

## Perception is Reality with Real Estate

There are very few things more frustrating to those in the real estate world than listening to all the griping, complaining, and negative publicity regarding the current real estate market. All the media reports is that the world is coming to an end (from a real estate standpoint). As consumers absorb all of this negative publicity, they are left with but one conclusion... real estate stinks right now. Perception is reality, and that could not be more evident than it is here in the Show-Me State.

The current real estate market is just one example of perception as reality. As a Realtor, what is especially frustrating is the fact that while the overall sales numbers are down nationally when compared to the past few years, the local real estate market is still quite strong. In fact, if you disregard the last 4-5 years and compare 2007/2008 to every other year, you will find that the homes are selling at a pretty high rate, and homeowners are still bringing in very solid prices. There doesn't seem to be anyone that wants to talk about this, though. The negative publicity bombardment has overwhelmed people's senses. Especially in a smaller market (like Rolla, Missouri), the shift in market conditions are much less extreme. So, for us, the highs and lows of real estate are much less severe.

Another excellent example of perception being reality in real estate is the concept of curb appeal. I can't tell you how many times I have driven someone out to look at a home and before we even pulled into the driveway, they told me to keep going to the next home. The homeowner may have spent countless hours and dollars remodeling a home and pouring their sweat equity into it, but because the siding was in bad shape, or the yard wasn't mowed, the buyer will never see what's behind the front door. People see a rough exterior and assume the inside is a mirror image of that.

Also consider the concept of cleanliness. When a potential buyer is previewing a home and there are toys and clothes all over the floor with dirty dishes sitting in the sink, many times the buyer assumes that there are other "hidden" issues with the home. They assume that if a homeowner doesn't take care of their home in the minute, day-to-day tasks, they must not take care of the larger issues either. Buyers don't take into consideration the fact that you were out of town until late last night and had to rush to get the kids out the door for school and yourself for work. The assumption is that the condition of the home is a reflection of the homeowner. This is oftentimes not the case, but perception is reality in real estate.

So, when you hear more gloom and doom reports about the national real estate market, remember that perception is reality. Here in mid-Missouri, the sky is not falling; in fact, people are still buying and selling homes quite regularly. No matter what the "state of the economy," homes will sell and there will always be plenty of buyers out looking for their dream home. Sure, there are also highs and lows, but at any given point, it is neither as good nor as bad as it seems. Although perception may be reality in real estate, what you perceive is not always the truth.