


Home Inspection Cost

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Don't Flinch at Home Inspection Cost — It Could Save you Thousands



by Tiffani Sherman

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In today's hot real estate market, there's a temptation to do anything necessary to get the house your family wants. But one thing you don't want to do is let the home inspection cost prevent you from having it done, even if the seller suggests it.

Jennifer Meadows and her family looked at 37 houses in the Richmond, Virginia, area and put in bids on five, losing four of them to buyers who were willing to sweeten their offers.

Several sellers asked Meadows to waive the home inspection. She declined.

"It looked like (the house) was in great condition but we didn't know," Meadows said. "And it's those unknowns that can get very pricey, and we weren't willing to risk our financial well-being by skipping inspection."

The cost of a home inspection is small compared to the unexpected expenses that could come up later.

When the Home Inspection Cost is Really Worth It

That skepticism was wise, said home inspector John Wanninger. He and his INSPECTIX team in Nebraska have inspected more than 30,000 homes.

It's not just the potentially expensive repairs, he said. Some of the problems can be life threatening.

Wanninger has done inspections where he found a three-story deck that was missing major reinforcement; carbon monoxide venting into a home because of rusty pipes; fireplaces with cracked flues, and many other dangerous situations.

A home inspection costs just a few hundred dollars.

Wanninger said the current cost range for a home inspection in his area of Nebraska is \$400 to \$600 with the size of the house determining the cost, with the larger homes costing more because they take more time.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the average home inspection costs between \$300 and \$500 depending on the size of the home, and it takes about three hours.

Condo and townhouse inspections are usually cheaper than free-standing homes (more in the \$250 range) and the age of the home isn't really a determining factor for his team.

After a general inspection, your inspector might recommend a specialist take a look at some things in and around the home including:

- Pools

- Sewer and septic systems
- Roof
- Pests
- Environmental issues (including radon, mold, asbestos)

These additional inspections add extra costs, according to Homeguide and Wanninger.

- Radon tests cost an additional \$100 to \$200.
- Mold inspections cost about \$100 to \$600.
- Asbestos inspections can cost between \$250 and \$800, but removal could range in the thousands.
- Lead tests cost about \$250 to \$500.

“We recommend a sewer scope on every inspection we do that has cast iron lines,” Wanninger said. “It’s 200 bucks, but if that sewer line is shot, after you move in, it’s \$8,000 to \$10,000.”

What is a Home Inspection?

The general idea behind a home inspection is it gives a buyer one last opportunity to find problems and potential problems before closing on the purchase and transferring ownership. It’s also a way to learn about the ins and outs of the house.

It also gives the seller an opportunity to address the issues or make an adjustment in the price.

“It could have some bearing on the price of the home if there were significant repairs that are needed,” said Nicole Deprez, a residential real estate agent with NP Dodge in Omaha, Nebraska. “I think when it comes to inspections, I think the biggest piece is the education part that kind of goes along with it.”

Usually, the buyer pays for the inspection, but sometimes a seller will get an inspection before putting their home on the market as a way to try to reassure potential buyers.

Keep the house you own in good shape so that the inspector won’t find much when you go to sell. Our list of 17 home checkups can prevent a shocking repair bill.

Finding a Home Inspector

The home inspection is only as good as the inspector you choose.

Real estate agent Deprez said she prefers to recommend inspectors who take their time and educate the buyers about their new homes while not panicking them.

This is difficult to know before you work with an inspector so recommendations from friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, and real estate professionals might have suggestions about people to call.

When choosing a home inspector:

- **Ask questions:** It's okay to ask about your potential inspector's background, experience, professional affiliations, etc.
- **Look at regulations:** If you live in a state that regulates home inspectors, check their licenses, credentials, and if there are any complaints against them.
- **Get paperwork:** Ask to see an inspector's proof of insurance and for a sample inspection report to make sure it is thorough.
- **Read the contract:** Make sure you understand what is part of the inspection and what may not be. Not all inspectors check for things like asbestos, lead paint, etc. or check swimming pools or septic systems.

What Do Home Inspectors Look For?

During an inspection, the National Association of Home Inspectors suggests their members look at about 1,600 items for signs of damage or other issues.

The inspector is looking at these general things:

- Water damage
- Structural integrity
- Potential safety issues
- Roof damage
- Electrical systems
- Plumbing systems
- HVAC system
- Any possible insect or pest infestations
- The condition of appliances

The inspector will only look at things that are easily accessible. They will not pull up carpet or make holes in walls.

Our eight-point home inspection checklist provides a detailed description of what an inspector is looking when surveying the house.

After the inspection, the buyer will receive a detailed report with everything the inspector found.

If Problems Arise After Closing

Sadly, not all inspections catch everything that might be a problem with a house.

Some inspectors will offer a warranty on their work, meaning their company will pay for repairs you might need to make on issues they should have caught during the inspection. Check your contract to see if this kind of protection exists.

Wanninger says the limit of liability is usually the fee paid for the inspection.

“Most home inspectors carry errors and omissions insurance to protect them from major losses, but understand our ability to detect and find things is limited to what we’re able to see and there are hundreds and hundreds of things a home inspector needs to look at.”

If they make a mistake, he said, most home inspectors will refund the fee paid for the inspection.

Tiffani Sherman is a Florida-based freelance reporter with more than 25 years of experience writing about finance, health, travel and other topics.
