



How Much is that Swimming Pool Worth?

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With the spring selling season approaching and the weather warming up, it's a good time to take a look at how swimming pools play into a home's value. When you work with sellers, you'll have to determine how much the pool is worth and how to market it successfully.

Like any other unique home feature, swimming pools can either thrill homeowners or leave them cold, making their real value up to the buyer.

On the plus side, swimming pools are part of the overall outdoor decorating trend that has given new emphasis to backyard landscaping, fencing, walkways, decks, weather-proof kitchens, fireplaces, patios, ponds, and more. This trend makes it easier to show off a pool as a true asset to the home.

However, you also should know about potential drawbacks. Pools come with safety risks—especially for families with small children. They also require a fair amount of maintenance and usually add to a home's insurance costs.

When working with sellers, you will have to gauge how much or how little their pool adds to the home's list price. Consider the following factors:

- **Demand.** Are pools popular in your area?
- **Style.** Is the pool area appropriate in look and function to the home and the neighborhood? Does the pool eliminate room for a play area or augment a play area? Is there an outdoor cabana with an extra shower and water closet?
- **Condition.** Does the pool appear as well-maintained as the home? Are there any visible cracks, broken tiles, or cloudy water that would telegraph large expenses to the buyer? How old are the mechanical components? Do they need to be replaced? Have the tile surround or concrete walkways been updated?
- **Staging.** Do the homeowners use the pool? Have they staged it with tables, chairs, barbecue pits, and other accoutrements to outdoor fun to appeal to residents and guests?
- **Age.** How old is the pool and does it look outdated? If so, it can make the home appear tired, too. Also, if the pool is old, it may need a new motorized pump, water filter, or other components, which can drain the pocketbook.

Encourage sellers to have pool maintenance records handy so you can decide what needs to be done for your marketing. Get recent prices from local pool companies on similar pools and see where your seller's pool compares. Most pool companies are happy to oblige in order to get the maintenance, repair, or redesign business from the new owner.

You'll also have to find out what type of pool the seller has in order to market it effectively. According to the information Web site, pools come in five styles. Here they are, listed in order of the least expensive to most expensive type of basin:

- 1. Above-ground.** The cheapest construction option, as well as the easiest to build.
- 2. Fiberglass.** Made from fiberglass-reinforced plastic, which has been molded into a basin shape.
- 3. Vinyl-lined in-ground.** A lot like above-ground pools, structurally, but they look more like conventional in-ground designs and their liners need to be replaced every 10 years or so.
- 4. Gunite.** Currently the most popular design in much of the United States, a highly durable sprayed mixture of cement and sand over a mesh grid.
- 5. Poured-concrete.** Similar to Gunite pools, but a lot harder to build. Instead of spraying concrete material around a rebar framework, concrete is actually poured into conventional wooden forms.

Before you start showing the home, have the seller "shock" clean the pool to make the water sparkle, and remove debris and old or broken toys and loungers. And finally, show off the pool from the inside of the home by cleaning the windows and opening the curtains or blinds.

A move-in ready home with a swim-ready pool can be very attractive to the right buyer, so the more you can encourage the homeseller to stage the pool, the better.