidays, writing as follows:

"With the colder temperatures and many people heading on vacation, it may seem like an inopportune moment to list your house, but **that couldn't be further from the truth.** Although it's true that there are fewer buyers looking for a home at this time of year, the pros far outweigh the cons. **There are fewer, yet far more serious buyers searching for homes** in your market, and there is **less competition with fewer homes on the market,** and transactions proceed more quickly...."

The blog post gives three reasons why the holidays are a good time to list a home. First, sellers needn't worry as much about staging the home. "Homebuyers who shop during the off-season are typically very serious about getting into a house. They're unlikely to waste their time viewing homes that don't already suit their criteria, and will be able to look past your child's messy playroom."

Second, the article states that transactions move more quickly, since inspectors, lenders, appraisers and title companies have less of a backlog. (Personally, I don't see this being so significant.)

Third, the article points out what I think **is** most important — **there are fewer homes competing for attention against your home.**

Sellers should particularly appreciate the fact that buyers who want to see listings at this time of year are probably serious about buying. "Lookie loos" are most often fair weather visitors. So, fewer people are likely to want to see your home during the holidays, but those who do are typically of the highly qualified and highly motivated variety.

### 'Conforming' Loan Limits Raised

Until recently, the conventional loan limit was \$417,000. Anything above that was considered a "jumbo" loan, which had stricter credit requirements and higher interest rates. But things have changed.

Last week, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the two government-sponsored entities that purchase the bulk of mortgage loans from lenders, raised that limit to \$484,350 for much of the country. In some regions with higher property values however, including metro Denver, the limit is now \$561,200. This is good news for borrowers, as conventional loans allow a smaller down payment percentage versus that of Jumbo loans — as little as 3%. Contact your mortgage broker to see if it makes sense for you to buy (or sell, for that matter) before mortgage rates rise further. If you don't have a mortgage broker call us. We can put you in touch with several professionals we know and trust

What the RSImedia blog post fails to address is what changed to make the holiday season a good time to list a home, because that wasn't true years ago. I believe it is because of how the internet has changed the relationship between buyers and their real estate agents.

In the past, agents would do the looking, contacting their client when they identified a home they think their buyer would like. With today's MLS systems, buyers' search criteria are entered into the MLS, which triggers an email alert when the system identifies a listing matching those criteria.

Thus, while **agents** might lose focus from time-to-time, the MLS computer **never** stops watching and alerting. The minute a suitable listing is entered in the MLS, buyers are alerted. Some of these folks are sufficiently motivated that if the listing "checks enough of their boxes," they'll call their agents to request an immediate showing — even on Christmas eve.

Buyers can set up similar alerts themselves on consumer-facing real estate websites such as Zillow, but they can't use nearly as many search criteria as their agent can. For example, I don't know of a single consumer-facing website that allows a user to search for main-floor master suites, fenced yards, homes with mountain views, or homes with full-but-unfinished basements. The MLS system on the other hand, allows its member agents to search for all of these criteria — and more. If it's a field on the MLS, it can be a search criterion for us agents.

If you aren't able to search for exactly what you want on those consumer-facing websites, ask us or

your agent of choice to set up the search for you. It doesn't cost the agent or you anything to do so.

In previous years I've published statistics showing how well listings sell in the winter. Look for them at [www.JimSmithColumns.com](http://www.JimSmithColumns.com).

### REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH, Realtor®

### Readers Offer More Suggestions on Making Homes Resistant to Wildfires

I was pleased to get several responses to last week's column on protecting homes from wildfires.

One reader suggested that building a house out of concrete might help. While this is a good idea, remember that such a house would still have a roof and openings for windows and doors that would need to be made as fire-resistant as possible.

Another reader suggested installing outdoor smoke detectors, something that hit close to home with a friend of mine. She said that a firefighter once rang her doorbell to warn her of an approaching wildfire. The moment she opened the door she smelled the smoke, but she hadn't smelled it when she was indoors. For that matter, why not cell-connect detectors in the forests?

That prompted me to wonder why building codes don't require smoke detectors in attached garages, but only require that the walls, door and ceiling be fire-rated to extend the time it takes for a garage fire to penetrate the living quarters.

Lastly, one reader pointed out that in a **fire-storm** no measures are likely to prevent a home from being consumed. So true.

Keep the suggestions coming. As with all my columns, last week's column is posted online at [www.GoldenREblog.com](http://www.GoldenREblog.com), where you can add your own comment.

## Affordable Westminster Condo Listed by Chuck Brown

Be sure to check out this move-in ready and affordable 2-bedroom/1bath condo at **2720 W 86th Ave. #69**, Westminster. The owners just completed a comprehensive remodel which included a stylish new kitchen, new bathroom, new tile and carpet flooring, and new paint. The outdoor covered balcony was recently renovated by the HOA. The location between Hwy. 36 and I-25 makes for an easy commute to Denver or Boulder. This unit is 1,000 sq. ft. and is located on the 2nd floor of the 3-story building. Take a narrated video tour at [www.WestminsterCondo.info](http://www.WestminsterCondo.info). Open house will be **Sunday, Dec. 9th, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.** Or call listing agent **Chuck Brown** at **303-885-7855** for a private showing.



Get this column in your inbox every Thursday. Send your request to [Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com](mailto:Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com).

**Jim Smith**

Broker/Owner

**Golden Real Estate, Inc.**

CALL OR TEXT: **303-525-1851**

OFFICE PHONE: **303-302-3636**

EMAIL: [Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com](mailto:Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com)

WEBSITE: [www.GoldenRealEstate.com](http://www.GoldenRealEstate.com)

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[www.JimSmithColumns.com](http://www.JimSmithColumns.com)

**17695 South Golden Road, Golden 80401**

