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Should I Stay or Should I Go?

by **BILL DONAHUE**
photos by **ALISON DUNLAP**

For homeowners who are unsure of when and if to sell, the **COMPASS RE** team led by **Realtor Deana Corrigan** excels at helping clients make clear-eyed decisions that serve their best interests.

Although current market conditions suggest a prolonged seller's market, limited inventory and fear of the unknown have left some prospective sellers in a state of limbo as they waver over a complex question: *Should I stay or should I go?* For homeowners in the Philadelphia area, Deana Corrigan stands ready to guide them toward a clear-cut answer.

"Every situation is different, which is why I do a sit-down consultation with every person I meet," says Deana, a Doylestown-based Realtor and luxury home specialist with COMPASS RE. "Whether they want to sell now or revisit the idea down the line, we figure out what the strategy will look like so they can make an informed decision about what to do next."

Originally from Albany, New York, Deana has spent the lion's share of her three-decades-long career in southeast Pennsylvania, serving clients primarily in Bucks and Montgomery counties. She has steered clients through markets of every sort, from the post-Great Recession bust to the pandemic-fueled boom that continues to this day.

Strictly a seller's agent, Deana wants all of her sellers to feel confident in their decision-making. That's why she has each prospective client carefully consider five key factors when determining whether they should sell or stay put, at least for the time being: market conditions, their financial situation, housing demand, the condition of their property, and their personal circumstances.

"Most sellers who are trying to evaluate the market right now aren't sure what to do," she adds. "Right now we're seeing a lot of nervousness because of changing interest rates and things people are hearing in the media. A lot of sellers have to sell in order to buy, so we'll get creative. If they're able to wait it out, one solution is to find a buyer first. By doing so, they become a more attractive buyer because they no longer have that contingency. You have to think outside the box, and that's where my 30 years of experience comes in."

Some would-be sellers go through the calculus with Deana only to decide it's not yet time to move. Perhaps, in order to obtain the home and property they want, they will need to move 15 to 20 minutes farther out than they originally thought. Doing so might force them to uproot their families at an inopportune time, especially if their children are involved in high school athletics or other extracurricular obligations; in these cases, families might agree to put their moving plans on hold until their children go off to college.

"The people who end up not selling become some of my best advocates," Deana says. "After spending two hours with me, talking about all the factors that might go into a move, they decide it's not the right time for them. If I can help them feel confident in their decision to stay, it's a good use of my time, because I love helping people. That's what makes this a great career for me; it's not about the money."

If, however, a homeowner does decide to sell, then Deana helps the client prepare the home so it can be marketed in the best possible light. She says some clients may take as long as a year to get the house ready, though she specializes in helping clients make their homes move-in-ready in short order.

"Among the things I provide is a professional stager, and there are several other inexpensive



I love helping people. That's what makes this a great career for me."

—DEANA CORRIGAN, COMPASS RE

ways we can make the home ready," she says. "A fresh coat of paint can make a world of difference; it also costs next to nothing. If someone has an aging roof, their instinct might be to pay for a new one, but that's not necessarily the way to go. If there's a problem with the roof, then we can negotiate [with a buyer]. A home might need a new deck or an HVAC system or new windows; a buyer is not going to see value in that, but they will see value in a new kitchen or bath. Knowing where to invest your time and money comes from experience."

Deana also helps clients benefit from programs such as COMPASS Concierge, which can help homeowners finance improvements designed to sell their homes more quickly and for a higher price. Essentially, the program enables a homeowner to borrow an interest-free sum earmarked for, say, a kitchen or bathroom renovation, and then repay the sum at settlement, with virtually no out-of-pocket costs.

When choosing a Realtor, Deana says homeowners need someone they can trust, someone with whom they can strategize, and someone who understands the emotional aspects of selling a home. She considers this last point of particular importance. Deana's passion for helping others—she has a master's degree in social work from Boston College, in addition to a bachelor's degree in marketing and management from Northeastern University—extends to the emotional journey most people undergo when they move from one home to another.

"Buying and selling a home is very stressful,



Two of Deana's recent listings



and not just because it's a huge financial decision," says Deana, a Certified Relocation Professional. "I'm here to help them through it. Many older folks have to move into assisted living, and when that happens we make them picture books of their [former] homes as keepsakes. We do whatever it takes to make people feel better about the move, and to make the process as simple and stress-free as possible from start to finish."

Deana has the support of a "trustworthy, caring" team, including five buyer's agents (her husband, Tom, among them), as well as a full-time assistant and two part-time assistants. When buyers begin looking for a new place to call home, Deana's agents will guide them through a process similar to the one she goes through with sellers. Together, the agent and the client assess prospective purchases through the lens of five key considerations: affordability, location, timing, home condition, and future needs.

"Interest rates shouldn't stop you," she adds. "Just because you get in at a higher interest rate, that's a short-term problem because you can always refinance. There are always ways to get creative on the finance side."

Deana's positive attitude extends not only to current market conditions, but also to where

she expects the market to head next. While some Realtors fall prey to the "fear factor" over worries of a downturn, Deana's years of experience have taught her that cooler, calmer heads prevail.

"In this area, I don't see the market ever going down significantly," she says. "We are in an in-demand area; people want to live here. There's also not enough homes being built right now, which is why you see so many apartment complexes going up. Everyone on my team has an attitude of plenty; if you're passionate about this work and have the experience to back it up, there's plenty for all of us to go around, and there will be plenty more to come." ■



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