

Fall Home Checklist

for MetroWest homeowners



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Twelve things I'd check before winter, and why each one matters when you sell.

Every October I walk my own house in Southborough with this list. It comes from more than twenty years as a licensed general contractor and the years since as a Realtor: a New England winter finds every weak seam, and the repairs that wait until spring cost more than the ones you do now.

☐ Gutters and downspouts

Clear them after leaf drop and extend downspouts at least four feet from the foundation.

When you sell: *Most wet basements start at the roofline, and a wet basement is the finding that costs sellers the most.*

☐ Roof and flashing

From the ground with binoculars: lifted shingles, exposed nail heads, flashing at the chimney and skylights.

When you sell: *Ice dams start where flashing and attic insulation fail. A buyer's inspector goes to the roof first.*

☐ Heating system service

Annual tune-up, new filter, thermostat test. Oil heat: check the tank legs and fittings for rust or weeping.

When you sell: *A dated service record is a selling point. A January failure is not.*

☐ Chimney and fireplace

Sweep and inspect if you burn. Check the cap and the crown for cracks.

When you sell: *Cracks let water into the masonry all winter, and masonry repairs are rarely small.*

☐ Exterior caulk and paint

Seal gaps at windows, doors, and trim joints. Touch up peeling paint before the first freeze.

When you sell: *Water in end grain rots trim in one winter, and peeling paint gets flagged on appraisals.*

☐ Outside faucets and irrigation

Shut the interior valves, drain the hose bibs, blow out the irrigation.

When you sell: *A split pipe inside a wall is a spring surprise nobody wants to negotiate over.*

☐ Grading, window wells, and the bulkhead

Soil slopes away from the house; window wells clear and covered. Seal the bulkhead seam: exterior silicone outside, spray foam inside.

When you sell: *That seam is one of the most common leak points in MetroWest, and one of the cheapest fixes.*

☐ Basement and sump

Test the sump pump. Look for white mineral staining or damp walls. Set the dehumidifier near 50 percent.

When you sell: *Moisture and mold findings change negotiations.*

☐ Smoke and CO alarms

Fresh batteries, and replace any unit past ten years old.

When you sell: *Massachusetts requires a fire department inspection at sale, and the date on the alarm is what they check.*

☐ Deck and porch

Check the ledger connection to the house, railing stability, and rot at post bases.

When you sell: *Decks are among the most common structural write-ups in an inspection.*

☐ Trees

Dead limbs over the roof, driveway, or service line come down now, with an arborist.

When you sell: *Otherwise winter storms make the decision for you, usually at a worse price.*

☐ Keep the receipts

Service records, permits, and warranties in one folder.

When you sell: *Buyers pay for a house that has been looked after. The paperwork proves it.*

Ask the builder.

Questions about your house, a project you're weighing, or an estimate that doesn't sit right? Scan for the online version and a short form. You'll get a straight answer from someone who has done the work.

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Global Real Estate Advisor | Gibson Sotheby's International Realty
Licensed General Contractor, Massachusetts
617.721.8384 | paul@paulneavynrealestate.com
paulneavynrealestate.com