

G10 Homefinder

THE SALE

Purging, renovating leads to four offers within four days

Owner overcame her preconception of when to sell.

By Lori Johnston
For the AJC

Names: Brian and Shelley Payne and their two school-age children

The home: A four-bedroom, 2½ bath home built in 1978 with a full basement.

Where: Atlanta's Dunwoody Heights neighborhood

Why they sold: To move closer to St. Martin's Episcopal School in Brookhaven, church, activities and Brian's job with The Coca-Cola Company in downtown Atlanta. "We didn't expect ourselves to move as fast as we did," Shelley said.

When the couple met with their agent, Collette McDonald of Re/Max Around Atlanta, in fall 2012, they assumed she would tell them to wait until the end of the 2012-2013 school year to sell, figuring that families typically don't like to move during the school year. When McDonald reviewed the inventory of homes on the market in

the Dunwoody area, she found that only one other house like theirs was on the market. "She explained how people are wanting to buy houses all the time, it doesn't just happen in the spring. I had a preconceived notion that that was when we had to do it," Shelley said.

Time on market: seven days

Original price: \$489,900

Sale price: \$472,500

What it took: It took about four weeks to get the home ready to put on the market, from de-cluttering to renovating two bathrooms. The couple had to purge the items that had accumulated in the house during nearly 10 years. "It was a huge project," Shelley said.

"That part of the process was 10 times harder and more labor intensive than the actual sale."

Changes included cleaning out closets and organizing the remaining clothes from light to dark colors. In her basement, she organized items into bins to take to consignment stores and items to keep, such as books and toddler clothes. It was dif-



Shelley and Brian Payne with their children Claire and William in front of their home. PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY CHRISTOPHER OQUENDO

ficult to let go of items her kids had outgrown. "It was like I was getting rid of memories," Shelley said.

The house was completely updated, with renovations to the bathrooms creating a move-in ready

home. They added Kohler toilets, solid wood cabinets and granite countertops to the bathrooms. Within four days, they had four offers.

"The prep part was so hard, but it was so worth it because it was ready.



The Payne's former home at 5642 Bunky Way.

Then when people came in, there was nothing they could critique. It wasn't cluttered. It was clean," Shelley said.

Potential stumbling block: Having multiple offers made it tricky to determine which one to accept. The Paynes didn't just look at the highest-priced offer, but considered factors such as how much people were asking for closing costs and how fast the buyers wanted to move in. The family had been too busy preparing the house for sale to look for their next purchase. The buyer they chose didn't need to move in right away, which gave the Paynes time to find another home. The Paynes purchased a ren-

ovated five-bedroom, three full and two half bath home built in 2007 in an Atlanta neighborhood just a mile and a half away from their children's school and shortening Brian's commute. The closings were back to back, in December 2012.

Seller's hint: Make changes to let potential buyers see their house as theirs, not yours. Karen DeRuyter of Stage Right Designs walked through the home and recommended changes such as removing kids' photographs from the walls. Shelley said she was reluctant to do so, but realized that taking down the portraits would allow buyers to picture themselves in the house.

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