

# Home Inspections: What are they and why are they important?

For many of us, the most significant investment that we ever make is the purchase of a home. There are so many decisions that need to be made in the process that it can fairly boggle the mind! Where to buy? What can I afford? Is this a good investment? What schools will my kids go to? All of these questions can keep one awake at night. One thing that can help you sleep is the confidence in the condition of the home provided by a Home Inspection.

A Home Inspection is very different than an appraisal. The appraisal looks at the relative value of the home versus other homes in the area and looks at other criteria such as historical prices, recent sales activity, etc. A Home Inspection specifically looks at the condition of the structure and the functionality of its systems. An inspection as defined by InterNACHI as, “a non-invasive, visual examination of the accessible areas of a residential property, performed for a fee, which is designed to identify defects within specific systems and components...”. The purpose of this inspection, and subsequent report, is to document potential issues with the property and to alert the buyer and seller of such so that both parties are informed and able to make sound decisions. If there are deficiencies found, the report gives the buyer and the seller a basis for negotiating any potential repairs and/or concessions.

Are there limitations as to what an inspection covers? Yes, of course. The home inspection will not reveal every issue that exists or ever could exist. The home inspection is based on the observations made by an individual inspector on the date of the inspection and cannot predict future conditions or events. Additionally, an inspection can only identify issues that are reasonably observable. For example, an inspector visiting a home in the winter may not be able to completely inspect a roof if it is covered with snow. Or, if a house is occupied there may be possessions stored in a closet that restrict access to the crawlspace.

From a buyer’s perspective, the inspection & report will provide certain information about the home that the buyer may not have thoroughly investigated while touring the home such as specifics on the heating & cooling, domestic water, and electrical systems as well as the overall condition of the home. Just a few of the important things that the inspection & report will cover are:

- The condition and operability of the furnace and air conditioning equipment;
- the presence and condition of water heater protections such as the TPRV and gas valves;
- evidence of potential plumbing problems such as leaking/loose toilets and/or drain pipes;
- the presence of and effectiveness of GFCI/AFCI protection of electrical outlets and other electrical hazards;
- the condition and serviceability of exterior components such as roofing materials, siding & trim, etc.;

In addition to the building systems, the inspection & report will contain observations of other areas such as the attic and crawlspaces that most buyers do not examine during the process. Inspection of these areas is critical in that various building defects can only be found by physical observation. It requires an inspector actually entering these enclosed areas to discern the presence of and condition of vapor barriers, insulation, attic ventilation, etc. These are important components that affect the functionality and cost of operations of a home. As an example, inadequate insulation in the attic can lead to additional cooling costs in this summer heat as well as putting more demand on the system components leading to premature failure and replacement.

From a seller’s perspective, preemptively inspecting a home can identify defect or voids that a buyer’s agent will observe and therefore can be addressed either prior to listing of a home or during the negotiation process. Real Estate Agents that we have worked with will attest that a current property inspection can strengthen a listing and attract more interest in your home potentially leading to a higher sales price with fewer potential stumbling blocks along the way. You could consider it an additional “amenity” of the home as it could give a buyer better peace of mind when touring the property.

Whether you are a buyer or a seller, working as a team with your Real Estate Agent and Home Inspector you can feel confident in your position in the transaction.