

A Message from the President of the Youngstown Columbian Association of REALTORS®

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VIRTUAL HOME SHOWINGS ARE A REALITY

By, Patrick Burgan



Everything today is virtual. Whatever happened to reality? From virtual meetings and virtual business, to virtual education and virtual assistants, the boom of online virtual engagement is impacting everyone. Thanks, Covid!

And while many people are still trying to figure out how to pronounce Alexa's name properly to get her to help them out, most of the population has been forced to embrace a virtual world, replacing the real experience with a remote one. No industry is immune to this virtual phenomenon as it provides a way for every business to feel like they are essential. However, the real estate market is one of the few areas that has not only helped during this time, but it has also reaffirmed that the new way isn't always better.

VIRTUAL HOME VISITS DRIVING ONLINE DEMAND

Digital tools are helping drive the housing market. While the market sustained a slight dip in sales during March, down about 13% in units the Mahoning Valley according to MLS-YES Data for March 2020, the demand is still growing. Individuals are still showing their houses and viewing houses online. According to a new report from **Redfin**, brokerages saw a 494% increase in requests for agent-led video home tours during the first week of April alone online across the country. Just because people are in their houses, doesn't mean they want to stay in them forever.

EVEN DOUBTING THOMAS CAN BE CONVINCED TO BUY

Many buyers and seller are skeptical right now about the abilities of brokerages and agents to help them with their home search. The thought of doing a virtual tour of a home by walking through it as you sit somewhere else is as oxymoronic as it sounds. However, it is a reality. Virtual home showings allow for even the biggest skeptics to see that it is safe and comfortable to buy or sell a home now with trusted real estate agents who not only embrace this new reality but know how to handle socializing and showings from a distance.

VIRTUAL SHOWINGS CANNOT REPLACE THE FINAL STEP TO BUYING A HOME

While I am the first to admit that virtual showings are an effective tool in this climate, they cannot replace the comfort in seeing, touching and walking through a home you are about to purchase. This is the largest purchase of your lifetime. It will be where you will make a family, find comfort and, in some cases, are quarantined away from the outside world. It will be a part of your family just as your children, your spouse or partner and your pets. There will always be a need for seeing a house in person before you buy it and that will always be the reality of the real estate business.

While virtual home showings are helping bridge the social distancing gap that exists for buyers and sellers, it is showing how technology can help us continue on in a new world. However, like other industries before, NOTHING will replace the personal engagement a person has before committing to a decision like this. Virtual car sites like, Carvana, allow you to test drive the vehicle for 7-days before committing, clothing box companies like, Front Door Fashion, let you try on the clothes and see if you like them before they bill you for it, even dating sites help you meet the person before you go any further. Virtual elements and buying experiences are tools to help you properly make a decision and see if what is out here is something that interests you. However, like so many other industries, a virtual home showing will never replace the reality that seeing a house in person is truly believing when buying a home.

Patrick Burgan is the 2020 President of the Youngstown Columbian Association of REALTORS®