My Property Isn't Selling — Should I Become a Landlord?

A San Antonio homeowner's guide to deciding whether renting is the right pivot — for Realtors to share with clients, and for owners weighing the decision themselves.

Should I Rent My House If It Isn't Selling?

It's tempting to get bogged down in what your house "should" sell for and how to get the most money out of it. The most important question you can ask yourself is: What do I need my house to do for me? Like any investment, your house is a tool — or an unwanted weight. Answering that question honestly can help you find the best path forward for you.

A Note on Carrying Costs

When calculating a seller's estimated net from a sale, carrying costs are often forgotten. Carrying cost = median days on market × your monthly payments (principal, interest, property taxes, insurance — PITI — plus utilities, lawn care, etc.). Factoring in carrying costs gives you a better idea of your true estimated net. If your property is vacant for more than 30 or 60 days, you may also need to factor in an additional insurance rider or policy for a vacant property.

A Warning on Zestimates and the Value of a Good Realtor

Texas is a non-disclosure state — sale prices aren't public record. Zillow's Zestimate isn't pulling from true comps, and it doesn't account for your home's condition. A Realtor can pull actual sold data, review days on market, and weigh your property's condition to help you decide on a listing price.

A Note on Condition When Pricing a Home

Four things sell a home: price, location, condition, and terms. Many people underestimate the importance of condition when pricing a home — old roofs, evidence of foundation movement (cracks in sheetrock or driveway/garage/flatwork, doors ghosting or sticking), multicolored or wallpapered walls, outdated fixtures (light and plumbing), the quality, type, and age of flooring (old carpet vs. new vinyl plank, for example), countertop material (solid surface like quartz or granite vs. laminate), landscaping (established trees, flower beds, and grass vs. weeds or dirt), and evidence of drainage issues around the house. Condition has a huge impact on price.

Competing Against the Builder

If you bought a new home and plan to move while the builder is still selling new homes in your neighborhood, be forewarned: the builder has a lot more wiggle room on sales price, a really powerful marketing strategy, and is good at using terms to attract potential buyers — no closing costs, interest rate buy-downs, funds for upgrades. If this is you, renting may be your best option until the builder stops operating in the neighborhood.

A Note on Photos

Photography is becoming more and more important. Many Realtors and professional photographers are using technology that merges multiple exposures to create the most inviting marketing photos, and many are also using virtual staging. Good photography makes a real difference on final closing price and days on market.

Your Equity: Will You Have to Pay to Sell?

Math is a major part of this conversation. When you say to yourself "my house isn't selling," is it that you're not getting the dollar amount out of it that you want, or that if you lowered the price, you'd have to pay to sell it? The definition of market price is what a willing and able buyer will pay, and that number can change every time a new buyer enters the market or a buyer closes on a property and exits it — there is no fixed price for a house. Looking at housing supply, or months of inventory, for your specific area and house type can help you understand current demand. A Realtor has access to this data. Depending on your specific financial and emotional situation, coupled with market conditions, lowering the price or changing the condition could be the correct pivot.

Is Renting the Correct Pivot for Me?

Not everyone makes a good landlord. The very un-fun fact is that becoming a good landlord can cost more up front than preparing your house for sale. If you'd have to bring money to the closing table to sell your house, often the math is that you'd also be negative each month after receiving your rent payment. In calculating start-up costs, you need to factor in your carrying cost for the vacant property plus property preparations — showing clean and move-in-ready clean are different standards, as are the standards for paint and making sure everything in the home is working properly. Texas Property Code also requires a rekey, a smoke detector check, and installation of additional security devices before a tenant moves in — added expenses that don't come with preparing a house for sale. A buyer may dismiss a missing drain plug; a renter may not, because a buyer can modify the home once they move in while a tenant usually cannot.

Current market conditions (written July 2026) are a crowded market both for sales and rentals, which makes condition an even more important factor.

Selling the house allows you to be free of the liabilities associated with owning the property. Renting it out keeps you locked in, and adds the additional liability of a renter. You can mitigate the risks by hiring a good property management company or a professional to lease the property, or by being an active self-manager — but that won't remove all risks. If your budget will not allow for uncertainties, or if your gut is churning at the idea, being a landlord may not be for you. The house could be a good investment, but that depends on the math — upfront and ongoing costs weighed against your reserves and monthly income — and on your own stress level around the potential liability versus the potential benefits.

Can I List My House for Rent and for Sale at the Same Time?

Technically, yes. Practically, no. Most people find their future home — to buy or rent — online, on major websites like Zillow and Trulia. These websites have algorithms that want only one listing per address, and they prioritize sales over rentals. So while you can physically put up the listing, people won't find the rental. With a professional manager, the MLS pushes out the sales listing while the property management software pushes out the rental listing — Zillow prioritizes the MLS/sale listing and ignores the rental listing (the same happens even if both are placed in the MLS, though that isn't a practical solution for most property managers with established software-based processes). You need to choose the direction that's best for you given current market conditions and go that way.

What About Co-Brokerage?

If you still want to list both ways, can one broker list the house for sale while another broker — a professional property manager — lists it for rent? This is a broker-specific question. At MHN, the answer is no. It makes two parties responsible for what's happening at the house, with neither having a full picture of who is going in and doing what. From a liability perspective, we kindly decline.

Work Through Your Own Numbers

It's about the math and the financial impact, and the emotional impact. What do you need this house to do for you? Use the questions below on your own, or bring them to a conversation with your Realtor or property manager.

- What do I need this house to do for me?
- What are my monthly carrying costs? (principal, interest, taxes, insurance — including a vacant-property rider if applicable — lawn care, utilities)
- What are the median days on market for my property type and location?
- What are my expected total carrying costs for selling this property?
- Would I have to bring money to the closing table to sell the property? If so, how much?
- Would expected rent cover my monthly expenses, or would I be negative each month? If so, how much?
- Does the idea of being a landlord make me think "awesome investment in my portfolio" or "liability and money pit"? (scale of 1–5, 1 being money pit and 5 being investment)
- Do I have the reserves in my budget to handle vacant property carrying costs, additional prep costs, and — if using a Realtor for tenant placement or a professional property manager — their service fees?

If renting is the way you want to go, take our "Hire a Property Manager or Self-Manage?" self-assessment. If you're leaning toward full-service property management, take our "Are We a Match?" self-assessment.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I rent my house if it isn't selling?

It depends on your numbers and your temperament. If you'd have to bring money to the closing table to sell, the math often works out that you'd also run negative each month as a landlord. Working through your carrying costs, start-up costs, and how the idea of being a landlord makes you feel is the honest starting point.

Why can't I just trust my Zillow estimate?

Texas is a non-disclosure state, so actual sale prices are not public record. Zillow isn't pulling from true comps, and it doesn't account for a home's actual condition. A Realtor can pull real sold data and weigh condition when helping you price.

Can I list my property for rent and for sale at the same time?

Technically, yes; practically, it doesn't work well. Major listing sites allow only one listing per address and prioritize the sale listing, so a rental listed alongside an active sale listing generally won't be seen by renters.

Can one broker list my house for sale while another manages it as a rental?

At MHN, we decline this structure. It puts two parties responsible for the property with neither having the full picture of who has access and what's happening — from a liability standpoint, we kindly decline.

What does Texas require before I can rent out my house?

Texas Property Code requires a rekey, a smoke detector check, and installation of any additional required security devices before a tenant moves in.

Is it cheaper to become a landlord than to sell at a loss?

Not necessarily. Start-up costs to prepare a home for rent can be more than preparing it for sale, since rental-ready condition standards are higher — a buyer can modify a home after purchase, while a tenant usually cannot.

Next Steps

Whether you're leaning toward listing again, renting, or you're not sure yet, talk it through with your Realtor or reach out to MHN Property Management directly.

MHN Property Management, LLC | MHNproperties.com | 210-402-9696

Developer Note — Schema Markup

Add FAQPage schema markup wrapping the Frequently Asked Questions section above, and standard Article schema for the main guide content, with LocalBusiness schema referenced site-wide. Link this page to and from the "Hire a Property Manager or Self-Manage?" and "Are We a Match?" self-assessment tools.