

# Real Estate

ST. CHARLES COUNTY

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## What will the house tell you?

You have taken the first step. You have decided that now is the right time to buy a new home. You've called your Realtor and talked to a lender to find the right financing program.

After what seemed like an eternity, your Realtor opened the door to the "right house."

Now, you look through the house and start to picture how your furniture would look, and you even find the perfect spot for the Christmas tree.

As you look around some more, you begin to wonder if it is as good as it looks. Is the electrical system up to date? What about the furnace and the plumbing? After all, this is probably the biggest investment you have ever made.

You stand there wishing the house could talk!

Unfortunately, houses only talk in Disney movies; and you have to make your buying decision in the real world. What do you do to make sure there are no hidden nightmares in your dream home?

First, do not ask your Realtor to give you advice. Your Realtor

is not an expert in construction, electricity or plumbing; so he or she cannot give you the answers.

The sellers' disclosure is a good place to start; but remember, it is only a statement of what the sellers know about their home. Like you, they probably are not experts and might not know anything about hidden problems that may exist in their home.

While your Realtor doesn't know the answers, he or she can help you find an expert who can give you the answers.

Your Realtor will advise you to hire a qualified independent home inspector to inspect your potential new home. The sales contract utilized by Realtors in our area gives you 10 days to inspect all aspects of your home.

If the inspection reveals unsatisfactory conditions, you have a couple of options. First, you can ask the seller to make needed repairs to the home or compensate you in lieu of making the repairs. Secondly, you have the option of cancelling the contract, have your earnest money returned, and find another home.

How do you find an inspector that will give you an accurate and complete picture of the home you want to buy? The sales contract requires that you get an "independent" inspection. Even if you have some knowledge, you can't do your own inspection. Also, your relative who might be a contractor, tradesman, etc., can't do the job for you. Unlike real estate agents, the state of Missouri has no licensing requirements for home inspectors.

However, inspectors who belong to the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) are experienced and knowledgeable in their profession. They adhere to a code of conduct, ethics and professionalism mandated by ASHI.

ASHI inspectors also must complete a minimum number of inspections before they can call themselves an ASHI inspector.

Your Realtor can provide you with a list of inspectors that have provided good service for their past clients. A complete list of ASHI inspectors in our area can be found at [www.stlashi.org](http://www.stlashi.org).

Be sure to talk with the inspector about the extent of his or her inspection and what the cost will be for the services. Generally, you will pay between \$300 and \$500 for this service. Remember, inspectors provide their services, for which you will need to pay them, regardless of whether you end up purchasing the home.

You want to be sure to accompany the inspector on the inspection. Even if this requires you to take time off from work, it will be time well spent.

Be sure to point out to the inspector any areas that are of particular concern to you. In addition to reviewing its current condition, the inspector will give you ideas for the future maintenance and upkeep of your new home. After the inspection, you will receive a written report of the inspector's findings.

After you receive the report, review it carefully. Then with your Realtor's assistance, you can decide if you want to complete the sale or ask the seller to make repairs.

If you request the seller to take



**Karen Vennard** is the 2009 president of the St. Charles County Association of Realtors. E-mail her at [comments@StCharlesREALTORS.com](mailto:comments@StCharlesREALTORS.com) if you have any real estate-related questions or comments you would like to see addressed in this column.

action or cancel the contract, the seller has the right to receive a copy of that report.

Your Realtor will strongly recommend that you not purchase a home without first getting an inspection. You may think the home looks fine and you'd rather spend the money on new furniture, but don't risk it! An independent inspection by an ASHI inspector is one of the best investments you can make in your new home.

Today's market with historically low interest rates, a large selection of homes at affordable prices, and possible government assistance make this a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to find the home of your dreams. Call your Realtor today.

## Real Estate Briefs

### New leasing agent

TOM MCCORMACK has joined Corporate Group Inc. as a commercial leasing agent. He is a recent graduate of Southeast Missouri State University.

Corporate Group is a commercial real estate, development and management company based in St. Charles.



T. McCormack

### Women's Council to meet

The Women's Council of Realtors St. Charles County Chapter is scheduled to meet at 8:30 a.m. May 1 at the Columns Banquet and Conference Center, 711 Veterans Memorial Parkway in St. Charles.

This will be a joint membership meeting of the Women's Council of Realtors and the St. Charles County Association of Realtors.

The topic for the meeting is, "Do You Know What Direction the Market is Going?" Featured speaker Joe Zanolis will discuss the local market and trends for the metropolitan region.

Cost is \$20. RSVP to Kathy at 636-946-4022 or through the website [www.StCharlesREALTORS.com](http://www.StCharlesREALTORS.com) or call Pam Bauer at 636-444-9627 for more information.