

BUSINESS JOURNAL

Ready To Buy That Property? **STOP!**

By Robert W. Wood



You have searched long and hard, and finally found the property that will meet your needs. Whether it's

location, square footage, or even the direction the sun beams in your windows, you are excited, relieved, and ready to sign on the dotted line to buy this property.

Don't be so fast.

There are many "issues" or "problems" that may not be apparent to most potential buyers who are not experienced in the construction industry themselves. That's where a property inspection comes in—before you sign the contract or during a period already identified in the sales agreement for due diligence.

A property inspection is an objective visual assessment of the property's structure and systems that is conducted, at your request, by a trained and experienced property inspector who has been specially trained in inspection services and must have passed several rigorous tests to become certified. Many inspectors are, in fact, former contractors who wanted a break from construction and decided to train and

become certified in a different area of the industry.

For the typical inspection (commercial or residential), the inspector will assess the heating and cooling systems, roof, attic, insulation, floors, windows and doors, electric panel, appliances, and the general structure of the building or rooms. Sometimes, environmental tests are conducted for mold, air quality, and lead paint if the building has some age. If it is a residential property, radon testing and septic tank inspections are usually extra.

Once the inspection is complete, the inspector will provide a detailed report—(identifying) detailing any potential issues you may wish to have the seller address before you agree to purchase. You may decide that the items he or she identified are no big deal, and you proceed with your purchase negotiations. If, however, you learn of other problems that the seller won't fix (or he or she won't reduce the price so you can pay someone to fix them for you), then you have made a modest investment of time and money to become educated about the property BEFORE you agreed to buy it.

Certainly there are overriding conditions. Perhaps you have information about what is about to

occur in a neighborhood that positively affects the value. Maybe other factors will make the issues discovered during the inspection of little consequence to you; however, with the inspection, the choice is yours. It's the "not-knowing" that can cost you.

Assuming the inspection makes sense now that you know more about it, you should also consider an added benefit. If you visit and tour the property with the inspector, his report will make more sense, and he or she can explain the "discoveries" as they are found throughout the process, giving you an easy opportunity to ask questions.

A point of distinction should be made here regarding inspections, however. They are NOT appraisals. An inspection is not a pass-fail test, but rather an objective review that can save you thousands of dollars in heart-ache and headache down the road.

Robert W. Wood is president of Wood Builders Collaborative, LLC and a certified property inspector with Inspection Services. He can be reached at 410-750-0890 or BobWood@BuiltByWood.com.