

THINKING OF SELLING?

Erie, PA Seller's Guide:
How to Sell Your House
During the COVID-19
Crisis



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If you're a homeowner thinking of selling in 2020, you probably didn't factor a global pandemic into your plans. COVID-19's economic impact continues to reverberate through every part of our lives, including the sale of our homes.

But in case you're wondering: Yes, you can still sell your house now despite the COVID-19 crisis. In fact, it could be an ideal time to put your home on the market. Currently, interest rates are at record lows, active listings are practically slashed in half in Erie County, and with so many businesses opening up remote options, the suburbs are poised to boom.

To help you position your home for a successful sale, Maleno put together this COVID-19 home seller's guide. From boosting your curb appeal to investing in a virtual tour, here are six tips for how to stand out in today's real estate market.

But First: A Snapshot of Erie Amid COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted every city and nearly every industry, and Erie, Pennsylvania's real estate market is no exception. The [unemployment rate is up](#) to 6.9 percent, and [active listings](#) in Erie County have plummeted over 44 percent year over year.



Conversely, Erie is a scorching hot seller's market. Based on the list-to-sale price ratio, prevalence of price cuts on home listings, and time-on-market, [Zillow](#) ranks Erie County as a "Very Hot" seller's market.

Furthermore, attractive mortgage rates are catching the eye of buyers that may not otherwise have been searching this summer. As of May 18, 2020, interest rates on a 30-year mortgage are an astonishingly low 3.28 percent! Combine these favorable terms with low inventory and a boom in the 'burbs, and we may have a scorching hot seller's market this summer.

1. Boost Your Curb Appeal

Just like a leaky faucet, an unkempt lawn can signal neglect. Mow and edge your lawn, trim shrubs, add fresh mulch, rake dead leaves, and sweep debris from your steps and sidewalk. Also, ensure your home's house numbers are easily visible from the street and replace your mailbox if it shows its age.

According to a [report](#) by the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP), 99% of REALTORS believe that curb appeal is important to attract buyers. Furthermore, the [return on investment \(ROI\) for landscaping](#) is arguably better than any indoor project when it comes to [adding value to your home](#), with some improvements touting an over 400% return! We also recommend:

- Limiting your lawn ornaments
- Keeping in mind the view from inside the house while working outside
- Planning your landscaping ideas out on paper before starting big projects

Further, if your budget permits, we also recommend installing a new garage door and front door. Two of the [best home improvements](#) based on cost recuperated is actually a garage door replacement and steel entry door replacement.



2. Find an Agent That's Right for You

Selling a home is one of the most significant decisions you'll make in your lifetime, second only to *buying* a home, perhaps. Give your house the attention it deserves by finding a seasoned real estate agent who will help you correctly price your property, make the selling process more manageable, and be a tough negotiator on your behalf. To [find an agent who's right for you](#), we recommend:

- Asking for referrals
- Checking that they understand your goals
- Considering how their communication style works with yours
- Interviewing at least three agents
- Scoping out their social and digital presence

At a time when social distancing is essential and opening houses are limited, it's critically important to work with an agent and agency with a robust digital footprint. More specifically, check out their social media, [read their blog](#), sign up for their newsletters, and look around their website.

If your real estate agency and/or agent is producing high-quality content, leveraging technology to help buyers and sellers transact, and engaging their audience, they're probably a good fit.

3. Declutter and Depersonalize

Are you continually ranting about how much "stuff" you have? Well, it looks like you're in good company. [Fifty-four percent of Americans](#) are overwhelmed by the amount of clutter they have, but 78 percent have no idea what to do with their stuff.

Here's an idea: Throw it out, recycle it, or donate it.

We know it's easier said than done. To make it easier, take a page out of the organization-guru, [Marie Kondo's book](#). One of her best ideas is to tidy up by category, not by location. Reason being, many people try to declutter room by room, which causes them to actually just move stuff from one place to another.

Therefore, you should take everything you have in one category, take clothes, for instance, and put them in one location so you can objectively see just how much you have. This strategy also works great when you're packing.

Once you conquer your clothes pile, shift to your overstuffed kitchen cabinets, and pull everything off the shelves to get it out in the open. Keep sorting by category until it's either trashed, recycled, donated, or packed.

Remember, overflowing closets and cabinets could send a signal to buyers that there isn't enough storage space in the house. If you don't use it or love it, it's probably time to let it go. Remember, the less stuff you own, the less you'll have to pack and move to your next house!

Finally, remember to pack up trophies, family photographs, religious items, and sports memorabilia to neutralize your home's decor. It's not that buyers will be offended by them, but it's more so that they'll be better able to *envision themselves* in the space without your keepsakes lining the walls.

4. Make Small Repairs

Small repairs make a big difference! To a buyer, deferred maintenance makes a home appear uncared for, which is the exact opposite of the impression you're trying to give. With a few online tutorials, you should be able to take on a variety of DIY projects, such as:

- Cleaning gutters
- Fixing leaky faucets
- Painting
- Patching holes in the drywall
- Refinishing hardwood floors
- Stripping wallpaper
- Tightening loose handles
- Washing windows inside and outside



5. Invest in a Virtual Tour

Although social distancing best practices have curtailed traditional open houses, 98% of buyers use the Internet to search for homes anyway, according to the [National Association of Realtors](#). And, even when buyers are able to tour houses in person, they'll still expect to be able to preview homes online.

We can't stress this enough: Make sure your home has a sparkling digital presence to make a great first impression. Virtual tours will most likely be the norm throughout 2020. Talk to your real estate agent about how to create one from *your* home.

6. Still Aim for A Summer Sale

Usually, buyers prefer to move while the weather is good and children are out of school. This is why April, May, June, and July are typically the most popular months to list a house.

According to [ATTOM Data Solutions](#), seller premiums were best in June (9.2 percent), followed by May (7.4 percent), and then July (7.3 percent). However, there is another reason to sell your home before the weather grows cold again.

[Experts](#) predict that the coronavirus may resurge in the winter, during which time stay-at-home orders could potentially go back into effect. Lock in your sale this summer to minimize the chances of having to wait another year to sell your home.

If You're Interested in Selling Your Home

Although the pandemic has undoubtedly affected the housing market, there are elements of the market that haven't changed at all. People still want a place to call home, sellers can still ensure above-market prices with preparation, and a great real estate agent working on your behalf will pay off in spades.

While times may be uncertain, we can tell you with confidence that people are still actively searching for, and buying, homes. If you're considering selling your home, use this seller's guide to help you through the process and reach out to [Maleno](#) by calling (814) 833-6516 or visiting our [contact page](#).



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