



Picket Fence Preview Presents

“The FSBO Concierge” A Helpful Guide For Private Home Sellers

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Introduction

This step-by-step instruction booklet has been designed to cover everything you need to know about selling a home "by owner" in Western Massachusetts using the services provided by Picket Fence Preview.

Perhaps you haven't quite decided to sell on your own and have requested this guide to help you make up your mind. Maybe you have already tested the waters and feel that you have too much at stake to make a mistake and want to make sure you are doing everything you can to promote your property. It could be that you are feeling overwhelmed with the process and are considering handing the job to a local real estate agent.

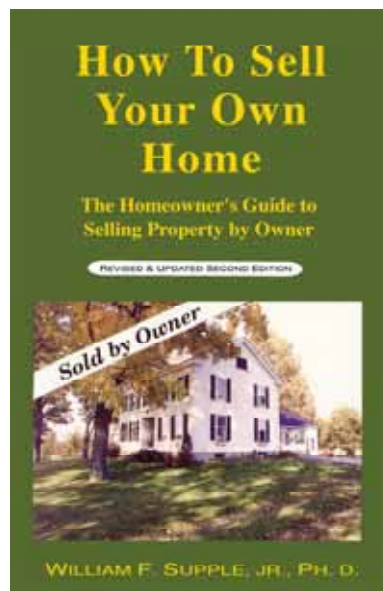
STOP!!! Don't give away THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS when you don't have to.

Whether you have questions regarding your marketing plan, where and how to reach buyers effectively, how to work with agents on YOUR terms or what to do to find the best buyer, you can count on Picket Fence Preview to offer you solid ideas and marketing assistance. We can help you stay on track and give you information that real estate agents don't want you to know. We have helped area home sellers save over \$7.5 million dollars in our first five years alone! When you sell using our services, you're still selling on your own....you're just not alone.



The Book

If you have recently chosen to use our services, we welcome you and want you to know we are here to help. By now you are probably reading your new book, **“How To Sell Your Own Home”**, written by Picket Fence Preview’s founder, William Supple, PhD. Our book is the most widely used support manual by regional for sale by owner services all over the country. It is the definitive guide on selling by owner and is filled with helpful information that has been gathered from the experts – people just like you who have successfully sold their homes using our proven methods. While the book is tremendously helpful, our advertisers have relied on us to help them find local resources and wanted information specific to Massachusetts. In this, our first edition of FSBO Concierge, we have tried to put together a lot of great information specifically on how to work with us.



If you haven't received your copy, give us a call. It is included in all our package plans and available for purchase as well.

FAQ

Q: Is Picket Fence Preview a real estate agency?

A: No, we are a for-sale-by-owner advertising service. Advertisers pay for their advertising and any products purchased only and never pay a real estate commission.

Q: How do you get paid?

A: We are paid through the advertising and product purchases from our home sellers.

Q: Where are you located and how can I contact you?

A: Our office and storefront is located at 4B Liberty St., Easthampton, MA 01027. Our phone number is (413)-529-2970 or Toll Free: (888)-920-FSBO. You may email us at info@ma4salebyowner.com Our website address is: <http://www.ma4salebyowner.com>

Q: If I advertise with you, am I free to advertise elsewhere?

A: Absolutely. You are in complete control. There are reasons why you may want to make us your primary point of advertising due to our wide exposure and the free use of our website in other advertising.

Q: I'm thinking of creating my own website. Can you link to it?

A: Maybe, but have you considered that investing money and time in a separate website may be unnecessary? Our Virtual Slide Show will give you plenty of room to describe your home and buyers find it easy to navigate. We enjoy very high search engine ranking naturally and your site will most likely never be seen unless you link to it directly. If you've already created one, let us look at it first.

Q: My home is listed with an agent now. Can I advertise with you at the same time?

A: It depends on your contract. If you have an open listing and can sell by owner simultaneously (builders often do this) it's no problem. If you have an exclusive listing, your agent may be entitled to a commission even if you do all the work. It doesn't sound like your agent is doing anything to promote your property. Maybe it's time to cancel the contract and take control of the sale.

Q: What is your deadline to advertise and how frequently does the magazine come out?

A: We really don't have a deadline as we take in property ads throughout the month. Our print deadline for our magazine is usually the 15th, however. You will receive FREE internet by getting your ad in before the deadline. The magazine is published monthly and is on the street by the 1st of each month.

Q: Where can I find a magazine?

A: We are in over 350 locations throughout Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire counties. Call us to find a local drop off point. We also have a subscription service for out of area buyers.

Q: I have a friend who is a real estate agent who wants me to list with her. I'd like to try it on my own but don't want to damage our relationship. Any suggestions?

A: Tell her that you have decided to sell "by owner" and offer her a finder's fee if she brings you a buyer. Sometimes sellers know more than one agent so they tell each of them that it would be "too hard" to choose between them, therefore deciding to sell by owner. This way you can still be invited to the neighborhood BBQ.

Why Picket Fence Preview?

Sometimes we hear new advertisers say to us, "I thought I'd try it on my own first, but now I realize I wasn't getting any response." The fact is, you are *still* selling "on your own" when you advertise with Picket Fence Preview. You're just *not alone*. Here is just some of what we offer:

- We are local. Being local is a big deal. Anyone can start a FSBO website in their basement and can brag about its popularity. You can stop in our office anytime and meet with a real person. Your ad will never be lost in cyberspace and you can always contact us. Because we are local, we know the area, the local real estate market, and the local media outlets. We can assist you in hundreds of ways that internet-only services cannot.
- We have no hidden agenda. Our business model is based upon one thing – helping you be successful selling "by owner". Unlike national internet-only companies who must attract affiliated partner businesses to pay for their websites, or mortgage company lead generator websites that depend on sellers as bait for buyers, our revenue comes from serious home sellers who pay in advance to get the best advertising possible. Buyers contact you directly, and are never solicited for other products or services, or are required to give out personal financial information just to ask for information on your property.
- Properties advertised through our services are real and current. It's amazing how many FSBO websites contain nothing but outdated property ads. It's easy to fool website visitors into thinking a site is successful by putting a lot of properties online. Buyers, however, see through this quickly and avoid websites where they hit dead ends. There are no outdated properties on <http://www.ma4salebyowner.com> or in Picket Fence Preview magazine. We report when properties are under contract and when they have been sold. Our advertisers complete a sales survey to help us use this information to better serve you.

Preparing Your Home For The Market

Make any necessary repairs and catch up on deferred maintenance. A well cared for property shows pride of ownership. Begin the process of de-cluttering and de-personalizing. A home that is free from clutter and personal decorating touches is more appealing to buyers, looks bigger and helps them envision themselves living there.

A buyer makes an impression about your home within seconds of seeing it. That means your “curb appeal” needs to POP! The four main areas to pay attention to are the entry, kitchen, living room and master bedroom. Outside, clear walkways, stay on top of yard work, and remove toys and tools. Bring in color wherever possible. If the season doesn’t provide it’s own color – add some of your own in the form of a potted plant or welcome flag.

Store unneeded items off premises if possible. There are several companies that offer removable storage containers (Pods, etc.) or consider renting a storage unit for a couple of months.

One of the least expensive and most effective ways to improve the interior of a home is to apply a fresh coat of paint to the walls. Keep the colors neutral to appeal to a wide range of buyers. Make sure your carpets are clean, kitchen shelves are free from appliances and clutter and don’t forget to remove all the artwork from the fridge!

Consider doing a little “staging”. If you haven’t caught “Designed To Sell” or one of the many cable TV shows on how to make your home sell, now is the time. Rooms should be staged to reflect their purpose. That means that the computer shouldn’t be in the front hall, there shouldn’t be a treadmill in the guest room and the kid’s playroom shouldn’t be in the formal dining room.

Did you know that less than 7% of the population can envision an empty space? If your home is empty or it is newly constructed, you may need to help buyers by showing them what each room’s purpose is. By adding a few special touches and focal points, you will attract more buyers.

Once you have everything looking great, don’t forget to address any unattractive smells that may exist. Odors from pets, smokers or even your hobby can be a big turn off for buyers. Find the source and eliminate it. Consider using an air purifier to help keep rooms free from unwanted smells. You can always take the unit with you to your next home.

After you have prepared carefully, ask a friend or neighbor to come in and give you feedback on your efforts.

To Review:

- Repair: Leaky faucets, ripped screens, etc. leave buyers wondering what else is wrong
- De-clutter: Get rid of anything you don’t absolutely need – clear shelves, bookcases, extra furniture
- De-personalize: Remove family photos, knick-knacks, etc.
- Neutralize: Choose colors that appeal to many buyers, not necessarily your style
- Each room has a purpose: Show buyers the best use for a room
- Curb appeal counts: Buyers decide within seconds whether your home holds promise for them

Setting Your Asking Price

Failure to set the correct price for your home can cause needless delays and unnecessary advertising expense. An overpriced property doesn't sell and quite often buyers won't even call you if you are priced outside their range. You can prevent this from happening learning how to price your property fairly in any market. Two common ways many sellers start out:

- **Doing your own research.** We know you like to do things yourself and we do recommend that you follow your local market before putting your property up for sale. Check to see what's coming on the market in your price range, follow the transactions in the local paper or online and get a sense of how long it is taking for homes to sell.

SELLER TIP: While it's OK to use websites like www.zillow.com to identify properties that have actually sold, be careful of using their "zestimates" as a way to price your own property. Online home valuation websites rely on a lot of public data to come up with their numbers and in some areas of the country their results can be more reliable. However, here in New England their ability to price a property may be grossly inaccurate due to the historical nature of many of our dwellings, the rural or unique character of homes, and the way data is collected by local towns and cities. At best, automated valuation services are accurate about 50% of the time according to surveys.

- **Having a free Market Analysis (CMA).** We are not crazy about this method for a number of reasons. 1) Agents use a CMA as a sales tool – that's why they give it away, not sell it. Depending on an agent's ability and desire for a listing the results can vary greatly and are always in a range, never a firm number. Agents who feel in competition for a listing or who wish to flatter the home seller may inflate the findings to attract the home seller. If you have had or intend to go this route, be sure to have the agent leave you with the completed report. This is very important. After the agent leaves, separate the comparable properties that are currently "on the market" (usually offered through their agency) from the properties that have actually "sold". There should be three. Concentrate on the three sold properties and compare them to what you found doing your own research. Your range may be thousands of dollars between the low and the high. Now what do you do?

Our Recommendation:

- **Obtain a Professional Appraisal.** We recommend this method for several reasons. #1: a Massachusetts licensed appraiser has no hidden agenda; #2: The rules for developing an appraisal and reporting its results are insured by enforcement of the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP). The appraisal gives you solid information and is not based on vague market findings; #3: The appraisal will give you a way to negotiate with a buyer from a position of strength as you will know the true value of your property; and #4: An appraiser will eventually end up on your doorstep, hired by the lender who will or will not grant a mortgage to your buyer based on the results of that report.

SELLER TIP: A lender never asks a real estate agent their opinion of value before lending money. They hire an appraiser to protect their interests. If agents are so good at setting the right price, why do they have so many price reductions, causing unnecessary time on the market for their sellers?

As a for-sale-by-owner you have a competitive advantage over your neighbors who may be using a real estate agent to sell their home. Let's say an agent puts a price of \$350,000 on your neighbor's house and yours is very similar. Remember that the agent may have a strategy of using price reductions (kind of like fire sales) until the real market is found. If your neighbor sells on Day 1, they will only pocket \$329,000 after the commission is paid. By pricing your home lower than your neighbor's listed property, using the real figures you have obtained from your professional appraisal as a guide, you will be packing your boxes for your next move while your neighbor is going through another price reduction!

Advertising To Today's Buyer

We use a combination of target print marketing, online marketing, cross-marketing, technology and branded products to reach a wide buyer pool. Picket Fence Preview magazine is a great example of effective target marketing as it combines pictures of properties for sale as well as helpful information for anyone interested in real estate, a very popular subject. Because we place our magazine next to other real estate magazines, it is picked up along with The Real Estate Book, Homes, Home Preview and other publications. Our extensive distribution assures sellers that their property will receive the widest exposure possible for their Western Massachusetts property. Every month there are more than \$25,000 magazines being picked up, read and passed on to readers throughout Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire counties.

Did you know that almost 80% of buyers see the home they eventually buy online at some point? Today's buyer spends little time combing classified ads. In fact, less than 53% of buyers even look in the paper anymore. Younger buyers get their news from TV and the Internet and do not subscribe to local newspapers, period. The Internet is responsible for about one-half of our sales these days. Our website is ranked at or near the top in every major search engine and attracts both local and out of area buyers alike. We have designed our website to be free from banner advertising, or other lead generating distractions to help buyers concentrate on one thing – finding your property and reaching you without a hassle. Buyers love our unique Virtual Slide Shows that allow additional description to be given for each photo. Our [Open House](#) page gives buyers the dates of every upcoming event and even provides a Mapquest link for directions.

We cross-market in many ways – our yard signs and directional signs point buyers to the website. Our magazine constantly points buyers to the website for Open Houses, Virtual Tours and helpful house hunting tools like our [Property Alert Notifications](#). It's important to continue to reach buyers throughout the home selling cycle. We send Property Alerts when your ad goes "live" online, when you post an Open House, if you change your price along the way, or when your property goes under contract and you want back up offers. Our [online newsletters](#) are sent twice a month and include links to each of these services as well as provide helpful information regarding for-sale-by-owner real estate.

Branding is a way of acquainting a service with a specific business. When you think of having a soda, you may say, "Give me a Coke." If you need to wipe your nose, you ask for a Kleenex, instead of a tissue. Although we're not quite at the level of Coca Cola, we do know the importance of tying our look to what we do. That's why our signs are recognizable and trusted throughout the area. Because our signs are so widely known, the public develops a level of comfort builds confidence in you, the home seller. We encourage you to use as many of our products as possible for this reason.

To Review:

- Target marketing works best – reach buyers where they are looking
- Less than 53% of buyers look at classified ads
- Over 80% of buyers look online – they want to see pictures and plenty of them
- Roughly 38% of buyers respond to a yard sign – make sure your sign promotes confidence

Ready To Go

Take a deep cleansing breath and now let go slowly. That's better. Now, let's talk about how to advertise and market your home for fast results.

1. **As soon as you know you want to sell, call us.** By making us your FIRST call, we can help take the stress out of selling and also you avoid common mistakes. We save you time and money – two things most of us could use more of! I know you may be tempted to run out and get a hardware store sign and put an ad in the paper just to see what could happen, but this could hurt, not help you. We're not saying don't use classified ads or signs but make them work hard for you by using them effectively. We will go over the different ad packages and help you select a plan that is right for your price range and the current market.
2. **Take pictures – lots of them.** You have one shot to make buyers fall in love with your home and it's important that you show buyers what you have for sale. Make sure your main photo shows sky at the top (don't clip off the roof) and has space on both the right and left. The main interior views are the living room, kitchen, dining room and master bedroom. Additional rooms may include a family room, home office, or exterior views such as a front or rear porch, deck or patio. Don't spend too much time on your perennial garden. Remember, buyers are buying a house, not landscaping. Before you take your photos make sure your counters are free from extra stuff, no magnets on the fridge, towels on the stove. Remove personal photos from the mantle and walls. Stage areas for maximum visual appeal. Remove any pet products (bowls, crates, litter boxes). Back lighting helps to draw the buyer's eye in.
3. **Write your description.** Following our recommended word counts based upon the magazine size ad you choose, be sure to include lot size, square footage, #bedrooms and baths, and other rooms. Amenities such as hardwood floors, gourmet kitchen, Goshen stone walkway are all important. Be sure to include updates and improvements – new roof, newer furnace, brand new plumbing, etc. Then, point out the location and why a buyer would want to live there. Are you close to a park and schools, near hiking trails and recreation, close to a major employer (U-Mass, Baystate Medical, etc.) If we are creating a Custom Flyer, make sure you send along bulleted points.
4. **Submit your ad early.** Be aware of our deadline (usually the 15th of each month) and get your ad materials to us before that date for best results. Early submission means FREE Internet advertising! As soon as your ad is paid for you may pick up your signs, book and other [products](#). Tell us if you are planning an early [Open House](#) and we will send you home with the right open house signage and post it online.

To Review:

- Make us your FIRST call for best results
- Prepare rooms before taking pictures
- Include the basics in descriptive text (lot size, sq.footage, #bedrooms and baths, recent improvements, amenities (hardwood floors, French doors, fireplace, Jacuzzi tubs, cathedral ceilings, etc.)
- Submit ad as early as possible – get FREE internet exposure

Submitting Your Ad

Ads may be submitted in the following ways:

In person: Bring your print photos or photo CD along with your written description to our office at 4B Liberty St., Easthampton, MA. You may make an appointment (recommended around deadline) or stop in between 8:30 – Noon and 1:00 – 4:30 most weekdays. Call first if you are concerned.

Or,

By email: You may email us at info@ma4salebyowner.com with your description in the body of the email. Photos may be attached and mailed. Photos may be difficult to email if they are large or if you have a dial up connection. Try sending a couple at a time to avoid a server problem.

Creating Your Slide Show

If your plan includes a slide show, please supply us with up to 25 photos and descriptive text for each. It is helpful to put the photos in order and title the text appropriately. You may change photos or text anytime. We will be including an Ad Management program in our website soon which will also allow you to modify or upload new images from your desktop.

Posting An Open House

Contact us the Monday preceding the event and give us the DATE or DATES and TIMES of your event. We will place the announcement on the Open House Page, the Listings Page and on your Ad Page. You will also be given a Mapquest link to direct buyers to your doorstep.

When you advertise your Open House in the local paper, be sure to include your ad# and the website to point buyers to your pictures, description and map.

Your Ad Proof

You must have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer to open your proof. You may download it here:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

Check your proof carefully for errors, especially the phone number, and notify us if changes need to be made. When your Internet ad is ready to be uploaded "live" to our website, we will send a Property Alert Notification, announcing your property to the market.

Internet: When your ad goes "Live" online:

1. Look it over carefully and test your Virtual Slide Show (if selected) to make sure your photos have loaded properly. Check your descriptive text for spelling errors, etc. (Sample ¼ page proof is shown below.)
2. Send yourself a test email by linking to the "Email Seller" form. The message will come to you with the following subject line – "Email for Picket Fence Preview Ad#XXXXXX" (NOTE: If you do not get this email, check your spam/quarantine/junk mail folders. You may need to adjust your security filters should this occur. If the email does not appear, check your Contact Information to make sure you entered the correct email address. Call us if you still have difficulty. A copy of every email is sent through our system and we keep copies.



\$375,000
Your Town
(Your County)
Your First Name(s)
(413) 000-0000

This 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath, center hall Colonial home with 2-car garage is in a desirable neighborhood on a quiet, cul-de-sac street with town sewer and water. The first floor includes dining room, large living room with a floor to ceiling bay window overlooking private backyard, 1/2 bath, and refurbished kitchen and family room with fireplace. The second floor has 3 bedrooms and full bath. The basement includes recreation room with storage and cedar closets, office, laundry, and workshop area. The home has central A/C, security system, vinyl siding and replacement windows, and large deck overlooking an in-ground pool. Ad#0000



Time Saving Organizational Tips



Once your ad has been submitted and is up and running online it is time to get ready for phone calls. Choose the person, if possible, which is the most organized to respond to buyer's phone calls and email inquiries. Here are some tips to make things go smoothly.

- Call your phone # (really!) and make sure the voice mail picks up in no more than 4 rings.
- Change your message to greet buyers in a friendly, professional manner. Example: "If you're calling about our home for sale, we'd love to show it to you. Please leave your name and number and we'll call you back as soon as possible."
- If you have caller I.D., be prepared to return calls to unknown numbers as not every buyer takes the time initially to leave a message.
- Create a "House" folder. This is your Prospect Log that will include contact information for all buyers who have expressed interest in your home, come to an open house, etc. Refer to this folder to call buyers at important times: price change, open house, offer coming in, etc. Don't forget to include anyone who has emailed you. Be sure to refer to your online House folder in your email program.
 - Staple a copy of your fact sheet inside for easy reference.
 - Download our Telephone Log and print a few pages.
 - Include a blank calendar – most email programs or word processing programs have a printable calendar. Block off days that are unavailable for showings, as well as highlight preferred showing days and times. Book your showings close together for maximum effectiveness. It's also less stressful on you.

Additional information that may be gathered:

- Put together a photo album of your favorite seasonal photos. Share this with buyers, as it's a great icebreaker.
- Research tax information, heating and cooling data, if available. Keep it handy if questions are asked.
- Locate the information on your home that you were given when you bought it. There may be additional information that you can share with buyers.
- Have a local mortgage lender prepare a financing sheet for you. We can refer one to you if needed. Mortgage representatives are very happy to provide this information for your buyers.

Holding An Open House



Open houses can be a great way to generate interest in your home. When agents hold an open house they do it to capture new buyers, not necessarily to sell the house they are standing in. When you hold an open house it gives buyers a way to see your home and check you out at the same time.

Who comes to an open house? Your neighbors, potential sellers, agents, unqualified buyers, buyers who have been told to check out the market, people looking for decorating tips and... just maybe YOUR buyer!

Open house strategies:

- **The “new to the market” blitz.** Upload your ad to our website and announce an open house in 1 – 2 weeks. Offer buyers the ability to view your slide show online and give them drive-by directions to check out the neighborhood. We will assign an AD# for you to use when contacting the newspaper. Buyers will be able to log onto your ad, look at your beautiful slide show and Mapquest directions to your door! Advertise the event in the local paper with the heading “First Showing” on two consecutive days (i.e. Open 12 – 2 Sat. & Sunday.) In your advertising, say “All offers reviewed after 2nd open house!”
- **The “piggyback” open house.** If you notice that an agent is holding an open house in your neighborhood, plan on having your open house on the same day. There will be more neighborhood traffic and interested buyers passing through.
- **The “unadvertised” open house.** This is like the piggyback event except it is impromptu. Just post it online with us and stick your signs out. You will get the overflow from the agent’s open house.
- **The “neighborhood tag sale” open house.** Check to see when your neighbors plan a multi-family tag sale and do an impromptu open house for the same day. There will be a lot of cars and traffic on your street. Put plenty of flyers in your box.
- **The “we’re moving” open house.** Nothing says ‘motivated seller’ like the Pod or moving truck in the front yard! Buyers will know that you are serious about moving and will be more likely to make an early offer. Another idea is to hold a moving sale and hand out flyers at the tag sale informing shoppers of your upcoming open house. Don’t show the house that day!

Tips for holding a successful open house:

- Download our handy “How To Hold An Open House” form for a step-by-step countdown.
- Beware of newspaper deadlines. We are happy to email photos to anyone, but you must set up the ad yourself.
- Less is better – marathon open houses don’t work. The idea of an open house is to generate activity. Buyers should see each other coming and going. Events that are spread out over several hours lose this important marketing strategy and can be very tiring for you.
- Get help. It’s not a bad thing to have a car or two parked in front of the house to attract more lookers. It also helps to have extra people available on each floor, in the garage, backyard, etc.
- Put away your valuables. This is just common sense. While we have not had a report of a theft occurring in an open house held by a private home seller (they can and do occur with agent-listed properties), use your head. Don’t get sidetracked in the kitchen with one buyer while their other half is upstairs alone.
- Clean, clean, clean. Make your home spotless. Buyers will appreciate your efforts. Believe me, your home will be at the top of their list when they compare it against agent-listed homes.
- Consider some “staging” – place settings at a breakfast bar, refreshments available on the deck, fire in the fireplace for chilly days, fresh decorative towels in the bath, etc.

Effective Signage

Did you know that 38% of buyers would respond to an effective yard sign? Of course, that means that you will be unable to reach the remaining 62% of buyers this way. That said, there are good yard signs and some really bad yard signs. If you don't know the difference, think about what a yard sign says about you.

What do these yard signs say about the owners?:

- They're cheap
- They don't know what they're doing
- They may be hiding defects in their home
- They may be difficult to work with



That doesn't instill too much confidence in a potential buyer, does it. If you have a generic hardware store special sign already, please think about replacing it with our professional quality signage. Our signs are known throughout the area and are TRUSTED by buyers.

Here's what an EFFECTIVE signage says about you:

- You are proud of what you are selling and not afraid to flaunt it
- You know what you're doing and are willing to pay for effective advertising
- You are providing clear information and have nothing to hide
- You are approachable, welcoming and will be easy to work with



Using our website address on our signs and directional signs cross-market your home. Our signs are EVERYWHERE and buyers trust us and our services. They know when they see a PFP sign that the home behind it is going to be well presented. Our signs set your home apart from the crowd.

Classified Advertising



Classified advertising may have a place in your overall selling strategy but it should not be your primary focus. It's best to save this kind of ad to use for time sensitive events like an open house, etc. Classified ads are expensive, are only available for one day and may not reach your buyer pool at all. Understand that *less than 53% of buyers look in a newspaper anymore* and many newspapers would be out of business if it wasn't for auto dealers and...yes, real estate agents. Younger buyers don't read the paper, preferring TV and the internet as providers of news, etc. The truth of the matter is that agents know that their leads don't come from the classifieds anymore, but it does provide an easy way to tell sellers what a great job they're doing to advertise their property.

That said, here are tips for using classified advertising:

- Event announcements – like open houses or “new to the market” ads
- Include a link to our website with your AD# so buyers can see lots of pictures
- Always put the price and “by owner” in the text
- Avoid words like “must see” or “not a drive by” as this is agent-speak
- Only advertise on days that buyers look at real estate. Each newspaper is different, the Springfield Republican is Sunday (Home and Garden), the Recorder is Friday, and the Gazette is Friday or Saturday for open houses, etc.
- Be careful about paying for more than you need just because there is a special promotion. Usually these are done on “slow” advertising days when readership is down.

These are the major newspapers in Western Massachusetts. Before you call to place your ad, have your Picket Fence Preview AD# ready and make sure it is available to buyers who view your ad.

Republican – Today's Open Houses – 413- 788-1132
Daily Hampshire Gazette – Classifieds - 413 – 584-5000
Recorder – Classifieds – 413- 772-0261
Reminder – 413-525-3247 x114
Berkshire Eagle/No. Adams Transcript – (800) 234-7404

There are also free publications that promote classifieds, like:

Western Mass. Pennysaver – 413-587-0072
Tri-State Pennysaver News – 888-633-0333
Berkshire Penny Saver – 413-243-2341

On the next page you will find examples of ways that our advertisers have maximized their classified advertising by including pictures, and links to their ad# on our website. Remember, buyers want pictures.

Examples of Good Classified Ads: (Zoom in for details)

OPEN HOUSE
Sat. & Sun. 1:00 to 3:00 PM

NEW LISTING



Victorian Homestead
1180 Hawley Road, Ashfield

Nicely renovated, 4 bedroom, 2 bath, new appliances, granite counters, wood floors, home office. Idyllic setting, pond, stream, barn, gorgeous views. Goshen stone patio, 4+ acres.

\$539,000

See photos at: www.ma4salebyowner.com
Agents Welcome, (413) 625-6758

Easthampton 890



EASTHAMPTON, 1806 sq ft. Cape Cod in great neighborhood 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths, brand new kitchen and Tile deck. \$298,000.
www.MA4salebyowner.com
#H128319, 527-1823. Open House 6/9, 6/10, 1-3pm, 8 Louise Ave.

OPEN HOUSE
SAT. & SUN. 1-3

New Low Price



20 GREENLEAF DRIVE, NORTHAMPTON

Custom-designed, 5-bedroom, 4 bath bright, airy contemporary built by Sovereign Builders/Todd Cellura. Dramatic staircase, cathedral ceilings, exquisite finish work, built-in 3 fireplaces, skylights, screened porch and deck. Views, gardens, and privacy in a desirable neighborhood. \$597,000.

Directions-Florence Road to Park Hill Road.
Right on Greenleaf Drive.

For more information and photos, go to:
www.greenleafdrive.info
www.ma4salebyowner.com Ad# H128294

413-586-6031

ADAMWAM
172 High St.

Lovely 4 bed, 3 1/2 bath contemporary home situated on 1/2 acre lot. Very spacious & open floor plan - full kitchen area opens to bright & sunny family room. Other features include hardwood floors, lg. formal dining room, 2 car garage, 1st fl. finished basement, 2nd fl. deck, 1/2 acre lot, 11 living space (344,500)

BY OWNER 413-796-4223
FOR MORE INFO SEE
www.ma4salebyowner.com
#H12727

Open House
Sunday 6/10
10am-4pm

5 Valley Lane
Amherst



Must see inside to appreciate sunny floor plan and size, 3 blocks to UMMS. View at ma4salebyowner.com. Ad number: H128305, 549-5059

12-2



EAST LONGMEADOW
12 Peachtree Road

New Construction-Clarendon French Colonial style home on large lot with brick and cedar 5 beds, 4 1/2 baths, 2 1/2 story front, 10 rooms lot with 3 car garage. Make this while you can. See by yourself. Great location. Home from 1998.

CAROL CUSTOM HOMES
413-427-0042
VIEW AT MA4SALEBYOWNER.COM
AD #128299

Amherst/Hadley 870

AMHERST. Unique town home with country view, sunny open floor plan, 5 bedrooms, 2 full baths, 3 blocks to UMMS. \$378,000. View at ma4salebyowner.com. Ad number: H128303, 413-549-0058

Open House
Sunday 6/10
1-3pm

12-14 Cherry St.
Northampton

Great income property!
Walk to downtown.
www.MA4salebyowner.com
#H128284

OPEN HOUSE
SUNDAY, 1:00-3:00 PM

Priced to Sell at \$359,900
New Listing



29 Pine Hill Rd., Easthampton

Spacious, well maintained, 4-bedroom, 3.5 bath Colonial in one of Easthampton's finest neighborhoods, on the Northampton line. Set on nearly an acre, this 10-year old home offers light, comfort, and an open floor plan. 2,128 square feet with an additional 3-room finished basement that could serve as a separate living area for teens, in-laws, or ideal space for a home office. Brick fireplace, first floor laundry, abundant storage, and two-car garage. Fenced backyard and deck. This home is perfect for the large family or those who enjoy extra space. A must see! For Sale By Owner. Call 413-237-1140

Directions: Rte. 66 West, left on Glendale, right on Pine Hill Road.

See more at: ma4salebyowner.com Ad#H128327

12-2



WESTFIELD
41 Beechridge Rd

Professional finished, 3rd and 4th floors! Price REDUCED \$268,000. Morgan Hill School District, 1000 sq ft. Ranch on approx. 1/2 acre in quiet neighborhood. Features: 2300 sq ft. Great floor, Cathedral ceiling, recessed lighting, wood for hardwood, 2000 deck, 2 BR, 2 Car garage, ceramic & hardwood, partially finished 3rd basement. \$262,000

MORE INFO
ma4salebyowner.com
AD #H128263

Examples of effective classified advertising include these Open House announcements.

What do they ALL have in common?

Sellers have included their AD#s and linked to MA4salebyowner.com so buyers can find Slide Shows and Mapquest links for driving directions.

VERY SMART!

Classified Advertising (Online)

This is a newer form of the classified ad and may produce mixed results. Some of these websites offer free listings. Don't expect them to be your main source of advertising, but if you have the time, go ahead and submit your information. Be sure to report to us your response.

- Craigslist.com – the largest online classified network in the world. Everything is regional, however. Look for “mass” and “western mass” to post your ad. Always link to your ad# and www.MA4salebyowner.com for best results. You must continually repost your ad in order to be seen. Don't expect a lot but if you get one or two inquires, that's worth the price. Lots of junk and agents posting properties for free.
- Postaroo.com - Channel 40's online free classified site. Very few ads. Some agent posts. Always link to your ad# and www.MA4salebyowner.com for best results.
- Sellstufflocal.com – Channel 22's online site. (not quite free, but pretty close) The problem is – there are very few ads here. Always link to your ad# and www.MA4salebyowner.com for best results.
- Yahoo.com – look for real estate classifieds – again, not free, but low cost. Always link to your ad# and www.MA4salebyowner.com for best results.
- Your company's intranet or message board – very local, but may be worthwhile. Always link to your ad# and www.MA4salebyowner.com for best results.

Advertising on the MLS

Agents have been telling consumers for years that the only way to sell a house is to put it on the MLS, the Multiple Listing Service. Of course, they also held the keys. What they meant to say is that you need wide exposure to find the right buyer. That is really why we started Picket Fence Preview. We knew that private home sellers had minimal options available to them that would provide the exposure necessary to get the job done.

As the real estate industry has changed, the players have too. First came the discount brokers – you know, the ones who say they can do everything the full commission agents can at a lower price. In addition to discounters, a new kind of agent was formed – the “flat-fee” lister. The flat fee agent agrees to list your property on the MLS for a “flat” fee (usually \$300 - \$800) for various time periods. The agent does nothing more. You do not give up your right to sell by owner in this case as the agent is acting merely as a “facilitator”.

If an agent brings the buyer, you will owe a commission – usually 1 – 3%. If the buyer comes alone, you owe Zero commission. Unlike selling through us where the ideal commission is “no commission”, there is no negotiation of these fees.

Do we think you need the MLS to sell? No, not if you have exposed your property to the market using our recommended services (magazine and internet) and have priced your home fairly for today's market.

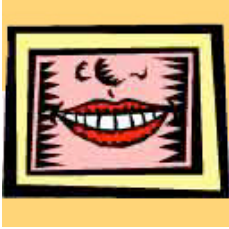
Can we recommend an MLS service if you want to include it in your overall marketing? Yes, absolutely. There are several hundred flat fee companies offering MLS listings and a lot of them are overpriced and do not upload to websites that make sense to you here in Western Massachusetts. We have found one that may work well for you and have negotiated a specially reduced rate for our advertisers. You may [email us](#) for the required forms.

Before you advertise, ask questions:

- What is the name of the local MLS that is used?
- Where is the company located?
- What knowledge do they have of the local real estate market?
- What is the contract length (2 months, 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, etc.)
- Are there additional charges if changes are made?
- Are there enhanced listings (Showcase Listing on Realtor.com, etc.)

Word of Mouth Advertising

The great thing about WOM (Word of Mouth) advertising is that it doesn't cost anything and can be very effective as an additional form of marketing. A word of caution: Occasionally, a neighbor or friend says they want to buy your home before you begin marketing and advertising it. While this may be a good sign, we have seen countless situations where this early interest has led to disaster, tying up the home seller for months before fizzling out. Our recommendation for these kinds of situations is to say "We would love it if you were the buyer. Our ad begins tomorrow with Picket Fence Preview. If you would like to view our slide show, here is a flyer. Should you decide to make an offer, we certainly review it carefully."



Here are effective ways to use WOM:

1. Take our flyer to all your neighbors the day your ad goes live on our website. Tell them you want them to be among the first to know you are selling and if they know of anyone who has been thinking of moving into the neighborhood, have them give you a call.
2. Invite your neighbors and friends to your Open House.
3. Post your flyer on your company bulletin board, leave a stack in the lunchroom (with permission) and post online if you have a message board.
4. Post flyers where you like to shop.
5. Send a blast email to everyone in your address book with a link to your ad and Virtual Tour on <http://MA4salebyowner.com> Note: Be sure to check for anyone in your address book that you may NOT want to know you are selling just yet.
6. Mention that you will be selling your home to members of organizations to which you belong (church, PTO, BNI, sports organizations, etc.). Keep flyers in your car for quick reference.
7. Contact or email local buyer brokers. Our Custom Flyers may be emailed as they are in PDF format. For help on how to approach brokers, call us.

Your Responsibilities as an Advertiser

1. Ads are non-refundable, once placed. If you receive an early offer, that's great. Your ad will act as an insurance policy should something happen to your sale along the way.
2. You agree to inform us of any changes that affect your magazine ad (price, text, pictures, etc.), as we are not aware when you make changes online.
3. Be aware of deadlines. Changes that are reported after our deadline may not be reflected in the upcoming magazine. Please be aware of this, especially with price changes.
4. You will inform us when you have accepted an offer. Your ad will remain linked.
5. You will inform us when you sign the purchase and sale agreement. (See survey)
6. You will inform us when you have sold. (See survey)
7. We will email you a Seller Survey. You agree to complete and return the "[Seller Survey](#)" in a timely fashion.
8. You agree to abide by our [User Agreement](#).
9. You will do your best to return phone calls and emails from buyers in a timely fashion.
10. You agree to subscribe to our [Online Newsletters](#) for the length of your advertising as it contains information on renewals, deadlines, etc.
11. Picket Fence Preview is a service exclusively for private home sellers, builders and real estate agents who are selling their own properties. If you decide to stop selling by owner and hire an agent to represent you, we ask that you notify us prior to signing an agreement with the agent. Unless you retain the right to sell by owner, you may not continue advertising through us. Your ad will run online only until the current issue expires. No refunds will apply, of course. This does not apply to those who add a flat fee MLS listing to their ad, as they do not give up the right to sell privately.

Checklist For Selling

Initial Legwork:

- Contact advisors to determine any concerns (financial planner, attorney, CPA)
- Prepare property
 - Repairs
 - Title V (septic) – be aware of time of year, schedule early
 - Pre-inspection? - Don't lose sleep after signing a contract should your property have "issues"
 - Appraisal? - The lender will require one. Don't lose your buyer due to incorrect pricing
 - Declutter/Depersonalize – your home will appear to a larger number of buyers
 - Cosmetics? - A coat of fresh paint goes a long way in making a home look fresh and inviting
- Set time frame and budget (length of time on market may depend on trends and season)
- Determine date to begin marketing (being aware of any deadlines, holidays, etc.)

On The Market!

- Call Picket Fence Preview to place ad
- Purchase products (yard signs/directional/open house signs, info. boxes, flyers @ PFP)
- Create separate email account (yahoo.com, hotmail.com, etc. Dump when sale is over)
- Take pictures – up to 25 with slide show (Disposable camera, digital, etc. Develop on CD or email)
- Change message on machine
- Plant yard sign and directional signs (be aware of sign ordinances in your town or condo. assoc.)
- Hang flyers around town and on sign
- Print organizational materials (telephone log, checklist before showing, guest register, etc.)
- Gather additional sales materials (photo album, utility costs, tax info.)
- Open house preparation? Print checklist. Call us.

At Offer to Purchase:

- Prepare documents and deposit check for attorney to hold in escrow
- Notify us that you have accepted an offer and ask for "Pending/Sold" Signs
- Change message machine to reflect that you are under deposit, but continue to take calls.

(It is critical to maintain advertising throughout the entire phase in the event the buyer is lost. You may take back up offers.)

At Purchase and Sale:

- Have attorney prepare P&S for signing (attorney will hold deposit monies)
- Schedule termite (wood boring insect) inspection DATE: _____
- Schedule appraisal (with buyer) DATE: _____
- Schedule home inspection(s) (with buyer) DATE: _____
- Schedule smoke detector/carbon monoxide inspection w/local fire dept. DATE: _____
- Complete PFP Seller Exit Survey & Marketing Survey and return (available on line)
- Do walk through with buyer DATE: _____
- Attend closing and hand over the keys!!!! DATE: _____

Service Directory



We have compiled this local service directory for you to use as needed. Many of the companies that are listed here have been regular advertisers with us or are on our referral list and have been used by many of our home sellers over the years. We provide this information as a service, but please understand that we cannot officially endorse or make a guarantee of any service listed. The majority of businesses and services listed work throughout Western Mass. We have, where appropriate, given general county area locations of the business. Be sure to tell them you found them through Picket Fence Preview! (Businesses appearing in yellow are preferred vendors, some of whom also give our advertisers a discounted rate.)

Appraisal Services

- Aztec Appraisal Services, Kelly Hopkins 413-527-8619 (Hampshire, Franklin - West) *
- Marion & Werenski, Appraisal Services 413-374-4140 (Hampshire, Franklin – East) *
- Race Appraisal Services, Mike Race 413-525-3233 (Hampden – East)
- Acadia Appraisal Services, Karin Benson 413-772-6098 (Franklin)
- Crowley Associates (Springfield) 413-733-8856
- Suburban Appraisal, Mike Nicora 413-786-0500 (Hampden – West)

* *Special Discounted Rates for Picket Fence Preview Advertisers – provide Ad# when calling*

Home Improvement/Hardware

- The Restore - non-profit surplus/used building materials 413-788-6900 www.restoreonline.org

Financial Services

- The Nathan Agencies - 800-228-8351 (insurance & financial planning) www.nathanagencies.com

Home Staging

- House To Home Staging, 413-584-0493 www.housestaging.com
- Pioneer Valley Home Staging, 413 – 348-5089 www.pvhomestaging.com
- Staged Interiors by ELR Design, 413-567-2415 www.elrdesigns.com

Home Valuation Services

** Online home valuation tools are NOT appraisal services. They are best used to locate sold (comparable) properties as this is public data. They are, however, not reliable for the purpose of an appraisal. Studies have shown that they can be reliable about 50% of the time. Not a great percentage considering what is at stake. We recommend obtaining a professional appraisal for best results.*

- Home Smart Reports – online home evaluation tool www.homesmartreports.com
- Zillow– online home evaluation tool www.zillow.com

- The Warren Group – Mass. online housing info. www.thewarrengroup.com
- Mass. Registry of Deeds – online housing data www.sec.state.ma.us/rod/rodidx.htm

Inspection Services

- Affordable Home & Septic Inspections, Inc. 800-706-0511 www.affordablehouseinspections.com
- Building Inspector of America, Inc. 800-626-4408 www.buildinginspectors.net
- ASAP Environmental (lead paint, etc.) www.asapenvironmental.com

Junk Removal/Clutter Control & Removal

- Sam, The Clean Out Man (413) 374-8935 www.thecleanoutman.com
- USA Hauling & Recycling, Greg Burns 800-998-2984 x 2152 www.usahauling.com

Legal Services

- Law Offices of Scott M. Hibbert 877-789-9800 (Agawam)
- Jackson & Torrone, P.C. 413-532-1200 (Holyoke) <http://www.jackson-torrone.com>
- Performance Title & Closing Co, Atty. Joel Soforenko 413-525-8500 (E. Longmeadow)
- Sievers Law, Atty. Diane Sievers, 413-584-1074 (Northampton)

Mortgage Lenders

- First World Mortgage Corp., 877-567-7899 (E. Longmeadow/Adams-Pittsfield)

Moving/Storage Services

- A to Z Storage Rentals, 413-527-9640 www.a-zstoragerentals.com
- USPS Mover's Guide online (secure website) <https://moversguide.usps.com>
- AMSA – American Moving & Storage Assoc. guide to moving www.moving.org

Real Estate (FSBO) Help Outside Massachusetts

- Picket Fence Preview – Vermont, New Hampshire www.picketfencepreview.com
- FSBO Publishers Network – locate a regional for sale by owner magazine www.fsbopublishers.org

Super Savings/Local Business Directories

- PennyPincher.biz - discounts and savings on merchandise throughout W. Mass.
- Visitnorthampton.net – Northampton info.
- Longmeadowbiz.com – Longmeadow info.

- Easthamptonweb.com – Easthampton info.