

COMMENTARY

Inspiration Realty, Inc.

Creative ways to sell your property in a down market

 rogerWILLIAMS

rwilliams@florida-weekly.com

Never mind all the hyperbole you've seen lately about the slumping real estate market. You heard this stuff in the media, right? And you've long since learned, because your parents told you so, never to believe everything you read, or maybe anything you read, except in Florida Weekly.

Home sales remain in a slump, mortgage-lending businesses smell like old cheese, Realtors are trading frustrated clients like poker players trade chips, and building permits have dropped so low they could fly under the new Sanibel causeway (which may or may not be stable, so better to fly under it than drive over it).

I say, big deal. Just a bunch of media hype. The market-slump statistics championed by current real estate analysts are irrelevant, in my opinion. Of course, you've likely seen what passes for evidence, too: "For Sale" signs nearly as old as the dinosaurs.

But none of this need be true.

For sellers, I imagine it's hard to drop the price when memories of the big boom remain so recent. Won't those deep-pocket buyers be back any moment, now?

Not to put too fine a point on it, but YES, THEY WILL.

Of course (and this should be obvious to anybody who lives in a county where Thomas

Edison once lived) that won't happen because of an improvement in the market.

Don't count on that anytime soon. The sober, do-it-by-the-book prognosticators appearing on financial pages and talk shows everywhere mostly agree: The resurrection of boom times is probably years in the future, not months.

So what? What none of these brilliant but not very hungry experts have done is think outside of the real estate office.

The downturn in the market is not due to an economic slump, but an inspirational one. Edison himself remarked that, "Success is 99 percent perspiration and 1 percent inspiration." But what he didn't add was that the 1 percent inspiration is the key. After all, one match starts a fire and one split atom starts an atomic bomb.

So here's what could change the market completely for you, especially if you're selling right now: Inspiration.

Can't sell your house or commercial property? Try this (and I offer this advice freely here; further help, though, is going to cost you).

*Throw in one of your used family cars, tuned up and with title and keys in the ignition, preferably an SUV or truck. They get about 14 miles to the gallon, and you can do much, much better. Your giveaway price: about \$20,000. Return on investment: your huge, over-inflated asking price, say \$50,000 to \$75,000, plus huge sums of gas-money savings.

*Agree to start a Florida college fund scholarship at \$100 a month for a child, and maintain it for a decade, or until the child

of your buyer turns 18. There's not one couple in 10 with children who wouldn't think long and hard about going for it. Giveaway price: About \$1,200 a year, or \$12,000 in 10 years. Return on investment: \$50,000 or more, depending on how much you had to reduce your asking price, initially.

*Appeal to the aficionado of fine food, or of junk food (think carefully about your markets here): either a 10-year gift certificate, at once a week and all-you-can-eat to McDonald's, or once a month to Ruth's Chris, either one.

Keep in mind, McDonald's will be here long after Ruth's Chris, but it won't be as much fun, and thus it won't have as much appeal to upper-end buyers. The downside: Your buyer will die faster from a heart attack at McDonald's but potentially go bankrupt at Ruth's Chris. Estimated cost: \$1,040 a year for McDonald's at \$20 once a week, or \$2,400 a year for once a month (at \$200) at Ruth's Chris. Return: On the Ruth's Chris end, potentially hundreds of thousands. Okay, maybe just \$75,000 to \$100,000. At McDonald's? I estimate a \$5,000 return on investment.

*Pay for one free surgery from the plastic surgeon of your buyer's choice, at two hours or less, with related consultations. Or more simply, buy a two-year, bi-monthly pass to a high-end beauty spa, like South Seas Plantation. Offer that, and there's not a home or condo in a Bonita Bay property that won't sell like a... well, not like a hotcake, but more like a tidy 18 holes on a Saturday morning in January. Cost: about \$15,000 for the plastic surgeon, and \$7,500 for the ritzy spa. Return: potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars,

depending on what you're selling. You might have to throw in a used BMW or Lexus or Mercedes to sweeten the deal.

*Buy a horse and stable it in the country for your buyer or her children, for the lifetime of the horse, or for 10 years, whichever comes first. If you don't know horses, then just try to buy an old horse, especially one with bad teeth. People love horses, especially people who live in Alva or Buckingham or North Fort Myers, or want to. Cost: \$1,000 to \$10,000 depending on how long the horse lives, and what it is. Return: you'll get what you ask for. Ride'em cowboy.

*If none of that works, then it's time to become hyper-inspired. Here are some ideas to get you started:

A. Give away one or two of your children. This always succeeds with buyers trying unsuccessfully to conceive, or those bent on wage-free slave labor in the home, without the usual painful questions about immigration status or green cards.

B. Offer an African safari, or an Alaskan hunt if you're selling to somebody who wants to kill something — and usually you are. There are plenty of buyers who want to kill something driving up and down I-75, U.S. 41, or State Roads 80 and 82.

C. Offer one week of living with a New York Times best-selling author. You'd have to talk Randy Wayne White into this, maybe by drinking with him at Doc Ford's on Sanibel and by offering him a lot of money. This would be the most fun, but potentially be the most costly. You could just give him your new boat; I've heard he can't resist those if they're big and fast. You're looking at the adventure-buyer market.

*And finally...well, selling your property might take a personal commitment. I can't define that in a family newspaper, but you know what I'm talking about. So I say, damn the naysayers. Hire some inspire, baby. Full speed ahead! ■

 **Edison**
NATIONAL BANK

 **Bank Of The
Islands**

**Traditional service
with innovation.
Teamwork makes
it happen.**

— John Ammons, Vice President
— Leah Kirby, Vice President

Combining tradition with innovation is our strategy for providing exemplary customer service while constantly searching for "a better way" to provide all your banking needs.

Free bill pay and online banking and an expanded ATM network are just two examples. Call today to learn about these free services and experience the benefits of joining Edison National Bank and Bank of the Islands. We make banking about you.

 An Equal Housing Lender • Member FDIC



13000 S. Cleveland Ave.
Fort Myers, FL 33907
239.466.1800

2105 First St.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
239.334.4668

1699 Periwinkle Way
Sanibel Island, FL 33957
239.472.7211