



PLANNING GUIDE FOR DOWNSIZERS

Fresh Start Checklist



Are you moving on to your next adventure in life or clearing an entire house for sale? Orchestrating a complete home transition can be a complex project, but it doesn't have to be overwhelming. With a good system, a little planning, and support from professionals, you can preserve the belongings you value the most, sell your home for top dollar, and simplify both your move and your life.

1

Manage Your Belongings

Decide what to take to your new home and feel good about what you leave behind.

2

Prepare Your Home for Market

Prioritize repairs and upgrades that will help your home sell for top dollar, plus keep projects on track and on budget.

3

Sell Your Home

Show your property at its best, market your home to qualified buyers, negotiate favorable terms, and approach the transaction with confidence.

4

Move your Belongings

Engage trustworthy professionals and use dependable systems and tried-and-true tools to track your belongings, and enjoy a seamless transition into your new space.

Don't Go It Alone

Home Transition Pros will help you develop a detailed project plan, completely customized to both your needs and wishes—down to every discriminating detail. We'll give you guidance on what tasks are worth tackling and where you should spend time, energy, and money to get top dollar for your home. We're honored to give you VIP access to our expansive, nationwide network of reputable and reasonable professionals who we truly trust to help with any aspect of your project.



Manage Your Belongings

Sorting, purging, and editing years' worth of belongings can be demanding— physically, mentally, and emotionally. However, most people feel relief and an enormous sense of freedom when it's done. Follow these pro tips to preserve your most useful and valuable possessions while efficiently liquidating the rest.

Start as early as possible.

The more time you allocate to sorting your belongings, the more control you will have over their final destination. Most people prefer to have a few months to prepare—some think they need more than a year to get their homes on the market. In truth, an efficient home closeout can happen within weeks—even in times of crisis. Set out your plan as soon as you've made the decision to move and set realistic deadlines based on your schedule and abilities. Expedited and last-minute services will typically cost more than those scheduled well in advance.

Stop the flow of “stuff” into your home.

Resist or remove the temptations to shop. Say 'no' to store sales. Turn a blind eye to ads everywhere — TV, radio, newspaper, on paper and electronically. Unsubscribe from catalogs, email blasts, and social media pages that want to sell and give you that 'stuff'. Let your friends and family know you would prefer intangible gifts. Return any borrowed items, and tell your family members to take care of the things in your home that belongs to them. Set deadlines to donate, distribute and dispose—and stick to it!

Manage Your Belongings



Protect your important documents.

Compiling and securing important legal and financial documents should be one of your first tasks. Once assembled, consider scanning and sharing these files with a trusted friend or family member. Original paper copies should be kept secure and close at hand throughout your move.

Key documents may include:

- ☐ Legal Identification
- ☐ Birth/Death Certificates
- ☐ Marriage License
- ☐ Name Change Documentation
- ☐ Passports
- ☐ Driver's License

Estate Planning Documents

- ☐ Revocable Living Trust
- ☐ Advanced Medical Directives
- ☐ Last Will and Testament
- ☐ Financial Power of Attorney
- ☐ Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order

Insurance Policies and Beneficiary Designations

- ☐ Life Insurance
- ☐ Health Insurance
- ☐ Long Term Care Insurance
- ☐ Disability Insurance
- ☐ Property/Homeowner Insurance
- ☐ Vehicle Insurance
- ☐ Umbrella/Liability Insurance

Bank Statements

- ☐ Checking Accounts
- ☐ Brokerage Account
- ☐ Investment Statements (*List and Location of Assets*)
- ☐ Retirement Accounts (*IRAs, 401(k)s, and Annuities*)
- ☐ Escrow Accounts
- ☐ Personal Loans
- ☐ Leases
- ☐ Mortgages/Lines of Credit
- ☐ Credit Bureau Reports

Proof of Ownership Documents

- ☐ Deeds for any Real Estate
- ☐ Original Automobile and Boat Titles
- ☐ Stock and Bond Certificates
- ☐ Prenuptial/Postnuptial Agreements
- ☐ Assisted Living Lease or Contract
- ☐ Cemetery Deeds

Business Documents

- ☐ Corporate, LLC, or Partnership Documents
- ☐ Business Licenses
- ☐ Contracts
- ☐ Employment Agreements
- ☐ Business Licenses

Proof of Ownership Documents

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Manage Your Belongings

Create a vision for your next home.

The room dimensions and floorplan of your next home will be an invaluable tool. Think about the activities you enjoy most and what items you'll need to pursue your interests. Identify the belongings that are most useful and/or loved, and measure your furniture to ensure everything you plan to move will actually fit in your next home.

✂ TOOL: Home Room Sizes and Floorplan

Donate, distribute and dispose.

Shave moving costs by unloading clutter first. Begin a routine of looking for obvious items you can dispose of now: extra household items, outdated paperwork, duplicate household items, old clothing, magazines, books, etc. There are some charities that will pick up items, or you can add a weekly drop-off to your routine. Take note that donation sites do NOT want any items that are broken, dirty or outdated. Items that are not suitable for donation should be recycled or disposed of.

✂ TOOL: Donation Planning Worksheet

Make a plan for your sentimental or valuable possessions.

Identify and document intended recipients for treasured items, and research potential value for items you'd like to sell.

✂ TOOL: Valuable Item Tracker



PRO TIP:

Try on ALL of the clothes that you plan to bring to your new home.

PROS WE KNOW:

- ▶ Professional Organizers/
Moving Coordinators
- ▶ Moving & Storage
- ▶ Auction House and Estate
Sale Specialists
- ▶ Donation Pickup/Dropoff
- ▶ Junk Removal
- ▶ Recycling & Shredding

Ask for help.

Most households will require a variety of channels to disburse belongings appropriately. Friends and family can be a great resource, but many people find they save time, money, and energy by enlisting a professional organizer or moving manager who has the expertise and manpower to complete the job efficiently. Options for organizers, online auctions, estate sales, and junk removal/recycling are plentiful as are services who offer whole-house cleanouts.

Prepare Your Home for Market



Now that you've reduced the contents of your home, it's time to determine the best selling strategy.

Fixing Up vs. Selling As-Is

In most cases, general repairs and small improvements in a home will pay off with a quicker sale, a higher selling price, and more favorable terms. However, sellers with very tight timelines or a home with significant problems may choose to sell "As-Is". These types of properties are typically sold to investors quickly and with less hassle, but often sell for far less than the market value of the same home in good condition. Your Realtor will assess your property and the overall market when guiding this decision.

PRO TIP:

Check out the competition by attending Open Houses in your area. Note the asking price, the condition, the décor, and how long the homes have been on the market.

Addressing Deferred Maintenance

While some buyers will see potential in a home with outdated fixtures or décor, fundamental problems will rarely be overlooked. View your entire property with a critical eye and look for these "red flags" that will cause concern for most buyers:

- ▶ Evidence of water damage anywhere in the house
- ▶ Cracks in the walls or ceiling
- ▶ A roof that leaks or shows age
- ▶ Old wiring and electrical fixtures
- ▶ Appliances that are more than 12 years old
- ▶ Broken windows or doors
- ▶ Code violations or safety hazards
- ▶ Obviously malfunctioning systems

✂ **TOOL:** Use the **Home Systems and Appliance Inventory** to document the age and condition of your home's systems and appliances

Prepare Your Home for Market



Modest Improvements Really Pay Off

In most cases, major renovations are not necessary to sell your home and may even cost you more in the long run. Instead, we recommend focusing on minor upgrades and strategic repairs so that your property looks its best in photography, from the street, and, of course, inside.

✂ **TOOL:** Use the **Home Condition Inventory** to record the room dimensions, fixtures and finishes in your home. Easy access to this information will be an invaluable tool when planning your project, estimating costs, buying supplies and securing services.

Typical Upgrades to Refresh a Home for Market:

- ▶ Remove overgrown shrubs and trim tree limbs.
- ▶ Refresh your home's entrance with paint, lighting, door mat and a new mailbox.
- ▶ Replace dated light fixtures inside and out.
- ▶ Replace all door hardware, inside and out.
- ▶ Replace bathroom faucets, shower curtain rods, and toilet seats.
- ▶ Replace worn, dirty, or outdated flooring.
- ▶ Remove dated window treatments.
- ▶ Repair and paint walls, trim, and ceiling in neutral colors.
- ▶ Remove "extra" furniture, leaving only the basics.
- ▶ Make sure the entire home is "Q-tip" clean.

PRO TIP:

Don't rush to market without completing all of the necessary decluttering, repairs, and cleaning. The very first buyers who visit your home are your best prospects.

PROS WE KNOW

- ▶ Handyman
- ▶ Painter
- ▶ Electrician
- ▶ Plumber
- ▶ Flooring Specialist
- ▶ General Contractor
- ▶ Roofer
- ▶ Chimney Specialist
- ▶ HVAC Specialist
- ▶ Tub Refinisher
- ▶ Carpet/Upholstery cleaner
- ▶ House Cleaner
- ▶ Power Washing/ Window Washing
- ▶ Landscaper



Selling Your Home



Now that you've decluttered and done the necessary repairs and upgrades, it's time to watch your hard work pay off and rely on your Realtor to find a qualified buyer, secure a contract quickly, and close the deal successfully.

Your Realtor will:

- ▶ Make a price recommendation based the specific features of your home and current market data.
- ▶ Clearly communicate all obligations and responsibilities in the listing agreement.
- ▶ Propose a plan to promote your property through the most effective channels in your market.
- ▶ Explain anticipated proceeds and the costs of selling.
- ▶ Handle mandatory disclosures and reports as required by law.
- ▶ Negotiate favorable terms and secure legally sound contracts.
- ▶ Oversee resolution of the home inspection, appraisal, and other contingencies to provide a clear path to closing.

Are You Authorized to Sell?

If you have been recently widowed or divorced while in your home or are tasked with closing an estate, seek counsel from an experienced attorney who specialize in estates and the transfer of property. Don't skip this step: selling under these circumstances is complicated and could create major legal issues, costs, and stress for you down the road.

Helpful Documents

The transfer of real estate is a complex transaction that requires a great deal of documentation and verification to insure a legally sound transaction.

Get a jump on the paperwork process by locating these commonly requested documents:

- ☐ Current mortgage statement or payoff documentation
- ☐ Homeowner insurance records and claims
- ☐ Homeowner Association documents
- ☐ Documents from the last sale of the home: sales contract, survey, title insurance, copy of the deed
- ☐ Manuals and warranties for appliances and systems
- ☐ Building permits for work done while you owned the home
- ☐ Receipts for capital improvements made while you owned the home

Selling Your Home



Marketing Your Home

Although your Realtor will carry out a comprehensive marketing strategy, there are several things you should consider to make the process even more successful:

- ▶ **Go for the “model home” look with minimal furnishing and accessories.** Appeal to a wider range of buyers by packing up family photos, mementos, and other personal items.
- ▶ **Have a discussion with your Realtor about staging strategies.** Decide if professional staging is needed based on your current furnishings, timeline, and budget.
- ▶ **Most buyers will get the first impression of your home online.** On photography day, make sure your home is 100% decluttered, completely clean, and looking its best.
- ▶ **Tell everyone you know that you are selling your home.**

Showing Your Home

If you are living in your home while it's on the market, multiple showings can be disruptive to normal routines. However, strive to present your home at its very best every time. If it's priced right and shows well, the short-term inconvenience will pay off with a quick offer. Refer to the Ready to Show Checklist for tips.

Ready to Show Checklist:

- ☐ Have an empty box or basket handy to quickly collect clutter from countertops, floors, and other flat surfaces and to put in an easy-to-find spot like the garage, utility room, or large closet.
- ☐ Make sure beds are made, pillows are fluffed, and clothes are put away.
- ☐ Sweep/spot clean hardwood and tile floors as needed and vacuum rugs and carpets.
- ☐ Trash and recycling bins should be tidy and odor-free.
- ☐ Keep supplies handy for maintaining cleanliness and touching up at the last-minute in the kitchen and bathrooms. Wipe up spills as they happen and put toiletries away when you're done using them.
- ☐ Lock away and hide all cash, jewelry and small valuables.
- ☐ If weather allows, open windows beforehand to circulate fresh air.
- ☐ Ideally, pets and their supplies should be unseen. Pet areas should be clean and odor-free.
- ☐ Open all drapes and shades during the day to let in as much light as possible, but screen out unappealing views.
- ☐ Turn on the lights — especially dark corners and hallways.
- ☐ Open all doors between rooms to give an inviting feeling—and close cabinets and closet doors.
- ☐ Make marketing materials visible by putting them on a table near the front door or a kitchen counter. Use a stand if space is an issue.
- ☐ Leave the house—go for a drive (or a walk if you don't have a car) so buyers get comfortable picturing themselves in your home.

Selling Your Home



Negotiating a Contract

Your Realtor will present any offers for your home immediately. Keep an open mind: early offers are often the best, and you will likely have to weigh variables such as home sale contingencies, length of time to close, and seller subsidies in addition to selling price. Remember, you have the final say when accepting an offer. Once you have agreed to a price, your Realtor will work on your behalf to secure a contract that not only benefits your interests but also has a good chance of closing without snags.

Getting to Closing

Once a contract has been signed, there will be several weeks during which you'll be asked to accommodate reasonable access to the house for the home inspection, the appraiser, and other inspections. Your Realtor will work with the title company, the cooperating agent, the buyers' lender, and others to remove contingencies and keep the deal on track.

PROS WE KNOW

- ▶ Realtor/Broker
- ▶ Realtor Assistant
- ▶ Transaction Manager
- ▶ Real Estate Attorney
- ▶ Title Attorney
- ▶ Estate Attorney
- ▶ Title Company
- ▶ Homeowner's Association
- ▶ Insurance Representative



Move Your Belongings



Planning Ahead

In preparation for your move, pick up the Moving Guide at any post office or go to usps.com for information on forwarding your mail. Update your information with financial and educational institutions as soon as you know your new address to keep accounts current and prevent a lapse in service. Order new checks, and keep a copy of any magazines, catalogues, or mailings you get from places important to you to remind yourself to change addresses with them as well. Some movers offer access to an online program that can help you do most of this at one time. Another task that can be done a week or more before your move is to arrange for disconnect and reconnect of home utilities.

✂ TOOL: Utilities Tracker

If you are helping a loved one move into an assisted living situation, a Senior Move Manager will be an indispensable member of your team; trained to assist with the most delicate situations, these professionals adhere to a strict code of ethics and anticipate the needs of Seniors during complex transitions.

Packing, Storing and Moving

If you've reduced your belongings and planned for your next home, moving will be a much more manageable task. You'll want to factor in the size and distance of your move, and your physical abilities to determine the level of service you will require.

An experienced move manager can will be an invaluable resource: someone who will be your point person for the entire project and will guide you through packing, organizing and securing your belongings from start to finish.

If you choose not to hire a dedicated move manager, look for a moving company that provides management as part of their service.

Partial Moves

When possible, we advise clients to avoid the cost of offsite storage for personal items. The one exception is short-term storage that allows you to partially move your items out of your home in order to make it more appealing for the market. There are many portable storage options available that can add flexibility to your move.



Move Your Belongings



Labeling Boxes

It's impossible to recommend one failsafe method for tracking moving boxes, but experts recommend using color coded stickers to organize moving boxes so that they get delivered to the right room. If you want more control, use a numbering system in addition to the colored stickers to help you remember what is in each box, and to prioritize unpacking.

Settling In

An "Open First" box is a critical planning tool for any move. Be sure to think through your first day or so at your new place and anticipate what you will need to be comfortable and secure during that time. It's OK if it takes more than one box! Just be sure the boxes are the last ones on the truck or better yet, take them yourself.

PROS WE KNOW

- ▶ Move Manager
- ▶ Senior Move Manager
- ▶ Packing/Unpacking Services
- ▶ Full Service Moving Company
- ▶ Small Moving Company
- ▶ Truck Rental
- ▶ Mobile Storage Company
- ▶ Storage Facility
- ▶ Professional Organizer
- ▶ Interior Designer

Items in the Open First Box May Include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra keys (home and vehicle) | <input type="checkbox"/> Plate and utensils |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone and charger | <input type="checkbox"/> Coffee maker, coffee, filter and mug |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Checkbook | <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding, pillows and throw blanket |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight | <input type="checkbox"/> Bath towel/washcloth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors/Tape | <input type="checkbox"/> Toothbrush and toothpaste |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basic toolbox | <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription medication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basic cleaning products | <input type="checkbox"/> Nightclothes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet paper/Paper Towels | <input type="checkbox"/> Change of clothing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hand soap | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote control(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dish soap and sponge | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet food/leash |



Next Home Room Sizes

Knowing exactly how much space you will have in your next home will help you decide what to take with you. When possible, work from an accurate floor plan to map out your needs for furniture, rugs, and storage.

Area/Room	Dimensions	Square feet	Notes
Front Porch			
Entrance/Foyer			
Kitchen			
Dining Area			
Dining Room			
Pantry			
Living Room			
Family Room			
Basement/Rec Room			
Bedroom 1			
Bedroom 2			
Bedroom 3			
Bedroom 4			
Outdoor Porch/Deck			
Outdoor Patio			
Storage Area			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			



Donation Planning Worksheet

Items	Value	Donation Center/Charity	Pickup Date	Dropoff Goal	Completed



Valuable Item Tracker

It's always a good idea to photograph your most cherished and valuable items, regardless of their final destination. When possible, include a history notation for the item to provide context for future owner, estate sale manager or auction house.

Item	Why it's valuable	Known Resale Value	Where it will go	Delivered



Home Systems and Appliance Inventory

Having receipts and other documentation handy helps, not only for the sale of your home, but, also for tax time if your capital investment purchases were made that calendar year. Gather all appliance manuals and warranties; they should stay with the house.

System/Appliance	Age	Notes
Plumbing		
Septic		
Well		
Electric		
HVAC		
Freestanding Heater(s)		
Freestanding Air Conditioner(s)		
Whole House Humidifier		
Hot Water Heater		
Refrigerator		
Freezer		
Icemaker		
Water Purifier		
Range		
Cooktop		
Dishwasher		
Disposal		
Oven 1		



Home Systems and Appliance Inventory

System/Appliance	Age	Notes
Oven 2		
Microwave		
Trash Compactor		
Washing Machine		
Clothes Dryer		
Wood Fireplace		
Gas Fireplace		
Sump Pump		
Roof		
Fan Ventilation		
Other		
Other		
Other		
Other		
Other		



Home Condition Inventory

Area	Condition Details	Notes	Estimated Costs
Curb Appeal:	Overall Condition Landscaping:		
	Overall Condition Exterior:		
	Paint? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		
Back Yard:	Overall Condition Landscaping:		
	Overall Condition Exterior:		
	Paint? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		
Room:	Décor/Overall Condition:		
Dimensions:	Paint Walls? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		
	Paint Trim? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		
	Flooring: Replace? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		
Square Feet:	Lighting: Repair? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Replace? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		
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Dimensions:	Paint Walls? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		
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Home Utilities Tracker

Utility	Provider	Account #	Disconnect Date	Connect Date
	Phone/Web Address			
Water				
Gas				
Electricity				
Phone				
Cable				
Internet				
Telephone				
Garbage/ Recycling				
Other				
Other				