



**Manageable Transition Seminar  
November 3, 2011**

On November 3, The Village at Brookwood hosted its first *Manageable Transitions* Seminar. The speakers included Pat Riley, President and Chief Operating Officer at Tate Realtors, Charlotte N.C.; Kimberly Lee, stager and owner of *All About Image*; and Karen White, transitional mover and owner of *The Right Moves*. Each speaker addressed an element in the saga of moving and offered information and strategies to minimize the difficulty of the ordeal.

**SELLING YOUR HOUSE IN TODAY'S MARKET**

Having 37 years of experience in the real estate market, Pat Riley served as the expert realtor with information about current home values, home sales, and strategies of selling a home in today's market. He informed the audience that the best recovery in the Carolina's rate of sales is Greenville, SC. Followed by the Triangle, and the Triad remaining steady. Riley emphasized that home sales and values varied greatly according to geographic location, so one must be careful listening to the news that tends to report national trends.

In his PowerPoint presentation, Riley presented several charts that indicated the rapid growth in home values from 2000-2007, at which time home values began to drop and have continued to drop through today's market. Riley reviewed the factors that have contributed to slow sales and the depreciation of home values that we have experienced and continue to experience:

- 1-A national policy to raise level of home ownership
- 2-The crash of the stock market drove investors to use real estate as an investment strategy
- 3-Interest rates at historic lows.

All of these things have resulted in a dramatic drop in the level of equity people had in their homes.

The real question, the elephant in the room, is "when is this going to stop?"

But, Riley first encouraged the audience to put things in perspective. For decades, home values tended to increase approximately 2% per year. That remained a true and steady rate until the inflated home values of the mid to late 2000's. According to Forbes.com: "Housing had a superb decade" – 58% increase in value per square foot in last ten years. Riley stated, "I think we hit bottom in October, 2010 so we are seeing real estate sales increase. Property values should turn around gradually at the end of 2012."

Why 2012 instead of now? Distressed housing. Distressed housing or housing in some form of foreclosure continues to have a negative impact on home sales. These houses glut the market and tend to reduce home values. In NC, we have almost 10 months of foreclosed homes on the market. These homes must clear before we can begin our recovery. Riley stated, "Price compaction will continue throughout 2012."

But, the good news is that it appears we are getting to the end of this trying and anxiety-producing period. In a year or so, we should once again experience a 2% per year value increase in our homes – the prudent, historic trend in home value increases. But, for those who may be tempted to wait to regain the home value of 2007, it may be a long wait. You must consider the availability, the cost and your health versus waiting for home appreciation again.

According to Pat Riley, who has already worked through this transition with his own parents, “The real key is to find the place where you maximize your life investment in your home, keeping in mind what’s a good time for your buyer, and still maximize the opportunity to meet the long term needs of your retirement years.” The other speakers for the day, a stager and a transitional senior mover, offered advice and suggestions on how to present your home today to get that best offer early so that you can continue your plans for a move sooner, rather than gambling on an insecure future of home sales.

### STAGING FOR TODAY’S HOME BUYER

Kim Lee followed with strategies to get your home sold in a buyer’s market. Many of her comments reinforced the previously stated observations that there are lots of homes on the market from which to choose. The real key is to make your home the best product at your particular price point by making it turn-key ready and up-to-date. Kim states, “Your house should stand out among its competition.”

Ms. Lee presented several specific tasks to prepare your house to go on the market:

- 1-Declutter-remove unnecessary furniture and items to create rooms that feel open.
- 2-Depersonalize – take out personal pictures, trophies or anything that makes the home look like it’s yours, rather than the new homeowner’s.
- 3-Update and repair-remove all wallpaper; today’s buyer prefers painted walls and they don’t want the expense or bother of removing existing wallpaper.
- 4- Clean and organize- Clear off kitchen and bathroom countertops. Don’t forget to clean out cabinets and closets. Buyers will be opening cabinets, drawers and closets; you don’t want them to feel that storage space is limited by overcrowded storage areas.
- 4-Neutralize – in both floor and wall finishes, use off-white, light beige or taupe. You may also sneak by with a little color if you use a light sage or butter cream.
- 5-Stage it-today’s consumer wants the prepared home to look open and impersonal, more like a hotel room. Keep in mind; you want it to look like their home. Save your decorating personality to decorate your next home.
- 6-Invest in good photography and post on the internet-whether you use a realtor or offer your home for-sale-by-owner, keep in mind that today’s consumer previews online before coming to visit. Be sure your pictures convince them to visit your house.

Lee informed the audience that all of these tasks can be performed by a professional stager. A professional stager is aware of current sentiments of the home buyer. He/she does not have emotional attachments or sentimentality; therefore, a stager can realistically create that new image to attract today’s home buyer.

### NAVIGATING THE PACKING AND MOVING

The final segment of the seminar addressed the ever-dreaded move itself. Karen White is a transitional mover who assists older adults as they transition, a move that usually requires some downsizing.

Ms. White identified several reasons why moving might be more difficult for someone who is older: it may be harder to organize and create a long range strategy for the move; you had years to accumulate more items; you may want to limit the number of hours per day you have to organize and pack; you may have multiple family members giving you varying and conflicting advice; and you may be overwhelmed by the required decision-making.

All of these reasons create the perfect storm, a storm that may be quieted by the use of a transitional mover. Ms. White mapped out the strategy for a manageable move:

1-Plan your move: do as many things as you can ahead of time. Cleaning closets and drawers can be an ongoing habit that will give you great relief when you finally decide to move.

2-Declutter: go through your house a room at a time, top floor to bottom floor. A) Identify things that can be thrown away immediately; B) Identify things you would like to donate and utilize your community donation sites, many of which will pick up large donations. White explained that you may take up to \$5000 in donations per year and the deduction can be spread over a five year period. White felt, "In the long run, you get more benefit from donations than attempting to sell many of your items. If you have top of the line antiques, you may want to use an auction house; otherwise, donations are a prudent way to go." C) Identify items you would like to give to family members. Keep in mind that you may want to talk to them first. White warns, "Don't just assume that your children want your items. They often have established homes of their own with no room for additional furniture or china."

3-Start small and work strategically forward: You can start with decluttering cabinets and drawers. Remember that when you move to a smaller, more manageable place, any storage area becomes valuable real estate to you.

4-Know the square footage of your new home and pack accordingly: think about taking furniture that includes storage – perhaps using a small chest as a coffee or side table. Don't forget artwork. Take your favorite pieces but don't take art that has filled a 12 room house and expect it to look nice in a seven-room Garden Home or four-room apartment.

5-Consider purchasing new electronic systems: Today's electronics tend to be more compact and take up less space.

6-Unpack boxes as they arrive.

And, to make an effortless move, use a transitional mover rather than just the traditional moving company. You and your family can go out for the day and return to your new location that is already arranged, decorated, pictures on the wall, and the bedroom ready for your first night at your new residence.