

Number One Cause of Buyer Dissatisfaction: Ugly Surprises After the Sale.

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[TREC License #6030]

Seeds of dissent are present from the beginning of any potential deal in the form of specific client concerns and conditions of the property. Great Realtors® always excel at discussing and coming to grips with client concerns. Another aspect of Realtor® greatness is early recognition of overall property condition – recognizing signs of potential problems early in the deal and addressing them directly rather than trying to avoid them.

The role of the home inspector is to clarify the condition of the property. If that clarification “blows the deal”, it may be a blessing in disguise – preventing future client dissatisfaction, or even legal action. When putting a deal together, it is to your advantage to learn to recognize subtle indications of potential problems ahead. Clients happy with their home are happy with you and give good referrals.

In this and following issues, you will find some examples of Red Flags, along with a brief description of what they might indicate about the condition of the property. Keep in mind that a Red Flag is an indication of possible problems – something to research and explore further. Red Flags may be subtle to the untrained eye. Actual conditions are typically somewhere between the best case and worst case.

Red Flag # 1

Obvious cracks in walls, floors, ceilings and foundations.

Best Case – There are only one or two small cracks which are simply a result of normal settling

Worst Case – There are significant foundation problems, and the whole structure is about to collapse.

Red Flag #2

Standing water or muddy wet spots in an otherwise dry yard.

Best Case – it just rained, and filled up the holes the dog

dug.

Worst Case – One or more under-slab leaks, combined with poor drainage requiring major landscape changes in addition to boring under the slab to fix the leaks.

Red Flag # 3

Water stains on walls or ceilings.

Best Case – A small leak just started and was repaired.

Worst Case – The leak has been happening for a long time – the entire structure is rotted from within and about to collapse.

Red Flag # 4

Rotted places in wood coverings

Best Case – A small isolated piece of trim needs attention.

Worst Case – Entire structure is rotted from within and about to collapse.

Red Flag # 5

Open joints that need to be caulked – like around windows.

Best Case – The wall structure was well designed for great internal airflow and drainage, the flashing was well done and it seldom rains.

Worst Case – The whole wall structure is rotted and about to collapse.

Red Flag # 6

Broken, warped or missing shingles.

Best Case – A few shingles need repairs

Worst Case – Water has been leaking into the structure for some time and it is rotted from within and about to collapse.

Red Flag # 7

Musty smells in any room.

Best Case – The cat box hasn't been emptied yet today.

Worst Case – The whole house is a fungi factory, suitable only for growing mushrooms until it collapses.

maintenance.

Best Case – A few simple repairs will bring it back up to snuff.

Worst Case – You’re looking at a real “Money Pit”.

Red Flag # 9

Missing faucet handles, or malfunctioning plumbing.

Best Case – No damage done yet, and the seller has it fixed the next day.

Worst Case – Don’t even think about the things you can’t see, you don’t even want to know.

Red Flag # 10

Smell of sewer gas, anywhere

Best Case – Don’t flick your BIC.

Worst Case – You just had to do it anyway, kaboom....

Red Flag # 11

Vegetation against or close to building walls

Best Case – It just started growing and no visible damage has yet occurred.

Worst Case – vines have filled the attic and are the only things holding the walls together which have rotted and are about to collapse.

Red Flag # 12

Loose or warped siding

Best Case – There is only one board which recently became inspired to change its vocation from wall covering to lookout.

Worst Case – Well, there’s that interesting “mural” on the inside wall that changes shape and color each day, growing especially bright when it rains. Come to think of it, that may not be a mural – and of course the whole wall structure is rotted and about to collapse.

Red Flag # 13

Broken windows

Best Case – someone recently did something stupid and is about to have it fixed.

Worst Case – you’re in a bad neighborhood, and it’s been raining 40 days and 40 nights into the broken windows.

Red Flag # 14

Major appliances with inadequate access.

Best Case – Everything will still be working well, at least until you unload the house on someone else next year.

Worst Case – They all die about two months after you move in, refuse to be covered by any kind of insurance, and you have to remove the new roof to get to them for replacement.

Red Flag # 15

Mold or fungus on air registers.

Best Case – It’s actually just a bit of dust and debris left over from the children’s soft drink fight that just happened to hit the the vent outlet.

Worst Case – AC system does not reduce the humidity of the air adequately and every wood and paper fiber in the entire structure has been feeding fungus and mold for years – so the whole structure is rotted and about to collapse.

Red Flag # 16

Exposed wiring

Best Case – The electricity has been disconnected and the wire is no longer in use.

Worst Case – Several people have already been electrocuted by it, and for a grand finale, it is about to convert the building into a bonfire.

Red Flag # 17

Doors that don’t operate properly

Best Case – It just needs a simple adjustment of the latch.

Worst Case – The foundation has suffered a major shift and the entire structure is about to collapse.

Red Flag # 18

Electrical fixtures that don’t work

Best Case – The bulb is out.

Worst Case – Lightening fried the whole electrical system. It is also wired with incorrectly terminated aluminum wire that will start a fire within a week after the short is fixed.

Red Flag # 19

Old heating AC system

Best Case – It refuses to work so there is no question about replacing it.

Worst Case – It acts like it might work, but it leaks Carbon Monoxide into the house, is a fire hazard and

grotesquely inefficient.

Red Flag # 20

Moisture under sinks or other inappropriate places

Best Case – It's just a one time spill.

Worst Case – If you believe that, I can show you a wonderful deal on a bridge for sale or lease....

Red Flag # 21

Warped or peeling floor coverings

Best Case – Cheap floor covering was poorly installed just to make the house look good for a quick sale.

Worst Case – A variety of leaks have been doing their thing for some time. Let's see now...plentiful moisture, lots of time, abundant food – no, not a picnic at the beach – have you considered growing mushrooms?

Red Flag # 22

Soft mortar in brick walls or chimneys

Best Case – There was only one tiny bit of soft mortar and you just happened to find it.

Worst Case – This is a worst case, even at best. If you can scratch out mortar with a pencil, you better figure on replacing it all in the seriously near future.

Red Flag # 23

Trees or other vegetation in contact with roof.

Best Case – A small sapling grew up overnight with no wind in the air, and you cut it down first thing the next day.

Worst Case – Moving branches abrade delicate shingle surfaces, creating leaks. Piles of vegetation wick water into roof and wall structures. Vines and branches enjoy weaving their way into and out of structures. Nature reclaims its own, in good time.

Red Flag # 24

Visibly crooked, misaligned or distorted walls, ceilings, floors or roofs

Best Case – The carpenter was drunk at the time.

Worst Case – Something has failed in a major way and the entire building is about to collapse.

A thorough, detailed Home Inspection, clearly written is a powerful asset for client satisfaction.

Stephen Ruback is a licensed Professional Inspector; member of TAREI [Texas Association of Real Estate Inspectors] and HAR [Houston Association of Realtors]; approved by TREC [Texas Real Estate Commission] as a Professional Home Inspection Instructor.

In addition, he has earned a BS in engineering from Trinity University, is an author of several books and teaches a variety of self empowerment courses through Leisure Learning.

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