



“Ask the Pink Realtor”

Hollywood Real Estate Q&A

BY ROCHELLE LE CAVALIER | Ask@pinkpalm.com

Dear Pink Realtor,

The real estate market has finally turned into a “buyer’s market.” Prices have remained pretty stable the last six months, houses are the most affordable they have been in decades – seeing some good deals out there – and the banks are (finally!) lending to first-time homebuyers again. So, I am ready to buy a house.

The problem I have run in to is the real estate agents. I have called at least a dozen of them to find a house. I have gotten two different results, and I don’t like either one. The first group, I will call the disappearing acts. I call, I leave messages, I e-mail...and nothing. Or, we talk once, and they never call back again. These agents I guess don’t want to work. That’s OK; I don’t want to work with them. The second group is demanding and pushy. One Realtor had the nerve to ask me – on our first call – if I was qualified to buy a house. Why else would I call? Then, he even said he needed to see proof that I am qualified. How do I find a professional Realtor to help me find a house and actually give me good service?

**Sincerely,
Customer is Always Right**

Dear Right,

First, on behalf of all of the hard-working, professional Realtors of South Florida, I apologize. As in any field, some professionals provide better service than others.

The Realtor who asked you about qualification was actually giving you good advice and setting you up to win. It could be that he did not explain it well, but that is another matter. It is accurate that the banks are lending. However, it is vitally important to know what type of loan

you are qualified for prior to beginning the process. Why?

Some sellers can accept any type of loan for their property. For many years, any seller could accept (almost) any type of loan. Today, sellers are limited in what loan types they can accept, usually for reasons beyond their control. For example, banks (the sellers of all those foreclosure properties) are frequently only able to accept cash, can usually accept conventional loan types, and less often can accept FHA and VA loan programs. Many condominium sellers cannot accept any loan type and can only sell for cash with no financing. And nearly all condominium sellers cannot accept FHA loan programs at this time.

If an agent were to show you houses while unaware of what loan type you are qualified for, it would be highly likely you would eventually find a property you wanted to buy and be unable to do so – solely based on your loan type. He would have wasted your time and his, and I’m sure you would then be dissatisfied to have never been informed about why you needed to be pre-qualified in advance.

Now, to the heart of the matter... Let’s find you a qualified professional.

Not every licensed real estate agent is a Realtor. A “Realtor” is a licensed agent who is a member of the National Association of Realtors (NAR) and is held to higher ethical and professional standards. There are 1.3 million Realtors, mostly in the United States, and an additional 1 million licensed real estate agents who are not members of NAR and cannot use the term “Realtor.” In addition, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics claims only about 600,000 working real estate brokers/salespersons (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos120.htm>).

The bottom line: Fewer than half

of the people licensed to practice real estate professionally are actually working as agents. A few more go to the trouble to pay dues, advance their training and voluntarily agree to be held to a higher ethical and professional standard.

So, how do you find one of the select Realtors who are well qualified to represent you in researching, contracting, negotiating and closing what will probably be the largest single transaction you will do in your lifetime?

I suggest the following:

Call various Realtors who work in your area – find them on the advice of friends, family, colleagues, etc. or from advertising (online, in newspapers, magazines, signs in your neighborhood, etc.). Ask them as many questions as it takes for you to feel comfortable and satisfied that the person you are speaking to knows what he/she is doing.

Be sure to ask them what services they will provide, how the process works, how long they have been in business and what extra training and certifications they have. I suggest working with a person who has worked full time in your area for at least three years. Ask for references and check them!

Your agent should be your partner in realizing your dream of home ownership, provide you great service and have answers to every question you have. He/she should be loyal and represent only you. And likewise, you should “hire” the best Realtor you find and work with only him/her.

Dear Pink Realtor,

All I hear about with this real estate market is how low the prices are and how it is all a “buyer’s market.” With so many foreclosures and people giving their property away, I am wondering if I will ever sell my house. When will it be a “seller’s market” again?

**Sincerely,
Ready & Willing but Unable Seller**

Dear Ready & Willing,

The good news is the market is stabilizing and improving.

In 2010, more houses sold than at the height of the real estate sales market in 2006 but at a fraction of the price, as reported by the Miami Association of Realtors. So, prices are down and volume is up. Buyers are

currently at an advantage.

Analysts expect the industry to continue the long road to recovery in 2011. Short sales and foreclosures account for about half of the sales volume of 2010, and there are thousands of such properties in Broward County that will have to work their way through the system before we are anywhere near a return to a “seller’s market.” With a glut of distressed properties on the market, foreclosure cases stalled in courts and high unemployment, there’s still a possibility that prices could slip further this year. Market research firm Clear Capital is predicting another 6.5 percent drop in South Florida home values in 2011 (as reported in The Miami Herald Jan 20, 2011).

There are some positive signs as well. The overall inventory of homes is down to 40,000 in South Florida from a peak of 75,000 in mid-2008. The law of supply and demand is coming into play here which should raise the median price of a home in Hollywood. Investments from overseas investors have stimulated demand, as well as a move toward granting more mortgage loans in Florida.

The even-better-than-good news, Dear Ready & Willing Seller, is demand for move-in ready homes is on the rise. Buyers are beginning to realize that even if they can acquire a house for a low price, there may be months of work at a cost of thousands of dollars to complete before the house is even ready to be lived in. We are hearing more buyers asking for a “move-in-condition” house than ever.

Call a Realtor, and ask about a comparative market analysis for homes like yours. He/she will look up actual closed sales, pending sales and available homes to give you a good idea of what a similar home to yours might sell for. You may be pleasantly surprised! 🌟

LeCavalier has an extensive background in land development, construction, mortgage banking, and real estate sales, marketing and management with more than 15 years experience in the industry. She is known as the “Pink Realtor” around South Florida where she and her team cheerfully serve the real estate needs of many clients. In addition, LeCavalier serves as Fund Manager for SISCO Limited Partners, a private equity fund that rehabilitates foreclosed properties and rents them via affordable housing programs in Broward County, and she is a licensed Real Estate Agent and an Accredited Residential Manager (IREM, ARM).

For more information, visit www.pinkpalm.com.

