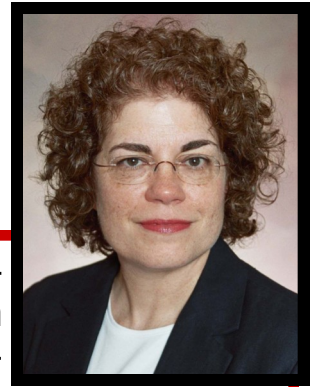


In Step with Alice Steppe

Vol. 2 Issue 2



Spring brings that particular color of green into our world that only nature can provide! It is one of my favorite parts of our transition from winter. The smell of the earth awakening and the glory of the sunshine are more than welcome as the winter fades. The challenging part is seeing all the trash that shows as the mounds of snow melts and looking through my dirty windshield at the glare rather than the beauty of the sun. Most importantly, welcome spring! Snow drops, crocus, daffodils are a delight to see as the season unfolds.

My back sustained itself after more than a few days of shoveling driveways of empty houses as I showed them to buyers. Also, I had to keep my own listings clear of all that snow if homeowners were absent. Looking forward, spring brings back all of that new life and the market is bringing all activities of housing into full swing. Countdown to April 30th is also underway as the First Time Buyer Clock is ticking. All first time buyers must be under contract by April 30th (and closed by June 30th). It seems like I can hear the tick-tick-tick as sellers list their homes to take advantage of the opportunities of motivated first timers and the buyers rush to accommodate. Sellers have their own incentive of \$6500 for selling and buying. Both of these credits come with qualifications. There is a seasonal cycle to real estate, but it is amazing that there isn't as much fluctuation as you would think. Buying and selling happens all the time, regardless of the month or holiday. Couples marry, babies are born, children grow, and transfers happen...to name a few of the life events that bring buyers and sellers into the market place for real estate.

Introducing Attorney Colleen Skole.....



Do You Need a Will?

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Buying or selling a home often causes individuals to wonder, Do I (we) need a will, or will this impact my current will. The standard answer is—it depends.

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Do You Need a Will?

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It depends on how your individual circumstances are affected by federal and state tax laws. The federal estate tax is big, but rare if planned for. The Indiana state inheritance tax is small, but due more often, depending on where your estate goes. Federal taxes may apply to what you leave your grandchildren. An important thing to remember is, not going through probate does not mean taxes are not owed.

Whether you need a will depends on how you feel about the intestacy laws in Indiana—in other words, where the state says your estate will go if you don't have a will.

You need a will if you have concerns about who will care for your minor children in the event both parents die. You need a will if you are concerned about who will control the money of your minor children.

A will can:

- allow you to determine where your property goes
- allow you to name a guardian for your children
- formalize your wishes for how your children are raised
- allow you to make charitable contributions

Major changes in life call for a review of your estate plans. Marriage, divorce, the birth of a child, purchase or sale of a home, family crises, sudden change in assets up or down are all examples of major life changes.

So: Do you need a will?

PAPER SHREDDING DAY

As a service to my clients (past, present, and future), I am participating in a paper shredding day. The truck will be at the Carpenter Realtors office at 5751 W. 56th Street on March 20, 2010 from 10:00 am—12:00 noon.

Bag up all of that paperwork you've been needing to destroy i.e. cancelled checks, old tax records, bills, etc. and bring to the Carpenter Realtors office. *FREE* or for a small donation (there's no minimum or maximum) to the Genessaret Clinic (care for Indiana's homeless), you can rid yourself and your home of all of that unwanted paperwork.

In Step with Alice Steppe

7 Deadly Sins of Real Estate Deadly Sin #4

Heeding Advice...NOT! One of the spiritual works of mercy is teaching the ignorant. I do not call people names nor do I assume that I am exempt from the behaviors I write about in this column. The metaphor of sin is merely metaphor and an enumeration of issues that come up in the process of listing and selling homes. I share these for the sake of experience and learning.

Heeding Advice is different than listening, which I wrote about previously. **Heeding Advice** implies or expects a response or action. A premise of **Merchandising a Home** is “*seeing it through the eyes of a buyer*”. We cannot see our home from a neutral perspective. We know what we like and what we are comfortable with in our own home. When listing a home, I always preface my initial walk through with the disclaimer, “I am not commenting on you or your lifestyle I need to help you prepare for the buyers”. But it isn’t always easy to be on the receiving end of such comments about your home. It is important that a property be clean, neat and smell good. Not tooooooo perfumey as though you are hiding something. If you have throw rugs, hearth rugs, etc...and a buyer pulls it aside and sees a big stain, they wonder what else the seller is hiding. Be upfront and forthright about disclosing information and concerns OR better yet, take care of any and all things ahead of time. A pre-sale home inspection is one way, but most of us know that there are things that we have always meant to do or areas to take care of but never got around to it.

Heeding Advice of your professional Realtor® is for your benefit in helping you to accomplish your goal of selling your home.

* Remember that this series, “The 7 Deadly Sins of Real Estate* is a casual take-off of the Seven Deadly Sins of Life. This series is meant to be a light-hearted, educational commentary. It is not intended for moral teaching.

Sign Unveiling for New Pike YMCA

Officials from the Metropolitan School District of Pike Township, along with YMCA volunteers, staff and members of the community held a “Sign Unveiling” for the future home of the Pike Branch YMCA on November 12. The new site is located at 5337 Lafayette Road, Indianapolis. Currently the YMCA offers programs in Pike Township through an Express YMCA facility, located at 7114 Lakeview Parkway West Drive, as well as through local school facilities. Since the branch opened 3 years ago. YMCA officials have always been optimistic about opening a full-service facility for the Pike community. Fundraising has begun for the new branch, which is estimated to cost up to \$12 million.

If you are a member of any YMCA, you can use any YMCA facility in the city, state, country, or internationally!

In Step with Alice Steppe

Democracy is NOT a
spectator sport. Vote
on May 4, 2010

Voter Registration

While you cannot register to vote at an Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (IN BMV) license agency, you can download the needed voter registration form from their official Web site.

After completing the form, you may either take it to one of the County Voter Registration Offices Listed on the form, or mail it to:

Indiana Election Division
302 West Washington St., Room E204
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2743

It's important to note that you will have to show some sort of photo identification, such as an Indiana driver's license or state identification card when you vote, unless you qualify for an exemption.

You are eligible to vote if you meet the following requirements:

- * You are a U.S. citizen
- * You are at least 18 years old
- * You have resided in your precinct at least 29 days before the election in which you will be voting
- * You are not currently in prison after being convicted of a crime
- * You apply to register to vote at least 29 days before the election in which you will be voting, and your application is approved.

For more information on the voting registration process or on elections in general, visit the official state elections page.

If you have moved since the last election, you will likely need to change your polling place. Check it out rather than be turned away on election day.

Indianapolis is the Most Affordable City to Buy a House

Median home price: \$106,000

Median income: \$68,100

Affordability score: 95.7%

America's most affordable housing market is the 33rd largest metro area in the United States, with 1.7 million people.

The median family income is fairly high and the median home prices are very reasonable according to the National Association of Homebuilders and Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index.

Helping keep home prices depressed is a fairly virulent foreclosure plague: There were more than 18,400 properties with foreclosure filings during 2009.

The turmoil in the auto industry, which Indianapolis had been closely associated with, has hurt the city. But increased diversification, which has made pharmaceutical companies, banks, government agencies and insurers all important employers, has helped keep job losses in check. The unemployment rate was just 8.5% in December, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, well below the national rate of 10% that month.