

Passing the Home Inspection – What Buyers Are Looking For

When you put your home up for sale you place it directly under the scrutiny of buyers. Superficial changes, such as new paint and resurfaced floors can do a lot to enhance your home's appeal, but when it comes to an offer, most serious buyers will seek the assistance of a professional home inspector to ensure that the house is sound beneath the surface.

During most home inspections there are over forty problem areas that will be examined for correct function and condition. It is important that you are aware of what areas buyers will examine, and what you can do to ensure that these are in proper working order. In most cases you'll be able to conduct a reasonable inspection yourself, if you know what to look for. This report will elaborate on some of the more important home inspection points, and will include information on:

- Home Inspection areas and what to look for
- How to make sure your home is as good beneath the surface as it is above

Home Inspection

Selling your home can be a difficult job, especially since you're competing against hundreds of other properties. It's important that you ensure that your home is in top condition, and doing a pre-inspection in anticipation of buyers doing the same is extremely important. Below are some areas that you should inspect:

Plumbing

Plumbing is of high priority when it comes to home inspections. Defective plumbing is classified in three ways namely leaking, clogging, and corrosion. A visual inspection will detect leaks and corrosion on pipes. Turning on all faucets in the highest bathroom and then flushing the toilet can gauge water pressure. The sound of water flowing through your pipes often indicates that the pipes are undersized. Additionally, if water coming from the pipes is dirty or contains debris, then the pipes are most likely rusting. The home inspector will evaluate all of these.

Damp or Wet Basement

The basement or crawl space is often the most revealing area in the building and usually provides a general picture of how the building works.

An inspector will check your walls for a powdery white mineral deposit a few inches off the floor, and will look to see if things you store right on your basement floor have suffered any moisture-related damage. Mildew odours are also a red flag for home inspectors. Difficult to eliminate, and indicative of other problems, an inspector will certainly be conscious of them.

Depending on severity and location it could cost you between \$400 and \$1,100 to seal a crack in your basement foundation. Another option is to add a sump pump and pit, which could cost around \$750-\$1,000. Finally complete waterproofing of an average 3-bedroom home could cost between \$5,000 and \$15,000. It's important to factor these costs into the calculation of what you want to net on the sale of your home.

Damp Attic Spaces

Just as detrimental to a home seller as basement dampness are mould and mildew problems in the attic. Improper ventilation, insulation and vapour barriers can cause water and moisture to accumulate in the attic. This moisture and associated mould and mildew can lead to premature wear of the roof, structure and building materials. Oftentimes costs associated with fixing this damage can be in excess of \$2,500.

Roofing Problems

The major problem associated with roofing problems is leakage, which can occur for a variety of reasons. Physical deterioration of asphalt shingles, mechanical damage from a windstorm or ice build-up as a result of poor drainage are all common causes of roofing issues. Leaky gutters and downspouts can also damage siding and exterior walls. Remember that it is only a matter of time before external damage becomes an internal problem.

Rotting Wood

Rotting wood, an issue particularly prevalent in older homes, can occur in many places such as door or window frames, trim, siding, decks and fences. Building inspectors will oftentimes probe the wood to check its integrity – and are particularly skeptical of woodwork that has been freshly painted.

Masonry Work

Brickwork commonly succumbs to water damage, minor ground and foundation settling and a host of other time-related changes. Redoing brickwork can be expensive, but when left unattended can sag, warp or even collapse. It's particularly important to inspect your chimney for signs of moisture damage and structural integrity as problems in this area can lead to falling bricks and collapsing roof stacks.

Inadequate Wiring and Electrical Systems

Inadequate wiring can occur in many forms. Home inspectors will look at octopus plugs and extension cables as indications of inadequate circuits and potential fire hazards. Also your home should have a minimum of 100 amps service, and this should be clearly marked. All wiring should be copper or aluminium.

Unsafe or Over Fused Electrical Circuits

Unsafe electrical conditions are created when more amperage is drawn from a circuit than is intended. 15 Amp circuits are the most common in typical homes, although larger circuits are used for appliances such as stoves and dryers.

Older homes will also contain fuse panels rather than circuit breakers. Replacing a fuse panel with a circuit panel can often cost hundreds of dollars, but will be a factor that the home inspector will examine.

Poor Heating and Cooling Systems

A home inspector will scrutinize heating and cooling systems for efficiency and performance.

Insufficient insulation, and an inadequate or poorly functioning heating system, are the most common causes of poor heating. A home inspector will check the age of your furnace to see if it exceeds the typical life span of 15-25 years. Additionally, in a forced air gas system, the inspector will place the heat exchanger under particular scrutiny examining for cracks and damage as a potential source of carbon monoxide in your home. If the heat exchanger is damaged it must be replaced as it cannot be repaired.

Cooling systems are of equal importance. A home inspector will examine your air conditioning unit to evaluate size, installation, noisiness, dehumidification and cooling ability. A home inspector will pay particular attention to the exterior compressor/condenser units to make sure they are free of debris and have sufficient room in which to operate.

Adequate Security Features

A home inspector will examine your home for proper locks on windows and patio doors, dead bolts on the doors, smoke and even carbon monoxide detectors in every bedroom and on every level. Installing these components can add to your costs, but will demonstrate an adherence to basic security standards in your home. A purchased security system will also be examined.

Structural/Foundation Problems

An inspector will most definitely examine the underlying footing and foundation of your home. A cracked foundation or unstable footing can cost thousands in your home's value.