



# Home Buyer Challenges during the Holiday Season

*As reported in a survey of  
Members of the  
National Association of  
Exclusive Buyer Agents*

National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents (NAEBA)  
1481 N Eliseo Felix Way, Suite 100, Avondale, AZ 85323  
623-932-0098 • 888-623-2299 • [naeba@naeba.info](mailto:naeba@naeba.info)  
[www.naeba.org](http://www.naeba.org)

A 100-year-old, faded, one-armed Santa.

Christmas trees in every room of the house.

Photos of the current homeowners wearing nothing but their birthday suits and a few Christmas accessories.

Aftermath of a New Year's Eve party including passed out guests complete with open and spilled adult beverages.

These are just a few of the responses received when the National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents (NAEBA) asked their members, real estate brokerages that only represent home buyers, about the challenges of shopping for a home during the holiday season. While NAEBA hopes that home buyers don't run into anything like the above this holiday season, there are a few unique challenges that home buyers should take into consideration when shopping for a home this month.

Many NAEBA members reported that the biggest challenge is getting into a home to see it. One NAEBA member stated, "Many sellers have limited showing times during the holidays, particularly on weekends - hard to get into houses when people are entertaining, have visitors, etc." Another member reported, "Sellers reluctant to show because house is a wreck or too much company in house."

Other challenges were reported as well. Many cited even lower inventory due to sellers temporarily taking their homes off the market. Another challenge mentioned was that the decorations can alter a person's perception of the house. Decorations may cover flaws or make a room look smaller than it actually is. A few members reported difficulties in meeting deadlines when financial institutions or other offices are closed or industry personnel (loan officer, inspector, etc.) take time off around the holidays. Those members in colder climates also mentioned the challenge of getting to a home when the homeowners haven't cleared away the snow from the entrance and the need to be cautious on icy sidewalks and steps.

Not all members pointed out challenges, however. One member stated, "Not a challenge but an opportunity for buyers. Since we know anyone whose home is on the market during the holidays is highly motivated, we can be more aggressive in offering price and terms of the contract."

States NAEBA President Dawn Rae, "While buying a home during the holiday season can pose extra challenges, NAEBA members are aware of those challenges and can help a home buyer overcome them."

A full list of the members' responses is on the following pages.

The challenges listed as follows are actual responses from NAEBA members. Other than corrections for misspellings and grammatical errors, they have not been altered. These are simply responses to a survey conducted by the National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents (NAEBA) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the association. The responses are not intended to serve as real estate advice. NAEBA always recommends that a licensed real estate professional who works for you exclusively be consulted when engaging in a real estate transaction.

## *Challenges Home Buyers May Face:*

The biggest challenge is actually getting an appointment. First, getting the listing agents to return calls in a timely manner. Then some sellers will take their house off the market temporarily so they can enjoy their holiday...for a couple weeks. Others are just more difficult to schedule around family activities since children are home over the holidays.

Inventory levels drop drastically during holiday season.

It's sometimes more difficult to get showing appointments; The weather doesn't always cooperate; Some buyers find it hard to look past all of the pretty decorations and good smells.

Generally, things slow across the board. Focus is off serious time consuming activities such as real estate and more so on the holiday decorating and shopping. Many people are planning and preparing to travel or entertain. This includes not only the buyer and seller, but brokers and agents and the many other professionals involved in the process including their secretaries and couriers.

Getting appointments to see homes when sellers have visitors, guest and parties going on.

Trying to schedule showings around seller and buyer holiday schedules.

You mean besides the cold, ice, snow, rain and getting dark at 5:30? Generally, it means limited evening viewing opportunities unless the Buyer-Client(s) can view during the daytime. Of course, weekends are generally not an issue. The good news is that it's a wonderful time to get a great deal/value on a residence! Many sellers are "recreational" in nature - meaning in the spring and summer they will put their home on the market for a "optimistic" price and if they sell it fine and dandy - but they don't have to sell and are not very motivated. However, a home on the market in November thru February or mid-March indicates a motivated seller. Add to this the fact that sales are at the bottom between Thanksgiving week and about a week after the Super Bowl! In fact, most home advertising (outside of the local MLS) and promotion is virtually non-existent...

Less inventory.

People unwilling to show their property because of family or guests.

Not getting into the property.

That sellers are unwilling to schedule appointments to see the property because it conflicts with their holiday plans.

Lack of inventory is a huge challenge. Folks take their homes off the market.

Sellers don't or forget to clear their front walk/steps/porch for showings or sellers decline showings during the holiday weeks (before, during and after the holidays).

Access to view homes. Sellers are busy during the holidays with family and parties.

Holiday schedules of the homeowners (i.e. Getting appointments confirmed).

Fewer homes on market and occasionally weather can cause the cancellation of an appointment.

Low inventory.

The biggest one is snow especially with vacant properties. I owned a PU truck at one time and actually had to plow out a couple of driveways and shovel a walk to get in to see a home. Good thing I got there an hour in advance. At another one my client and I walked through three feet of snow over a 100-yard area to get to the home.

Schedules - most showings take place on weekends and so do holiday events. Also, in the resort community, a lot of houses are unavailable to show because they have short-term rentals.

Not a challenge but an opportunity for buyers. Since we know anyone whose home is on the market during the holidays is highly motivated, we can be more aggressive in offering price and terms of the contract.

Homes are many times difficult to show at holiday time as people have so many things going on. Also, homes while they look nice all decorated it tends to cover up what the buyers need to see and picture themselves in the space.

Often less inventory. Sellers more particular about allowing showings. Buyers may have less time to look, etc.

Many sellers have limited showing times during the holidays, particularly on weekends - hard to get into houses when people are entertaining, have visitors, etc.

1. The choices are often fewer. Many houses are temporarily withdrawn because the sellers have visitors for the holidays and don't want to disrupt the festivities for showings. For the same reasons, sellers who are considering putting their home on the market, prefer to waiting until after the holidays.
2. Buyers have a more difficult time imagining what their belongings will look like in a fully decorated house and a room with a Christmas tree usually feels smaller than usual.
3. They need to be more focused. Some buyers are distracted by all the decorations and they don't really see the house.
4. It can be more difficult to orchestrate a quick close on an occupied home during the holidays. Sellers may be out of town or they may have house guests and they frequently have a busier schedule, making it daunting to get everything packed up in a timely fashion.

Despite the challenges, the holidays can be an ideal time to look for a home, especially if it is vacant. It often gives buyers a negotiating advantage because many sellers fear if they don't accept an offer before Thanksgiving, they won't get another one until January. (Of course, this doesn't apply in a hot market.)

Weather conditions and sellers unwilling to show their homes during the holidays.

We are in a low inventory market. This gets worse around the holidays because sellers are even less inclined to allow showings.

Power, heat, snow on the walkways. Any seller that wants to sell their home should keep the power on, heat at 60 to 63 at the least, and make sure a walkway is shoveled every time it snows.

Seller is not in a hurry to move which causes a lot of stress.

Extremely low inventory. Sometimes it's harder to get in on showings.

Sellers reluctant to show because house is a wreck or too much company in house.

The yard! You have no idea what is going to come up in the spring and everything looks pretty ugly. Of course, house tours can be tricky with ice and snow and it gets dark now at 5 pm so it's harder to see a house after work during the work week.

1. Seeing the property through the personalization of gifts and decorations and food. 2. Getting to a vacant home! Many times, we have to shovel in!

It's dark and it's cold. I love December clients ... they are serious and ready to purchase!

Because of the holidays deadlines, e.g., inspection, loan commitment, etc., can be harder to meet.

### ***Unique Issues Reported:***

The seller's pet cat was stuffed and laying on display on the kitchen island shelf.

No holiday decorations come to mind but the New Year's morning when I opened a home for a scheduled showing only to find a bunch of folks sprawled all over the furniture and floor with countless liquor bottles spilling their contents everywhere.

Halloween decorations were still up.

A Christmas tree in place before we've even celebrated Thanksgiving.

It's always silly to show a property that has blow up Santas and snowmen in the yard.

A 100-year-old, one-armed Santa. The red had faded to brown and his beard to yellow. The owner claimed he lost his arm in WWI.

I once showed a home that had 13 (thirteen!!) Christmas trees. There was at least one in each room and they ranged in size from 7' to 2'. Of course, the trees weren't the only holiday decorations. You can imagine how excited the listing agent was. When he called to get feedback on the showing, I told him the buyers were a bit distracted by the Christmas explosion. He sighed and said, "You probably wouldn't believe me if I told you how it looks on a typical year. You saw their 'dialed back' version!"

In a barn was probably 75, or so boxes, labeled with last names. Some boxes were kind of opened and Christmas lights were visible. Among the boxes were also some wreaths and other decorations. On the same property was a garage apartment, filled with more labeled boxes, and Christmas decorations. I jokingly said to my clients that the owner must be a "Christmas light putter-upper." Before we left, the owner, who had been riding his tractor, walked over to speak with us. I asked him about the boxes. Sure enough, the boxes belong to his son, who is hired to decorate homes.

Naked photos on the walls of the couple in Christmas stuff.

We have a three-block neighborhood called Candy Cane Lane where (with a few exceptions) the houses are fully decked out with lights and displays ... so if you are buying a house in that neighborhood during December you understand that it comes with that expectation.

### **About NAEBA**

The [National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents \(NAEBA\)](#), created in 1995, is an organization of companies dedicated to representing only buyers of real estate. NAEBA member brokerages do not list homes for sale and never represent sellers. This restriction to one side of the real estate transaction avoids conflicts and ensures that the interest of the home buyer is protected at all times from house-hunting and negotiation to inspection, financing and closing.