A RESOURCE FOR HAMILTON HOME SELLERS

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELLING A HOME IN HAMILTON

See Your Home the Way Buyers Will.

A research-backed guide to what buyers notice, and why it matters.

WHAT BUYERS NOTICE.

WHY IT MATTERS.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS.



CONTENTS

Inside This Guide

	Introduction: Every Home Tells a Story How to read the evidence tags	03
01	**Price Is the First Message** Anchoring, precise or round pricing, search ranges	05
02	**The Scroll** The lead photo, split-second judgments, how buyers look at listings	07
03	**The Full Listing** Specific language, readability, floor plans	08
04	**The Arrival** Curb appeal, the halo effect, the front door	09
05	**The Walkthrough, Space by Space** Styling, imagined ownership, touch and scent, every space at a glance	11
06	**Pre-Listing Improvements and Inspections** Payback by project size, why the smallest fixes matter most, the pre-listing inspection	14
07	**The Last Impression** The peak-end rule, ending the showing well, homes judged in sequence	16
08	**The Seller's Own Psychology** The endowment effect, the purchase price, sweat equity	17
	Closing: The Guide in Brief The guide in brief and prep checklist	19

INTRODUCTION

Every Home Tells a Story

Buyers don't just inspect a house. They read it, and they start reading long before they open the front door.

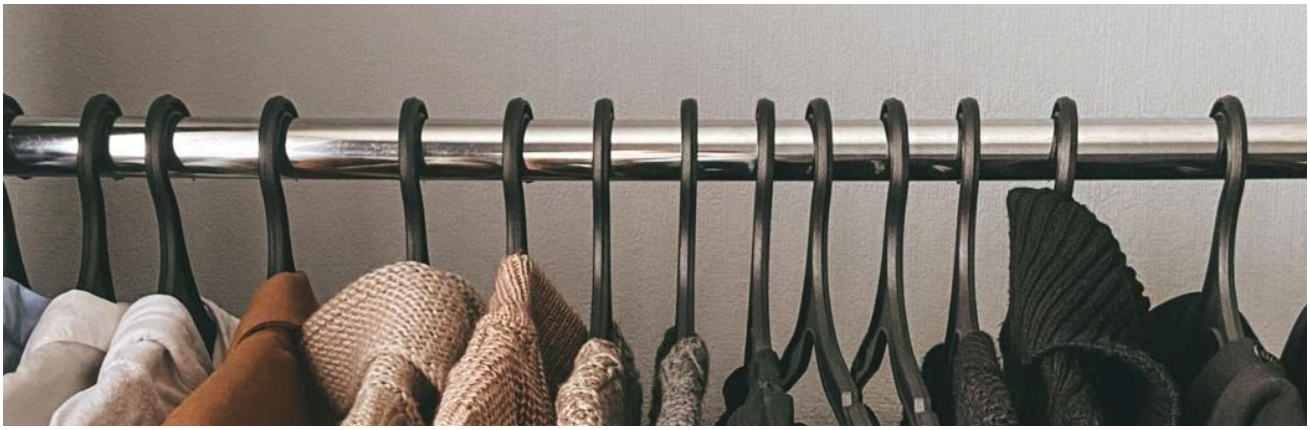
I recently toured a home that had been mostly decluttered. But one closet held a row of empty hangers in three or four different styles, a couple of boxes left askew for no clear reason, and a few things on the floor. Nothing in that closet was broken. Yet as a REALTOR® who also works with buyers, I walked away with a question: if this seller wasn't careful about presenting the home when the stakes were this high, how carefully did they look after it all those years?

That question is what this guide is about. Every listing photo, every room, every price and every page of an inspection report sends a message. Buyers piece those messages into a story about the home, and the story shapes what they're willing to pay.

Why research

There's plenty of advice about selling a home. Much of it is opinion dressed up as fact. This guide checks each recommendation against published research: some about real estate, much from psychology and consumer behaviour, and some from close to home, including research from Carleton University in Ottawa and the University of Guelph.

Where the research supports common wisdom, the guide says so. Where it contradicts it, the guide says that too. And where no one has studied a question directly, the guide notes the gap rather than filling it with a guess.



INTRODUCTION

How to Read the Evidence Tags

Every claim in this guide carries one of three tags.

REAL ESTATE STUDY	Research done on actual home sales, listings, buyers or agents. The most directly relevant evidence.
STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH	Well-established findings from psychology or consumer research, not specific to homes. The principle is solid; applying it to real estate is a short step.
REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION	A sensible conclusion drawn from research in a different setting, or from experience, that hasn't been tested directly. Worth acting on, with open eyes.

ONE MORE NOTE

Research describes what tends to happen across many people and many homes. Your home, your market and your buyers are specific. Use this guide alongside a conversation with your REALTOR® about your home, not instead of one.

SOURCES

The full list of sources, with links and study details, is on this guide's page at mikemccarthyrealty.com.

CHAPTER 01

Price Is the First Message

Your list price is the first thing most buyers learn about your home, and it frames everything they see afterward. It anchors their sense of value, decides who finds the listing at all, and even its last few digits can matter.

The price becomes the yardstick

Psychologists call it anchoring: the first number we see becomes the reference point we adjust from, and we rarely adjust enough. When experienced real estate agents valued the same home, those shown a higher list price valued it higher, even though most said the list price hadn't influenced them (Northcraft and Neale, 1987).

— REAL ESTATE STUDY

If seasoned professionals anchor on the list price, buyers do too.

Precise or round? It depends on your market

Popular advice says to price precisely, $649,900 instead of $650,000. The research says that's only half right.

- **In a buyer's market**, where offers usually come in below asking, precise prices were linked to selling prices closer to the list price (Thomas, Simon and Kadiyali, 2010). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

- **In a seller's market**, where offers come in above asking, the effect flips: in Amsterdam, round asking prices were linked to selling prices about 0.6% higher (Leib et al., 2021). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

A precise number makes buyers think in smaller steps, so offers land closer to asking. That helps below asking and hurts above it.

Price decides who sees the home

Buyers search online with price filters. A home listed just above a common search ceiling can drop out of searches by buyers who would happily pay that price. No published study has measured the exact effect, but the mechanics are straightforward. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

IN HAMILTON

Comparables and search ranges both work neighbourhood by neighbourhood. A home on the Mountain competes in a different market than one in the Lower City, Dundas, Ancaster, Waterdown or Stoney Creek, and a price that sits comfortably in one area's range can sit outside the range buyers use in the next. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

MYTH OR EVIDENCE?

"Price it high, we can always come down"

The evidence is more mixed than either side usually admits.

- **What supports pricing higher.** Higher list prices were linked to slightly higher sale prices, but the gain was small: about $117 to $163 for listing 10 to 20% above comparable homes (Bucchianeri and Minson, 2013). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

- **What supports pricing right.** Brokerage data from Redfin suggests overpricing by 10% or more can add more than a month on market, and that price cuts carry a stigma. Redfin has a commercial stake in this message, so treat it as a strong signal, not settled science. — REAL ESTATE STUDY (INDUSTRY DATA)

The takeaway. A modestly ambitious price may anchor buyers slightly higher, but the costs of overpricing, such as more time on market, carrying costs and a listing that starts to look stale, can be much larger. The right price is ambitious enough to anchor well and realistic enough to sell while buyer interest is highest.



CHAPTER 02

The Scroll

Most buyers meet your home as one small photo on a phone screen, judged in a fraction of a second.

Judgments happen before thinking does

Ratings of web pages seen for 50 milliseconds closely matched longer viewing (Lindgaard et al., 2006), and half-second impressions matched 10-second ones (Tractinsky et al., 2006). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

Your lead photo is your 50 milliseconds, and a poor first impression is hard to reverse.
— REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION FROM WEBSITES TO LISTINGS

How buyers actually look at a listing

In an eye-tracking study, over 40% of participants never looked at the agent's remarks, and attention dropped after the first home (Seiler, Madhavan and Liechty, 2012). Most who skipped them were students; among actual buyers it was about 20%. More photos were linked to higher sale prices but longer time on market (Benefield, Cain and Johnson, 2011). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

Buyers can tell fixable from unfixable. Buyers judged pink walls differently from power lines, though fixable flaws still shape the first impression (Seiler, Madhavan and Liechty, 2012). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

MYTH OR EVIDENCE?

"Buyers will look past the photos and come see it anyway"

Mostly myth. Buyers rarely book a showing to see what the photos didn't show.
— STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH AND REAL ESTATE STUDY COMBINED

CHAPTER 03

The Full Listing

Once a photo earns the click, the listing has to answer a buyer's questions quickly and believably.

Specific beats vague

- Words for real features, such as "granite," "maple" and "gourmet," were linked to higher sale prices, while "fantastic" and "charming" had no effect and "spacious" was slightly negative (Levitt and Syverson, 2005). — REAL ESTATE STUDY
- Each feature mentioned was linked to a sale price just under 1% higher, but positive words like "beautiful" were also linked to slightly higher prices, which conflicts with the earlier finding (Goodwin, Waller and Weeks, 2014). — REAL ESTATE STUDY
- In more than 20,000 Canadian listings, homes with a "motivated" seller took 15% longer to sell, according to University of Guelph professor Paul Anglin; the study was reported in the news but doesn't appear to have been published. — REAL ESTATE STUDY
- Mentioning minor improvements like new paint or carpet was linked to marginally lower selling prices (Haag, Rutherford and Thomson, 2000). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

These studies show correlation, not cause, but the pattern is consistent: concrete features earn trust, and empty enthusiasm doesn't.

Easy to read feels more trustworthy. Information that's easier to read tends to be judged as more likeable and more true, whether or not it is (Alter and Oppenheimer, 2009). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

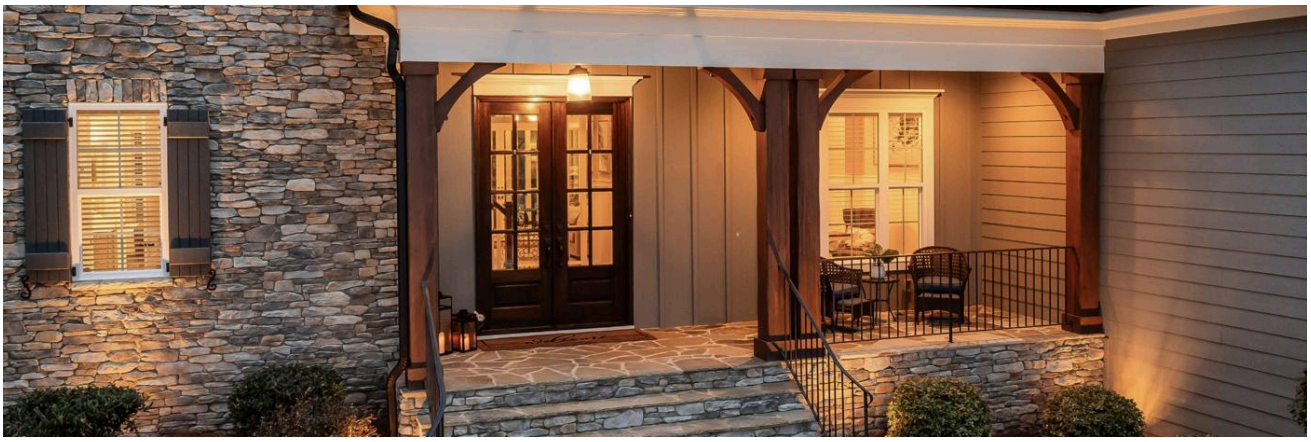
For a listing, that means short sentences, plain words and a clear order. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

Floor plans remove guesswork. In NAR's 2022 generational trends report, 55% of buyers rated floor plans "very useful," and in a UK Rightmove survey, over a third said they were less likely to enquire about a home without one. — REAL ESTATE STUDY (INDUSTRY SURVEYS)

MYTH OR EVIDENCE?

"Nobody reads the description"

Partly true. Many buyers skip the remarks, but the words that are there still correlate with price. Write for the skimmer. — REAL ESTATE STUDY



CHAPTER 04

The Arrival

The drive-up is the moment the online story meets reality. A strong exterior confirms what the photos promised and sets a warm tone for everything inside. A weak one plants doubt before the door opens.

Curb appeal has a measurable price

In the Denver area, a home's own curb appeal and its neighbours' together accounted for up to 7% of its sale price, more when the market was weak (Johnson, Tidwell and Villupuram, 2020). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

The scores reflected the whole exterior, including architecture, so not all of it is within a seller's control.

In Boston, a one standard deviation improvement in a home's appearance was linked to about $68,000 more in value at the average Boston price (Glaeser, Kincaid and Naik, 2018). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

Landscaping shapes perceived value

People perceived homes with good landscaping as worth 5% to 11% more, with plant size and design sophistication adding the most (Behe et al., 2005). — REAL ESTATE STUDY (SURVEY)

Shoppers likewise said they'd pay 9% to 12% more in business districts with good tree canopy (Wolf, 2005). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

Both measured perceived value, not actual sale prices.

The halo effect: one impression colours the rest

Students who saw an instructor act warmly rated him more favourably on everything, including traits that were identical, and didn't realize their feelings had affected their ratings (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977).

— STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

A buyer who arrives to a tidy walkway and a welcoming front door is primed to read the interior generously. A buyer who steps past peeling paint arrives looking for problems. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

The first seconds at the door

The front door is where buyers wait while their REALTOR® opens the lockbox. A clean door, working lights, a clear step and fresh hardware cost little and frame the moment of entry. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

MYTH OR EVIDENCE?

"Curb appeal is just cosmetic"

Myth. Curb appeal rarely changes how a home functions, but in the Denver study, a home's curb appeal together with its neighbours' accounted for up to 7% of sale price. Cosmetic doesn't mean minor.

— REAL ESTATE STUDY



CHAPTER 05

The Walkthrough, Space by Space

Inside, buyers are doing two things at once: imagining their life in the home, and looking for reasons not to buy it.

Styling sells: present the home like a product

Watch any ad for a sofa, a TV or even a coffee maker. The product never sits in a tired, dated room. It sits in a bright, sharpened space that feels a step above everyday life. Advertisers spend heavily on that setting because the setting is part of the message. A home for sale deserves the same treatment.

What the direct evidence says. Direct evidence on interior staging is thin. In NAR's 2025 survey, 83% of buyers' agents said staging made it easier for buyers to picture the home as theirs, but that records what agents believe, not measured prices. — REAL ESTATE STUDY (AGENT SURVEY)

The one controlled study found that staging didn't significantly change what home buyers said they'd pay, though it made the home feel more livable (Lane, Seiler and Seiler, 2015). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

It used virtual tours of one home and stated prices, and didn't measure clicks, showings or speed of sale. Co-author Michael Seiler put it this way: "I am definitely not ready to say spending money on staging would be a waste."

WHAT THE ADVERTISING AND RETAIL RESEARCH ADDS

None of these studies involved homes, so each is tagged for the research itself and for the step to real estate.

- **Space makes things look better.** The same products shown with more space around them were more appealing, and in a store test about twice as many shoppers bought (Sevilla and Townsend, 2016). It supports decluttering. — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH AND REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

- **Signs of other people put buyers off.** Shoppers rated a T-shirt lower when they believed someone else had touched it (Argo, Dahl and Morales, 2006). It supports depersonalizing.
  — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH AND REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION
- **Easy-to-imagine use raises interest.** Ads that made use easier to picture raised purchase intent, but only for appealing products (Elder and Krishna, 2012). It supports showing rooms in use, such as a set table. — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH AND REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION
- **Disorder doesn't always hurt.** A messy, low-stock shelf lowered interest in food but raised it for non-food items, where it signalled popularity (Castro, Morales and Nowlis, 2013).
  — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

The case for styling rests mostly on how first impressions, attention and imagined ownership work, not on direct proof that staging raises the price. That's still a strong case, and the steps it points to cost little.

> THE LINE TO HOLD
>
> Elevate the home, but don't misrepresent it. Digitally altered photos that hide flaws undermine trust the moment a buyer arrives, and any virtual staging should be clearly disclosed. The aim is a home that feels sharpened and inviting while still feeling authentic, not a showroom or a set.

Three ideas that apply to every room

Let buyers imagine owning it. Simply imagining owning a product increased people's sense of ownership and how much they'd pay (Peck and Shu, 2009). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

Someone else's photos and collections make that harder, and so does the owner's presence, one reason to leave during showings. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

What buyers touch matters. The same research found valuation depended partly on whether touching an object felt pleasant. Sticky, loose or grimy handles, taps and railings send an unpleasant signal at the moment of contact.
— STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH, APPLIED BY REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

Simple scents beat complex ones. Shoppers exposed to a simple orange scent spent about 20% more, while a complex blend had no effect (Herrmann et al., 2013). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

That's why baking cookies before a showing probably isn't worth it: baked goods are a complex scent that can make buyers wonder what's being covered. Clean and neutral is the safer target. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

Every space at a glance

- **Exterior and yard:** tidy beds, a defined seating area, repaired fences and a clean deck. Mature planting adds perceived value (Chapter 4).

- **Entry:** clear, bright and odour-free. This is where the halo effect starts working inside.
  — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

- **Kitchen and main living areas:** these rooms carry the most emotion. Buyers' agents ranked the living room most important to stage (37%), then the primary bedroom (34%) and kitchen (23%) in NAR's survey.
  — REAL ESTATE STUDY

- **Bedrooms and bathrooms:** depersonalize, put away anything private, and make taps, grout and fixtures spotless. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

- **Closets and cabinets:** observers judge conscientiousness from personal spaces, with neatness the key cue (Gosling et al., 2002). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

  A messy closet doesn't prove neglected systems, but buyers make the leap anyway.

- **Basement, garage and mechanical room:** deal with damp and odours at the source, clear access to the furnace and panel, and leave maintenance records out. Disclose latent defects as the law requires.
  — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

For room-by-room detail, see the Room-by-Room Checklists and the Hamilton Home Staging Guide.

> IN HAMILTON
>
> Much of Hamilton's housing is decades old, and buyers' inspectors know where to look: knob-and-tube or aluminum wiring, galvanized pipes, lead water service lines, older sewer lines, basement moisture, vermiculite and any current or former oil tank. Some can affect a buyer's insurance or financing. The City of Hamilton offers a free check of a home's water service line. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

MYTH OR EVIDENCE?

"Buyers can see past the clutter"

Mostly myth. No study shows buyers reliably mentally erase clutter. It hides the space buyers are paying for and sends the conscientiousness signal from the closet research. Clearing it can be harder than it sounds, especially with things that carry memories. Decluttering Your Home walks through it at a manageable pace. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

CHAPTER 06

Pre-Listing Improvements and Inspections

Before listing, sellers face two questions: what to fix, and what to leave. Small, visible, inexpensive work tends to pay back far better than big projects.

The smaller the job, the bigger the payback

Small jobs, under about $500. In two 2019 HomeLight surveys, top agents estimated the value added by common projects:

PROJECT	TYPICAL COST	ESTIMATED VALUE ADDED	RETURN
Deep cleaning	$167	$1,728	935%
Decluttering	$486	$2,584	432%
Lawn care service	$268	$1,211	352%
Fresh mulch	$340	$769	126%

Source: HomeLight Top Agent Insights, Q1 and Q2 2019. Return is the value added minus the cost, divided by the cost. High-end landscaping lost money, at about −9%. — REAL ESTATE STUDY (AGENT ESTIMATES)

Medium jobs, a few thousand dollars. A garage door replacement recovered an estimated 268%, a steel entry door 216%, refinished hardwood 147%, and professional staging an estimated $13,477 against a median $1,500 cost. — REAL ESTATE STUDY (INDUSTRY AND AGENT ESTIMATES)

Large jobs, tens of thousands. A major kitchen remodel recovered an estimated 51%, a bathroom 80% and a roof 68%, while a minor kitchen refresh recovered about 113%. The lesson: refresh, don't gut.

— REAL ESTATE STUDY (INDUSTRY ESTIMATES)

These are U.S. estimates, not measured prices, but the direction is consistent.

Why the smallest fixes matter most

Small disorder sends a big signal. A loose pull, a dripping faucet or a burnt-out bulb costs little to fix. When a wall near a bike rack was covered in graffiti, 69% of people littered, compared with 33% when it was clean (Keizer, Lindenberg and Steg, 2008). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

In a home, a dripping tap tells a buyer that small things weren't attended to, and invites them to wonder about the big things they can't see. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

Small flaws add up to buyer fatigue. Every flaw a buyer notices becomes an item on a mental to-do list, and attention is limited. A dozen small flaws can leave a buyer feeling a home is "a lot of work," even when no single item is serious. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

Buyers are wary of maintenance. In one survey, 42% of buyers with regrets said they'd buy a home needing less maintenance, and in a Zillow and Thumbtack survey, millennial buyers expected about $10,000 to $15,000 in move-in costs versus about $26,900 in reality. — REAL ESTATE STUDY (INDUSTRY SURVEYS)

Repairs get priced in either way. Homes tend to be restored to a "normally maintained" state each time they sell, with that cost built into the price (Knight, Miceli and Sirmans, 2000). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

Unfixed items come off the price, often at the buyer's estimate.

Paint, wallpaper and fixtures. Neutral paint sharpens photos, dated wallpaper dates the whole room, and new hardware is cheap and exactly what buyers touch. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

The pre-listing inspection: from 50 items to a focused 20

A pre-listing inspection shows what a buyer's inspector will find before it becomes a negotiating surprise. If it finds 50 mostly minor items, fixing enough to bring the list to about 20 makes the report far less overwhelming, without making it look too good to be true.

Mixing trivial details with important ones makes judgments less clear-cut (Nisbett, Zukier and Lemley, 1981).
— STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

A small negative after strong positives can even raise evaluations (Ein-Gar, Shiv and Tormala, 2012), so applying it to a report is *reasonable extrapolation*. No one has tested a 50-item report against a 20-item one.

Sellers aren't obliged to fix anything an inspection finds. Disclose latent defects as Ontario law requires, and get legal advice if you're unsure. Chapter 7 of the Hamilton Home Seller's Guide covers disclosure, and the Hamilton Home Inspection Guide covers how buyers read a report.

HOW I HANDLE IT

On every home I list, I arrange and pay for a pre-listing inspection. It helps us price correctly and means you never learn something about your home after the buyers do. It doesn't replace a buyer's own inspection.

MYTH OR EVIDENCE?

"Fix everything before you list"

Myth. Major projects usually return less than they cost, and no seller must fix everything an inspection finds. Small, visible, inexpensive fixes pay back best.
— REAL ESTATE STUDY (INDUSTRY ESTIMATES) AND REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

CHAPTER 07

The Last Impression

Buyers remember the high point, the low point and how a showing ended, then compare your home with the others they saw.

Memory keeps the peak and the end

People who held a hand in cold water preferred to repeat a longer trial that ended slightly less painfully (Kahneman, Fredrickson, Schreiber and Redelmeier, 1993). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

Colonoscopy patients given a few milder minutes at the end rated the whole procedure as less unpleasant and were more likely to return (Redelmeier, Katz and Kahneman, 2003). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

A 2022 review supported this peak-end rule but found the average of the whole experience predicted judgments about as well, so the rest of the showing still counts (Alaybek et al., 2022).

Plan the peak, and end well

- **Create a clear high point.** Make the home's best feature clean, well lit and styled. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION
- **Hunt down the low point.** Fix a musty smell or stain, or make sure it's understood and disclosed. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION
- **The last room and the way out.** Buyers often finish at the entry. Make the last room, front hall and porch as sharp as the first impression. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION
- **Something to take with them.** A feature sheet or floor plan helps buyers recall the home accurately when several homes start to blur. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

Buyers judge homes in sequence. In Eurovision, figure skating and the Idol series, ratings rose the later a contestant performed (Bruine de Bruin, 2005; Page and Page, 2010). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

A strong peak and a clean ending hold up better in comparison. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

MYTH OR EVIDENCE?

"Only the first impression matters"

Myth. A showing that ends poorly is remembered for how it ended. — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH



CHAPTER 08

The Seller's Own Psychology

Every chapter so far has been about how buyers think. This one is about how sellers think, because the same human tendencies shape sellers too. None of this is a criticism. These patterns show up in nearly everyone.

Owning something makes it feel more valuable

Students given a coffee mug asked roughly twice as much to part with it as others would pay (Kahneman, Knetsch and Thaler, 1990). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

The exact gap is debated, but the endowment effect is widely accepted.

Owners and buyers focus on different things. A seller walks through the kitchen and remembers holiday dinners. A buyer walks through the same kitchen and counts the dated cabinets. — REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

The pull of the purchase price

Boston condo owners facing a loss set higher asking prices, sold for somewhat more and took much longer to sell, especially owner-occupants (Genesove and Mayer, 2001). — REAL ESTATE STUDY

A study of Oslo listings found the same pattern, even stronger. — REAL ESTATE STUDY

Mayer's own advice was blunt: if you want to sell, list at the market price. Buyers may know what you paid, but it doesn't change what they'll pay.

IN HAMILTON

In Hamilton, the average residential sale price fell from about $1,021,000 in February 2022 to about $718,000 in February 2026, a drop of about 30% (MLS® System data, Cornerstone Association of REALTORS®, City of Hamilton, residential, average sale price). Many owners who bought near the peak now face exactly the situation the Boston and Oslo studies describe.

— REAL ESTATE STUDY FOR THE PATTERN; THE LOCAL FIGURES ARE MARKET DATA

What we build, we overvalue

People who assembled IKEA boxes or built Lego sets valued their own creations about as highly as experts' work, but only when they finished them (Norton, Mochon and Ariely, 2012). — STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

The basement you finished yourself feels worth more to you than to a buyer seeing it for the first time.

— REASONABLE EXTRAPOLATION

MYTH OR EVIDENCE?

"My home is worth what I've put into it"

Myth. Buyers pay for what a home is worth to them today, and even professional renovations rarely recover their full cost (Chapter 6). That feeling is human. It just isn't a pricing method.

— REAL ESTATE STUDY AND STRONG GENERAL RESEARCH

Seeing your home the way buyers will

- **Use outside evidence.** Recent comparable sales describe what buyers are actually paying.
- **Walk through as a stranger would.** Start from the street and the listing photos, and look for the flaws you've stopped noticing.
- **Separate memories from the product.** Depersonalizing helps you see the home as something you're selling. Decluttering Your Home helps with the hardest things to let go.
- **Lean on a second opinion.** A REALTOR®, a stager or an inspector sees the home without years of attachment.

SUMMARY

The Guide in Brief

Price is the first message. It anchors value and decides who sees the home. Precise or round depends on the market. CHAPTER 1

First impressions are fast. Impressions form in a fraction of a second, and many buyers skim listings rather than read them. CHAPTER 2

Specific words build trust. Concrete features beat vague praise, and a floor plan removes guesswork. CHAPTER 3

Curb appeal has a real price. In one study, a home's curb appeal and its neighbours' accounted for up to 7% of sale price. CHAPTER 4

Style the home like a product, and let buyers imagine owning it. Depersonalize, fix what buyers touch, keep scent clean and neutral, and treat closets as part of the showing. CHAPTER 5

The smaller the fix, the bigger the payback. Deep cleaning, decluttering and minor repairs beat major renovations, and small flaws signal neglect and tire buyers out. CHAPTER 6

Endings stick. Plan the high point, remove the low point and treat the route out like the route in. CHAPTER 7

Sellers are human too. Ownership, loss aversion and sweat equity make every home feel worth more to its owner. CHAPTER 8

None of this guarantees a particular result. Markets move, and every home is different. But where the research is clear, it's worth acting on, and where it isn't, it's worth knowing that too.

Related resources

Hamilton Home Seller's Guide →

Hamilton Home Staging Guide →

What Does It Cost to Sell a Home in Hamilton? →

Room-by-Room Checklists →

Decluttering Your Home →

Hamilton Home Inspection Guide →

Our Selling Services →

SUMMARY

Prep Checklist

BEFORE LISTING

- [ ] Set a price from comparable sales, and decide precise or round based on whether homes are selling under or over asking
- [ ] Check where your price sits against common search ranges
- [ ] Consider a pre-listing inspection to choose your fixes
- [ ] Deep clean, declutter, and fix the small things: pulls, taps, caulking, railings, bulbs
- [ ] Paint dated or bold colours, remove wallpaper, and hold off on major renovations
- [ ] Disclose latent defects as Ontario law requires

OUTSIDE

- [ ] Mow, trim, mulch, sweep walks and clear the porch
- [ ] Refresh the front door and check that exterior lights work

FOR PHOTOS AND THE LISTING

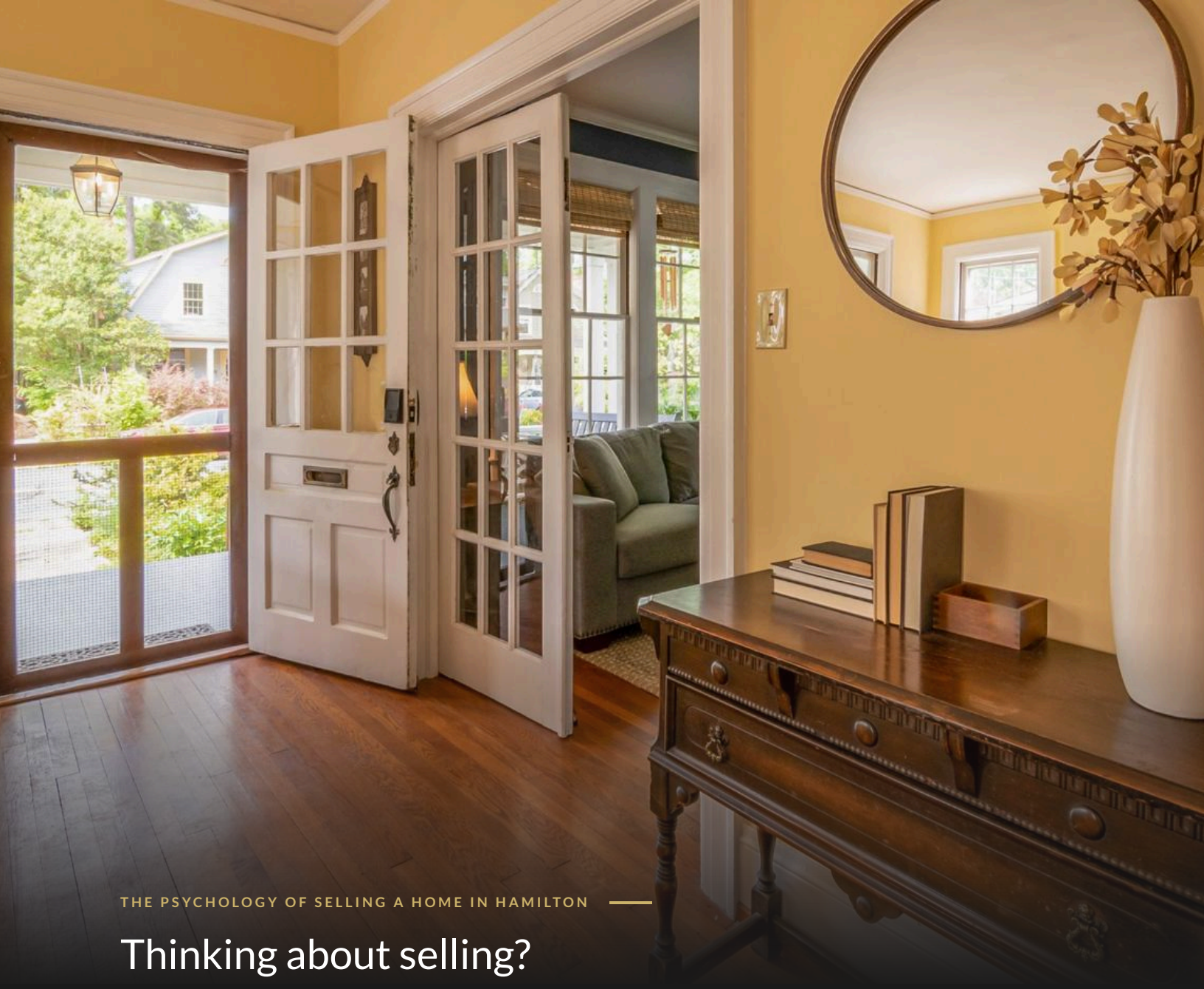
- [ ] Style rooms to elevate, never misrepresent, and disclose any virtual staging
- [ ] Choose a strong lead photo, weighted toward interiors
- [ ] Describe specific features, avoid “motivated,” and include a floor plan

FOR SHOWINGS

- [ ] Put away personal photos and private items
- [ ] Keep scent clean and neutral, and turn on lights
- [ ] Make the best feature shine and fix or address the low point
- [ ] Make the last room and porch as sharp as the first impression, and leave a feature sheet

MINDSET

- [ ] Set aside what you paid, and value renovations by what buyers will pay
- [ ] Use outside evidence and a second opinion



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELLING A HOME IN HAMILTON

Thinking about selling?

A conversation now can shape how buyers see your home later.

CALL OR TEXT
(289) 919-5442

EMAIL
mike@mikemccarthyrealty.com

ONLINE
mikemccarthyrealty.com

Contact Mike →

Mike McCarthy REALTY | real

Mike McCarthy, REALTOR® · Real Broker Ontario Ltd., Brokerage

This guide provides general information only and is not legal, financial, tax or mortgage advice. Programs, rules and costs change; confirm details for your situation with the appropriate professionals. Not intended to solicit sellers already under contract with a brokerage.