SELLING CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

The Fresno Downsizing Checklist

A calm, practical guide for homeowners and families preparing for a smaller home, a move closer to family, or the sale of a longtime property.

A thoughtful move starts with a clear plan - not a rushed decision.

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1. Start With the Next Chapter

Before you make decisions about repairs, staging, or listing dates, get clear about where you are going and what matters most. A downsizing plan is easier when the destination is defined first.

- Clarify where you want to live next - smaller home, single-level home, rental, senior community, or closer to family.
- Decide whether you need to sell before buying, buy before selling, or coordinate both.
- Identify the people who should be involved in decisions and who has final authority.
- List the features that matter in your next home: fewer stairs, less yard work, accessibility, proximity to family or services.
- Set a realistic target timeline rather than choosing a listing date first.
- If a trust, estate, probate, power of attorney, or title question may be involved, speak with the appropriate legal or tax professional early.

A useful first question

“If the house sold tomorrow, would I know exactly what happens next?” If the answer is no, that is the planning step to solve first.

Family coordination

When adult children or multiple family members are helping, agree on roles early. One person may coordinate appointments, another may help sort belongings, and another may handle move logistics. Clear roles reduce stress and prevent mixed messages.

2. Sort the Home Without Rushing

A longtime home can hold decades of belongings and memories. The goal is not to “get rid of everything.” The goal is to make thoughtful decisions in manageable stages.

- Create four categories: Keep • Family • Donate/Sell • Decide Later.
- Start with low-emotion spaces such as linen closets, garages, or duplicate kitchen items.
- Handle sentimental items in shorter sessions; avoid making every decision in one weekend.
- Photograph meaningful objects or collections before they leave the home if that helps preserve the memory.
- Identify jewelry, documents, family records, medications, keys, and valuables before showings begin.
- If you plan to use an estate-sale, donation, moving, or clean-out service, schedule estimates before the listing rush.
- Keep important legal, financial, medical, and property documents in a clearly labeled, secure location.

A room-by-room approach

Week 1	Closets, linens, pantry, duplicates
Week 2	Garage, storage, tools, seasonal items
Week 3	Furniture, art, books, collections
Week 4	Photos, keepsakes, important papers

3. Prepare the Property Strategically

Not every home needs a renovation before selling. The right preparation plan depends on condition, competition, price range, timing, and your own energy and budget.

- Ask for a pre-listing walk-through before spending money on improvements.
- Create three repair categories: must address • helpful if practical • not necessary for the sale strategy.
- Prioritize safety, deferred maintenance, obvious defects, cleanliness, lighting, and curb appeal.
- Avoid major renovations until you understand whether buyers in your price range are likely to reward the expense.
- Decide whether an as-is strategy is more appropriate than a long renovation timeline.
- Make a plan for pets, medications, valuables, documents, and mobility needs during showings.
- Discuss whether staging, partial staging, or simply editing existing furnishings makes the most sense.

Documents to gather

- Property tax and insurance information
- Loan or mortgage information
- HOA documents, if applicable
- Permits or records for significant improvements, if available
- Solar documentation, if applicable
- Warranties, service records, or appliance information worth retaining
- Trust or ownership documents when relevant - reviewed with the appropriate professional

4. Plan the Sale and the Move Together

The smoothest downsizing transactions treat the home sale and the move as one coordinated project.

- Review a realistic pricing strategy based on current comparable sales, competition, condition, and buyer demand.
- Request an estimated seller net sheet so you understand likely proceeds and selling costs before making commitments.
- Decide how much notice you need before showings begin.
- Plan where you will stay if your next home is not ready at closing.
- Discuss closing-date flexibility, possession, or a rent-back when appropriate and legally available.
- Book movers only after the transaction timeline is reasonably clear.
- Arrange utility transfers, mail forwarding, address updates, and key handoff.
- Keep a small “first week” box with medications, documents, chargers, toiletries, basic kitchen items, and essentials.

Before accepting an offer, look beyond price

Consider financing, contingencies, inspection terms, appraisal risk, requested credits, closing timing, possession, and the buyer’s overall ability to perform. The highest number is not always the simplest or strongest offer.

5. Questions to Ask Before You List

What should I do before spending money on repairs?
Start with a strategy review. A pre-listing walk-through can help separate important work from unnecessary projects.

Can I sell the home as-is?
Sometimes. The right choice depends on condition, market demand, timing, and your priorities.

What if family members disagree?
Clarify who has authority to make transaction decisions and use a written plan for roles and communication.

How early should I start?
Earlier than most people think. Planning, sorting, repairs, and move coordination often take longer than the actual listing period.

Do I need an SRES®?
You are not required to use one. An SRES® is a real estate professional who has completed specialized education focused on the needs of mature clients.

Considering a move, downsizing, or helping a parent sell a home?

Aradhana Bhandary can help you organize the real estate side of the transition, understand your options, and create a clear plan before you list.

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