

Lake Lanier Real Estate

TIPS FOR BUYERS AND SELLERS



DREAMSMITH
REALTY



LUXURY
PROPERTIES



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WHY WE WROTE THIS GUIDE

As Lake Lanier residents and Realtors for over two decades, we have found time and again that homeowners often discount their home's value when they sell on Lake Lanier. It's particularly troubling when we see an older senior not maximizing their profit from the sale of their home which could help pay for their next chapter--often in independent/assisted living communities.

We've also found that many buyers looking for a place on the lake don't understand why one home may cost hundreds of thousands more than another one that seems similar.

Selling and buying real estate on Lake Lanier is not as clear-cut as selling and buying non-lake properties. Though a home valuation tool is a good first step, these tools don't take into consideration the value that being on the lake can add. There are so many important lake-related factors that impact pricing on Lake Lanier – and we cover these in our guide.

*So grab a coffee or glass of sweet tea, nestle in to your favorite reading nook, and take a little time to learn how you can maximize **your** home's value on Lake Lanier.*



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Key Characteristics of Lake Properties
- How Much Value Does the Lakefront Add?
- Marketing A Lake Lanier Home to Sell
- Buying A Property on Lake Lanier
- Contact DreamSmith

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF LAKE PROPERTIES

These are important factors to weigh when deciding what you need and want in a home on Lake Lanier. Knowing the advantages and disadvantages of these aspects will help in making an informed decision.

	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
VIEW	Most people will always say, it's all about the view. With a view you can enjoy the lake without being on your dock.	No views of the water; however, some allow views in the winter (due to leaves off the trees).
ACCESS TO THE DOCK	Having a personal dock is a must for utilization of lake toys and entertainment.	Most lake families expect to have a personal dock, in the backyard, or their neighborhood marina.
WATER DEPTH	Deep water allows the use of your boat, year round.	Shallow water could limit the number of months for keeping your boat at the dock.
DOCK PERMIT	New dock permits are not being issued on Lake Lanier. Existing permits range from platform docks to double slips with party decks.	Without a dock you do not have a personal boat slip or the ability to entertain on the water from your backyard.

	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
BOAT TRAFFIC	Little boat traffic is good; this promotes a more enjoyable experience for dock entertaining and swimming.	Heavy boat traffic rocks the docks and the water is rough (and sometimes dangerous) for swimming.
SLOPE	A gentle slope makes accessing the dock easier and more enjoyable.	If it's too steep it may be difficult getting back and forth from the dock.
LOT FUNCTIONALITY	A level to semi-level lot supports more opportunities for outdoor entertaining. Also many people want easy access to the house from the lake or the street.	If the lot is steep or has gullies this can negatively impact access, use of the yard, and existing or future septic leach lines.
UTILITIES	Having county water, natural gas, and cable are a plus.	Homeowners have the option to heat with electric or propane.
NOISE	Limited to no noise is desirable.	Being close to a highway or an area with high boat traffic creates more ambient noise.
DOCK LOCATION	A dock just behind your house is most attractive.	It may not be close to the house or may be out of view.

HOW MUCH VALUE DO THESE FACTORS ADD?



How much value different aspects of a lakefront add to a property depends on several factors:

THE VIEW

- Most lake dwellers would like a view but this is not always possible; however, many homes do have nice winter views.

WATER ACCESS

- Having your own dock just behind your home is a huge plus if you have boat(s) and other lake toys.

DEPTH OF WATER

- Deep water ensures that you can access your dock year-round, even if the lake levels are down.

DOCK PERMIT

- Is your dock permitted for a double slip with a party deck or for a smaller dock? The most important thing is to have a permit.

BOAT TRAFFIC OR ROUGH WATER

- This can determine the amount of enjoyment when entertaining or swimming at the dock.

SLOPE

- The grade and accessibility to the dock is an important consideration.

LOT FUNCTIONALITY

- This can determine usable space outside of the home, including whether there is an easy path to access the lake.

UTILITIES

- Most Lake Lanier homes have septic systems. Other considerations are the drinking water source, how the house is heated (electric or gas), and is the Internet available?

Continued on the next page...





MARKETING A LAKEFRONT HOME TO SELL

1. Know your audience.

It's important to know who you are marketing to. This is not like selling a traditional non-waterfront home. Most lake buyers are looking for an experience and a way to live out their dreams. It is very important to understand the different buyer personas.

2. Choose a Realtor with experience selling waterfront homes.

Many people make the mistake of choosing a real estate agent who has no experience selling waterfront homes. Remember that your agent will be the conduit to the buying public, so choose one wisely.

3. Choose a Realtor who is a lakefront homeowner.

Your Realtor should know how to market and sell the "lake living experience." The goal is to also reach those buyers who want the same thing that turned you on to the home when you bought it. If your Realtor is a lakefront homeowner, you can significantly improve your odds of getting a better price for your home.

SELLING YOUR LAKE LANIER HOME

Are you ready to “upgrade” your lake home? Perhaps you’ve had a wonderful family weekend cabin, and now your chapter of life allows you to live full-time at Lake Lanier.

Or, perhaps you are downsizing. This could be due to many reasons, but what we see most often at Lake Lanier is that adult children have moved away and don’t visit as often. The other top reasons we see people downsizing are either that they are looking to move into a retirement community and/or that they can no longer easily keep up with the maintenance of their lake home, dock, and boat.

No matter your reason for selling, be sure you work with a Realtor who *knows* the Lake and who can market your home to actual buyers (not just tire-kickers).



HOW TO MAKE YOUR HOME STAND APART FROM THE COMPETITION



Realize that when selling your home, buyers will be comparing yours to other lakefront properties. They will respond best if your home is in good condition and is reasonably priced for its perceived value.

Here are some ways to help your property stand out from the competition:

Your Home's Maintenance

Lake homes take a beating because of the moisture. The exterior is more prone to rust, deterioration, and erosion, due to its proximity to the water. These maintenance tips can help you bring in the most value for your lakefront home:

- Stain or seal decks and outdoor furniture that may look faded or worn.
- Invest in a pre-listing home inspection so that you can be informed about any structural or moisture problems.
- Take care of the landscaping and any erosion issues.
- Be sure the boat dock is cleaned and clutter-free.

Staging

- Buyers will see what we have overlooked. Invite friends over for their honest opinion as to how your house looks, inside and out. They will share things you may not have thought of.
- Keep in mind that you want to sell your house, not all that you have accumulated. Think about your furniture and accessories and determine which items add possible value, and how do these items impact a buyer's impression of this being their home? If it doesn't add to the perceived value, put it in storage or get rid of it.
- Rooms need to look clean, and a coat of fresh paint may be necessary. This will make your walls look new. Neutral colors are best because it helps any buyer imagine their own preferences in each room. Stick to neutral colors.

- Think of ways to dress up the bathroom. Put away everyday towels and replace them with fresh white towels. Hide toothbrushes and other toiletries in baskets or other containers under the sink or in cabinets. Consider some candles or flower arrangements.

Curb Appeal

Keep the outside of your house looking immaculate. You never know when someone will drive by before asking their agent to preview the home.

- Spruce up the landscaping, manicure the lawn, use pine straw or mulch, and add some fresh flowers and greenery.
- Cut back tree limbs and shrubs that may be blocking the view. Your goal is to enhance your house, not hide it.
- Clean the driveway, walkway, and windows.
- Paint or replace the front door and hardware; this needs to stand out and be inviting.
- Clean, paint, or swap out lamp fixtures.
- The exterior of the house must look fresh and clean. Pressure washing may take care of this, or you may need to have the house painted.
- Clean the roof and gutters of algae or debris.
- If you have exterior living spaces that need to be spruced up, consider buying inviting-looking budget furniture.





BUYING A PROPERTY ON LAKE LANIER

Knowing how you will use your property and weighing that alongside the key characteristics of lake properties is very important when buying on Lake Lanier—particularly in establishing a realistic budget. Will you live there full-time or part-time? Do you plan to spend much of your time on the lake—fishing, boating, swimming, skiing, etc? Do you need indoor and/or outdoor space for entertaining? Will you regularly host overnight guests? These are just a few of the questions to consider.

Review our section about how to sell waterfront property. You should choose a Realtor who has that kind of knowledge.

Choose a Realtor with lake-specific experience

Your Realtor should understand how properties can enhance the "lake living experience" and who knows the value of various aspects of the homes you preview to buy.

Choose a Realtor who is a Lake Lanier homeowner

Your agent will need to understand the rules governing the use of public lands managed by the Army Corps of Engineers. Many people make the mistake of choosing a real estate agent who has no experience with the intricacies of Lake Lanier. For this reason, too often, people buy on the lake to later regret it because their agent did not have the knowledge to give them proper guidance.

Continued on the next page...






Thinking of Selling or Buying? **Let's Chat.**

Set up a free marketing consultation with DreamSmith, where you will map out a custom strategic plan to sell your property on your timeline and for the best price possible.


Even though this consultation is FREE, your time is not.

If you feel that your marketing success consultation wasn't worth your time, just let us know, and DreamSmith will donate \$250 to your favorite charity.

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