

TOP AGENT MAGAZINE

Christine Browning A Light in the Darkness



Christine Browning knows banking, and she knows people. The combination of those two things has made her a comforting presence for hundreds of homeowners who have found themselves upside down in their mortgages. A short sale is never an ideal situation, but having a caring and experienced professional on board can make a world of difference.

Living and working in Bend, OR, Browning has been right at the epicenter of the country's housing crisis. During the boom, buyers flocked to the area for its beauty and recreation opportunities, making Bend number two in the nation in the growth of home values. Then the downturn left a record number of people with homes that were worth less than they paid for them. The formerly vibrant construction industry nearly ground to a halt, unemployment skyrocketed and homes lost 50 to 65 percent of their value.

Browning had spent eight years in banking, doing all sorts of portfolio lending. When the crash was approaching, one of her tasks was to get borrowers to pay their mortgages by any means necessary. She was loyal to her employer, but had an ethical problem telling borrowers to cash in their retirement funds or borrow against credit cards to pay their mortgages. She knew there must be a better solution. "I saw the need for a real estate professional, with a background in banking, who could specialize in short sales," she says. In 2009, she made the switch to real estate and now sits on the other side of the desk, helping people get out



from under homes they can no longer afford, but without sacrificing their futures to do it.

"I very much enjoy what I do," Browning says. "Folks are not sure do what do when their home loses so much of their value, and they lose a lot of sleep over it. I like being able to help them find some peace of mind and get closure." Browning helps sellers negotiate short sales, unburden themselves and begin rebuilding their lives. A short sale is an infinitely better situation than hanging on with both hands until the bank takes the property. "Besides being quite a stain on your credit, a foreclosure can remain on your credit for up to 10 years," Browning says. "Many of my clients will be able to buy a house again within a couple of years."

Browning manages 60 to 80 listings at any given time, and employs two full-time assistants to make sure every detail is covered. Her goal is to put clients back in the driver's seat and get them to the other side of a very uncomfortable situation. Now that the market has leveled out, it might look like Browning is putting herself out of a job. But she has engendered such trust and

loyalty with her clients, she has built a strong client base, even in a tough economy.

"There are still so many folks to help, and a lot of the people I worked with on their short sales in 2009, are now qualified to buy again," she says. She also has plans to bring several buyer's agents on board to take advantage of the favorable market for people looking for a home. The past two years of hardship certainly don't define Bend, or the future of its residents.

"This is just a chapter in our story," Browning says. "Real estate will recover, construction will resume and this will continue to be a very desirable place to live. I see myself selling real estate here for the next 30 years."

Christine Browning
Broker at GoBend Realty
browninghomes@gmail.com
christinebrowning.com
(541) 390-6005 cell