

REAL ESTATE

APRIL
2024

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NEXT STEP REALTY SOUTH

Page 8

Matt Wyble, Lynn Peaper and Joe Smith have helped clients buy and sell homes for over 30 combined years.

THE BEST INSURANCE FOR THE BEST PRICE

Page 5

Reduce the cost of your homeowners insurance.

HOME SELLING & BUYING TIPS

Page 6

From staging to settlement and lender approval to closing.

ESTATE PLANNING CHECKLIST

Page 14

This is one of the most important things you can do for your family.



Thinking About Downsizing Your Home?

Jenna Aliff
Park
Modern
Realty



The thought of leaving your current home might seem overwhelming, but you may realize that moving to a smaller and simpler home would be beneficial.

Change is difficult for anyone, however, there are some substantial benefits to downsizing:

- Cash out on the equity in your home that has built up over the years.
- Reduce clutter and create more open space, find items to donate, and save your family the task of sorting through your personal property down the road.
- A smaller home means fewer chores and less to take care of and clean, freeing up your time to enjoy your favorite activities.
- A smaller home will be easier to get around. For example, a one-story with no steps can make life more comfortable and safer.
- A smaller home typically means lower bills.

You can downsize at any point as there are many life changes that could make downsizing worthwhile. It is worth researching where you want to live, what kind of property you'd like to live in and the lifestyle you want to live.

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You can downsize at any point as there are many life changes that could make downsizing worthwhile. It is worth researching where you want to live, what kind of property you'd like to live in and the lifestyle you want to live.

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Transferring Your Home To Your Loved Ones

Paula Mattson-Sarli
Managing Attorney
 Law Office
 of Steven M.
 Berger



Understanding how your property transfers at death can reduce anxiety and lead to less conflict when you're gone. There could be significant tax implications, expenses and unexpected liens. It is important to consult an attorney before making

changes to your title.

When someone passes away, there may be a probate estate or trust subject to administration. If there is a property in the estate or trust, we often recommend obtaining an appraisal. The appraisal determines the date of death

value for tax purposes. If the property is sold while in the estate, the proceeds will need to be deposited into an estate account. The estate will receive a 1099S that needs to be reported on a 1041 fiduciary tax return.

Continued on page 12



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How To Get The **Best** Insurance For The **Best** Price



Alex Schwab
Allstate Insurance

The goal of an insurance professional should be to provide the best protection for the best price possible.

While more frequent severe weather and higher repair prices are causing insurance claim costs to soar, customers can get competitive prices and save money by bundling home and auto insurance. This leads to a



commonly asked question, "How can I reduce the cost of my homeowners insurance?"

The answer is simple: review your policy with your agent. An agent can advise

you on important coverage decisions, answer any questions, and help simplify your experience. They can help you find available discounts and deductibles, and they can guide you through the homeowners claims process.

A multiple policy discount for bundling your home and auto insurance together provides significant savings to both policies. Newer roofs and protective devices, such as alarm systems, can also lead to reduced premiums.

The deductible is your out-of-pocket cost in the event of a claim. Many homeowners

Continued on page 12

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KEYGROUP'S HOME SELLING PROCESS



STAGING
Prepare your home for sale by removing clutter. It will show better and look much larger. Extra space ranks high on a buyers' priority list.



PHOTOGRAPHY
Most homebuyers start their hunt online, so a home's "photo appeal" is taking over as the top way to impress buyers.

INSPECTION AND APPRAISAL

Buyer will have a professional home inspection for structural and mechanical items, roof, termite, etc. and their lender will order an appraisal.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a powerful tool in your home-selling arsenal. Your agent will:

- › post an open house
- › create a virtual home tour
- › engage with the neighborhood



PREPARING TO SELL

- › Meet with your agent to review market activity
- › Calculate selling expenses and determine sale price
- › Plan your selling strategy
- › Meet with our home stager
- › Discuss showing service and lock box procedures



MARKETING

- Our team will:
- Create MLS listing, design ads, signs, flyers
 - Create a social media strategy
 - Post showings, open houses, and virtual home tours



OFFER RECEIVED

- › Review the offer in detail with your agent
- › Review a "Seller's Net" provided by your agent
- › If multiple offers, determine the best course of action
- › Create a possible counter offer



UNDER CONTRACT

- › Negotiate buyer repair requests
- › Your agent will meet, provide comparable home sales, and discuss the value with appraiser
- › Contact movers
- › Provide mortgage payoff authorization to the title company



SETTLEMENT

- › Buyer will complete a final walk through to check repairs
- › Review final ALTA statement from the title company
- › Sign all closing documents at settlement

KEYGROUP'S FIVE STEPS TO HOME BUYING

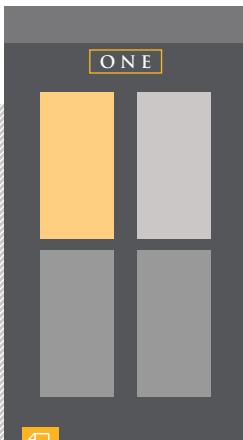


PERSONAL INSPECTION

Obtain a professional home inspection and negotiate any necessary repairs.

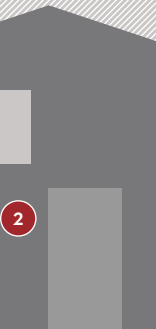


ONE



LENDER APPROVAL

- › Reach out to a lender to get pre-approved for a mortgage
- › Begin to collect financial documentation that the lender will require
- › Discuss concerns with your agent in regards to the timing of your move



THE SEARCH

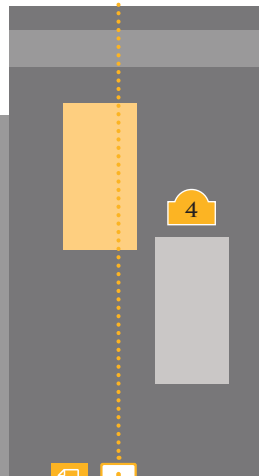
- › Determine your needs and wants:
 - Location (urban, suburban, rural)
 - Type (single family, condo, townhome)
 - Price range
 - Architectural style
- › Tour Properties



THE OFFER

- › Review comparable recent home sales to determine offer price
- › Update your pre-approval letter to match offer price
- › Provide earnest money deposit
- › Determine closing date
- › Determine warranty, special requests, and inspection terms

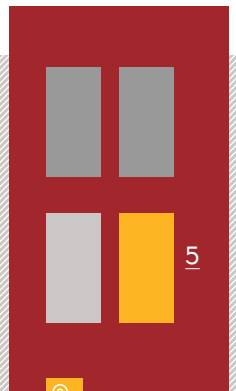
FOUR



UNDER CONTRACT

- › Choose title company
- › Finalize loan with lenders
- › Complete home inspections and request repairs
- › Lender will order appraisal and title company will order survey
- › Shop for homeowners insurance
- › Transfer utilities

FIVE



CLOSING

- › Review closing disclosure from lender
- › Review the final ALTA statement from the title company
- › Complete final walk through
- › Check repairs
- › Sign all closing documents at settlement

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Expertise And Client Care Are Hallmarks

By Meredith Winter

For most people, buying or selling a home can be one of life's biggest financial transactions, not to mention exciting, stressful and confusing all at once. Residents of Anne Arundel County can breathe a sigh of relief, however, with experienced real estate professionals like Matt Wyble, Joe Smith and Lynn Peaper ready and eager to help them navigate the complexities of the real estate world.

Having worked together as a team for seven years now, Wyble, Smith and Peaper have over 30 combined years of experience helping clients of all ages and income levels buy and sell homes in Severna Park, Arnold and beyond. After five consecutive years of being recognized as the number-one CENTURY 21 team in Maryland, the three merged with Maryland-based Next Step Realty (NSR) to create Next Step Realty South (NSRS) in 2023. Together, they are managing partners and co-owners of NSRS, which is jointly owned along with NSR co-owners James Weiskerger and Kelly Schuit.

As the corporate real estate world seemingly became more and more focused on metrics rather than people, Wyble, Smith and Peaper conducted a 12-month search for a new client-focused brokerage to call home. Now, Next Step Realty empowers them to make their clients and their agents their top professional priorities.

"We all take amazing care of our clients, we all take amazing care of our families, and are very similar in age and goals and outcomes, but it's amazing how you can do this business so differently and still end up equally successful," Wyble said, alluding to his and his colleagues' varied strengths and backgrounds.

Wyble is a fourth-generation Anne Arundel County real estate agent following in the footsteps of his grandfather and great-grandfather. He began his career in marketing, but like Peaper and Smith, pursued his real estate license because he wanted to help his community.

Smith, a longtime Anne Arundel County resident, cultivated a passion for real estate eight years ago. Smith is bilingual and was born to deaf parents, which makes him a CODA, or child of deaf adults. Being fluent in American Sign Language is one of his unique strengths to help his clients of all needs have the best real estate experience possible.

Mother to three active children, Peaper began her career as a nurse before electing to change career paths in 2015. "She shot off like a rocket the very first year of business and had 'rookie-of-the-year-style' numbers and hasn't looked back ever since," Wyble remarked of his colleague.

The trio pride themselves on being true, full-time real estate professionals who are confident, competent and always looking out for their clients' best interests. Together, they have sold and settled over \$500 million in real estate representing more than 1,100 transactions. Through their combined expertise, they provide



Matt Wyble is a fourth-generation real estate agent dedicated to serving clients in Anne Arundel County and Central Maryland. He especially enjoys helping senior citizens who are seeking to downsize, and "move-up" clients who are ready to leave their starter homes.

concierge-level service to any and all clients looking for industry leaders to help them with their real estate needs.

Wyble works with clients primarily in central Anne Arundel County, but he also does business in much of Howard, Queen Anne's and Baltimore counties and Baltimore City. He especially enjoys helping "move-up" clients who are transitioning out of their starter homes into long-term residences, as well as senior citizens who are looking to downsize.

Smith also works primarily in Anne Arundel County and surrounding areas, helping a wide range of clients including the deaf community. Being a top producer in the area, he has clients ranging from first-time homebuyers to families looking for a larger space to call home, as well as new construction community projects. "Whether you're a client, a referral from someone, or if you're connected to me somehow in my community, I'm going to make sure you're taken care of," Smith said.

Of Next Step Realty South



Peaper also primarily operates within Anne Arundel County, often in properties at the upper end of the market. She has developed passions for helping buyers build their ideal homes through custom construction projects and assisting homeowners in preparing their homes for the market when selling. Working with mostly busy professionals, she remarked, "I take as much as possible off of my clients' plates so that they can focus on their lives outside of the move."

Wyble noted that 90 percent of the team's clients are referral based, repeat clients, family friends and people from within their spheres of influence – which together are large due to their active involvement in the community.

Wyble, Smith and Peaper have deep roots in Severna Park. Wyble and Peaper met in eighth grade and graduated as good friends from Severna Park High School (SPHS). Smith's three children attend Severna Park schools and are active with the Greater Severna Park Athletic Association, also known as the Green Hornets. Wyble's kids also attend Severna Park schools, and he gives back to his hometown through serving on SPHS' business advisory board, teaching a credit 101 class at county high schools, and fundraising for local hospitals with his wife through their For Ellie Foundation, a nonprofit started in memory of their daughter Ellie, who passed away at 3 months old.

Additionally, Next Step Realty is an active member of the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce and sponsors the chamber's annual Christmas tree lighting and Taste and Sip event.

Collectively, Wyble, Peaper and Smith bring to the table a wealth of experience, a deep understanding of the ever-shifting real estate market, and a shared commitment to providing exemplary service to clients. To learn more about buying and selling with Next Step Realty, visit www.nextsteprealtymd.com or call 443-901-2200. ■

Joe Smith is eager to serve anyone who has a real estate need, and he is uniquely equipped as a child of deaf adults to assist deaf clients with their home buying and selling transactions.



Experienced in selling properties at the upper end of the market, Lynn Peaper is passionate about helping buyers build their ideal homes through custom construction and assisting homeowners in preparing their homes for sale.



Five Simple Spring Safety Tips For Your Home

(Brandpoint) — Refreshing your home in the spring is about more than organizing closets and cleaning floors. As winter melts away and warmer weather returns, proactively checking your home's systems will help keep it running efficiently while remaining a comfortable and safe space for you and your loved ones.

Upgrade Fire And CO Safety Solutions

While you're ticking through your list of spring maintenance to-do's, don't forget about the smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. Proper smoke and CO alarm placement, regular maintenance and alarm replacement are essential to keeping your family safe. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends that alarms be installed on every level of the home, including the basement, as well as in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. Alarms should be tested regularly, and if the device is battery-powered, batteries should be changed at least every six months.

To make maintaining your smoke and CO alarms easier, upgrade to a two-in-one smoke and carbon monoxide alarm, such as the First Alert 10-Year Battery Combination Alarm. This 10-year sealed battery alarm eliminates battery replacement and late-night battery chirps for a decade. Easy to install, 10-year alarms come equipped with a mounting bracket and installation kit — making safety simple for you and your family.

Check For Winter Wear And Tear

Winter's extreme temperatures can take a toll on the outside of your home and its appliances. Examine the outside of your house and roof to check for fallen branches or debris that could block gutters or downspouts and cause a drainage problem. Inspect the driveway and sidewalks for new potholes or cracks that may have developed in the cold, and ensure all exterior lights are working properly.



Tune Up Your Cooling System

When the weather gets milder, schedule a professional maintenance service to ensure that your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are operating optimally and won't quit after the first heat wave. If you don't already have one, upgrade to a smart thermostat, like a Honeywell Home Smart Thermostat, which allows you to adjust your temperature from

anywhere and set different temperature schedules for various times of the day. ENERGY STAR certified thermostats can provide comfort when you're home, and energy savings when away.

Change Your Air Filters

Over a long winter, your heating system's air filters naturally accumulate dust and other airborne particles, which can clog your air filter, impact indoor air quality and affect system performance. Regularly replacing your air filters is a great way to help maintain indoor air quality and support a comfortable environment for your family. Clean air filters also allow for better air flow, reducing the stress on your home's HVAC system and promoting energy efficiency.

Secure Windows And Doors

Warmer weather often breeds more home break-ins as burglars like when windows are open at night or garage doors are open during yardwork. But you can help lower the threat by hardening the target. Walk around outside of your home to inspect doors and windows for working locks and be mindful not to leave valuables in sight. If you have cars parked in your driveway, keep them locked and garage door openers should be tucked away.

To help protect what matters most and learn more fire safety tips, visit www.firstalert.com. For assistance with HVAC or home security assessments, contact your local professional service. ■



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Transferring Your Home To Your Loved Ones

Continued from page 4

If a property is vacant, the homeowner's insurance company may not cover the property. In addition, if the property is not being used as a residence after the death of the owner, it is possible the homestead credit could be recaptured by the county before a new deed can be transferred. Once the property is ready to be distributed from the trust or estate, the personal representative or trustee must sign a new deed and record it with the land records. The job is not done unless the property is in the name of the beneficiary. As you can see, working with an estate attorney ensures that the personal representative meets all of his or her obligations and nothing falls through the cracks.

People consult estate attorneys at different stages of life. I believe the attorney should meet with the client and identify their goals. Some clients are young married couples who own

their property as tenants by the entireties and aren't concerned about what happens when they are gone. Others are widows or widowers who now own their property alone and are concerned about probate or ensuring one child has a right to remain in the home after they are gone. Each situation is unique and requires careful thought and guidance.

If a client wants to avoid probate, an attorney may mention life estate deeds with powers, revocable living trusts and joint ownership. For asset protection planning options, they may suggest creating an LLC and transferring the property into the LLC. If a client wants to protect the house from a Medicaid lien as part of estate recovery, we discuss life estate deeds without powers, irrevocable trusts and outright gifts of property. With knowledge there is peace of mind. Start planning today.

For more information or to consult an attorney, visit www.bergerwills.com. ■

How To Get The Best Insurance For The Best Price

Continued from page 5

instinctively want a low deductible. However, a higher deductible will reduce the cost of the policy.

Each situation is different, and customers can decide whether they want to file a claim. Schedule a review with a local licensed insurance professional to make sure you are receiving the best protection for the best price.

Alex Schwab is a third-generation insurance professional representing Allstate Insurance.

Schwab Insurance Agency is located at 517 Benfield Road, Suite 202, in Severna Park and may be reached at 410-255-3200.

Insurance coverage and discounts are subject to terms, conditions and availability, which may vary by state. Discount amounts and potential savings will vary. ■



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Five Home Improvement Projects That Are Low Cost And High Impact

By NAPSI

Housing prices may be as expensive as ever, but that doesn't necessarily mean you have to put your plans for a dream home on hold. Rather than purchasing a new house, many homeowners are instead opting to improve their current living spaces through redecorating and do-it-yourself projects. You don't have to be a DIY expert to get started — many of these projects are extremely approachable, helping you to upgrade your home without breaking the bank.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are seemingly endless possibilities when it comes to home improvement, so it might be overwhelming to determine where to begin. To give you some inspiration, the experts at Design House have shared five DIY-projects that are low cost and can result in high impact on your home.

Get A Handle On Hardware

Replacing hardware on your kitchen cabinets, vanity pulls, hinges or door stops can create an instant makeover and is a DIY project anyone can take on. Selecting new hardware allows you to explore trending designs that immediately make a dated home more current. An affordable upgrade, hardware is often sold in convenient, pre-packed quantities and can often be purchased for less than \$100.



Brighten A Room With A Mirror



Mirrors reflect light, which can result in making a room appear more open and illuminated. Adding a mirror can have the effect of an additional window or light source. By strategically placing a mirror on the wall, you can enhance both the lighting and spatial qualities of a room.

Install A Lamp Post



Lamp posts are a great way to increase the curb appeal of your home, adding beauty to entranceways, walkways and paths. As an added benefit, they can also provide increased safety after dark and help with easier navigation from place to place at night.

Update With Upholstered Seating



If you have an open floor plan, explore incorporating upholstered seating throughout your kitchen and dining areas. For bar, counter and dining areas, utilizing upholstered seating is a simple way to enhance your home with touches of luxury.

Add A Medicine Cabinet



Give your bathroom a refresh by installing a medicine cabinet. In addition to providing extra storage, medicine cabinet designs offer a variety of styles and sizes to choose from that will best fit both your aesthetic and functional needs.

These are several of the many projects anyone can take on without extensive DIY experience. In addition to being affordable, all of these upgrades can have a high impact when it comes to enhancing your home. ■

Estate Planning Checklist

Five Key Steps To Protect Your Family



**Karen
Authement**
KMA Law
Office



Estate planning is an uncomfortable subject for a lot of people. And because it is so uncomfortable, many people find reasons to keep putting it off.

Here's the reality: Planning your estate is one of the most important things you can do for your family and your loved ones.

Putting an estate plan into place can save your loved ones a tremendous amount of time, energy and money – and it can help to avoid damaging disagreements and

disputes between your heirs.

There are five important topics that you must consider to be sure that your family and your loved ones are protected. Let's dive in!

1 Guardianship *Who's Going To Care For Your Kids?*

If you have kids under the age of 18, this is perhaps the most important and immediate decision that you need to make.

If you and your spouse pass away, who is going to raise your children?

There is so much to consider. Who are your kids going to be comfortable with? Who do you trust to take care of them? Who shares your values? Who will raise your kids most similar to the way you would have?

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Ultimately this is a sensitive, personal decision and it's important that you and your spouse think it through carefully.

In addition to naming a "permanent" guardian, you should also think through temporary guardians in the event that your permanent guardians are traveling or otherwise unavailable when you pass away.

If you don't make these decisions, the court system is going to make them for you. Don't let that happen.

2 Life Insurance

Make Sure Your Family's Financial Needs Are Met

How will your family pay the bills if you pass away and can no longer provide an income? How will your kids pay for college? Life insurance is an important tool to make sure that your loved ones are taken care of financially should you pass away.

A good rule of thumb is that your insurance policy should be roughly 10 times your annual salary.

That means if you are earning a salary of \$150,000 per year, you'd likely want a life insurance policy worth \$1.5 million. Of course, there are many important variables to consider when deciding on the right coverage amount. You can work with a qualified financial advisor to get these policies in place if you don't already have them.

It's critical that you have your beneficiaries properly named within your life insurance policy – making a mistake in this area can create major complications should you pass away unexpectedly. For example, if you have minor children and you don't properly name your beneficiaries, the adult taking care of your children may not be able to access the money until they turn 18.



You want to make sure that your life insurance is properly structured and identified within your estate planning documents so that the proceeds are distributed in the way you would like them to be distributed should you pass away.

3 Trusts

How Will Your Assets Be Distributed?

A trust is an important estate planning tool that basically determines how and when your assets should be distributed after you pass away. Many people think that trusts are only for the ultra-wealthy, but the reality is that trusts are accessible and valuable for most people. If you own a home, you should have a trust in place as part of your estate plan!

There are many benefits of using a trust as a part of your estate plan – including that it will help you avoid probate and minimize taxes after you pass away. These are two big deals. Probate is a legal process that can sometimes delay your assets being distributed for many months or even years. And obviously, the lower your taxes, the more money goes to your loved ones instead of to the government.

If you have children under 18, a trust can also be used

to detail how and when you want them to receive their inheritance. It's not generally a good idea to give an 18-year-old a big lump sum of cash, and your trust will allow you to distribute their inheritance over time however you see fit.

There are many strategic variables that go into creating an effective trust.

4 Powers of Attorney and Living Will

What Happens If You're Incapacitated?

What do you want to happen if you're medically incapacitated? Powers of attorney appoint others to make financial and medical decisions on your behalf if you're unable to do so.

In addition, you can create a living will to express your wishes in the event that you're incapacitated. For example, some people may wish to include a "Do Not Resuscitate" order in their living will.

Estate planning tools that you can use to communicate these orders include:

- Durable financial power of attorney
- Health care power of attorney
- Living will

If you or your spouse own

a business, it's important that you also think through these decisions in that context. Who will run your company if you are incapacitated? How and when will you step back in after you recover?

Each of these estate planning tools has a specific purpose and must be created properly in order to have legal standing.

5 Keep Your Plan Current

As Your Life Changes, Your Estate Plan Needs To Be Updated

Your estate plan is intended to be a living, breathing document – and as your life changes, your estate plan needs to be updated.

For example, here are several common reasons you may need to update your plan:

- Marriage
- Divorce
- Death of a loved one
- Falling out with somebody named in your will
- Retirement
- Health scare
- Health diagnosis for yourself or a loved one
- Memory impairment
- Minor child turns 18
- Birth of a child
- Adoption of a child
- Purchase or sale of a business
- Purchase of a rental property
- Moving your family to a new state

And there are many more circumstances that could change and would then need to be updated in your estate plan.

As a general rule, it's a good idea to review your plan at least every one to two years – or anytime there are any major life changes. ■

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Attorneys Providing Quality Legal Services.*

KMA Law Office focuses on helping individuals and families with the following:

Estate Planning:

- Wills
- Trusts - Revocable Trusts,
Special Needs Trusts, etc.
- Power of Attorney
- Advanced Directives

Significant life events require periodic review of your Estate Planning documents.
Let us make sure your assets are protected for your loved ones future!

Personal Injury:

- Car Accidents
- Work Injuries
- Dog Bites

No one plans to get hurt and it can turn a family's world upside down.
We help injury victims get the compensation they're entitled to!

*Big Firm Services With
Small Firm Personal Attention*

**Schedule Your Free
Consultation Today**

