

Downsizing: A Practical Guide for Your Next Chapter (2026 Edition)

Clear options, realistic planning, and experienced guidance for homeowners ready to simplify

By Michelle Clemons, REALTOR®

Charles Burt Realtors | Move with Michelle



Who This Guide Is For

This guide is for homeowners who are **actively considering downsizing** and want a clear understanding of how the process works — financially, logistically, and practically.

Downsizing is not about "starting over." It's about **right-sizing** your home to better fit how you live today.

Most people reading this guide have already:

- Owned a home for many years
- Managed major life transitions
- Made thoughtful financial decisions before

This guide assumes that experience — and builds on it with practical, actionable information you can use to make confident decisions about your next move.



What Downsizing Really Means

Downsizing looks different for everyone. There's no single blueprint, and what works for one household may not fit another.

For Some, It Means

- Fewer square feet to maintain
- Less time spent on upkeep
- One level instead of stairs
- Lower utility costs

For Others, It Means

- A different location entirely
- A patio home or condo community
- Proximity to family, healthcare, or amenities
- Access to services and convenience

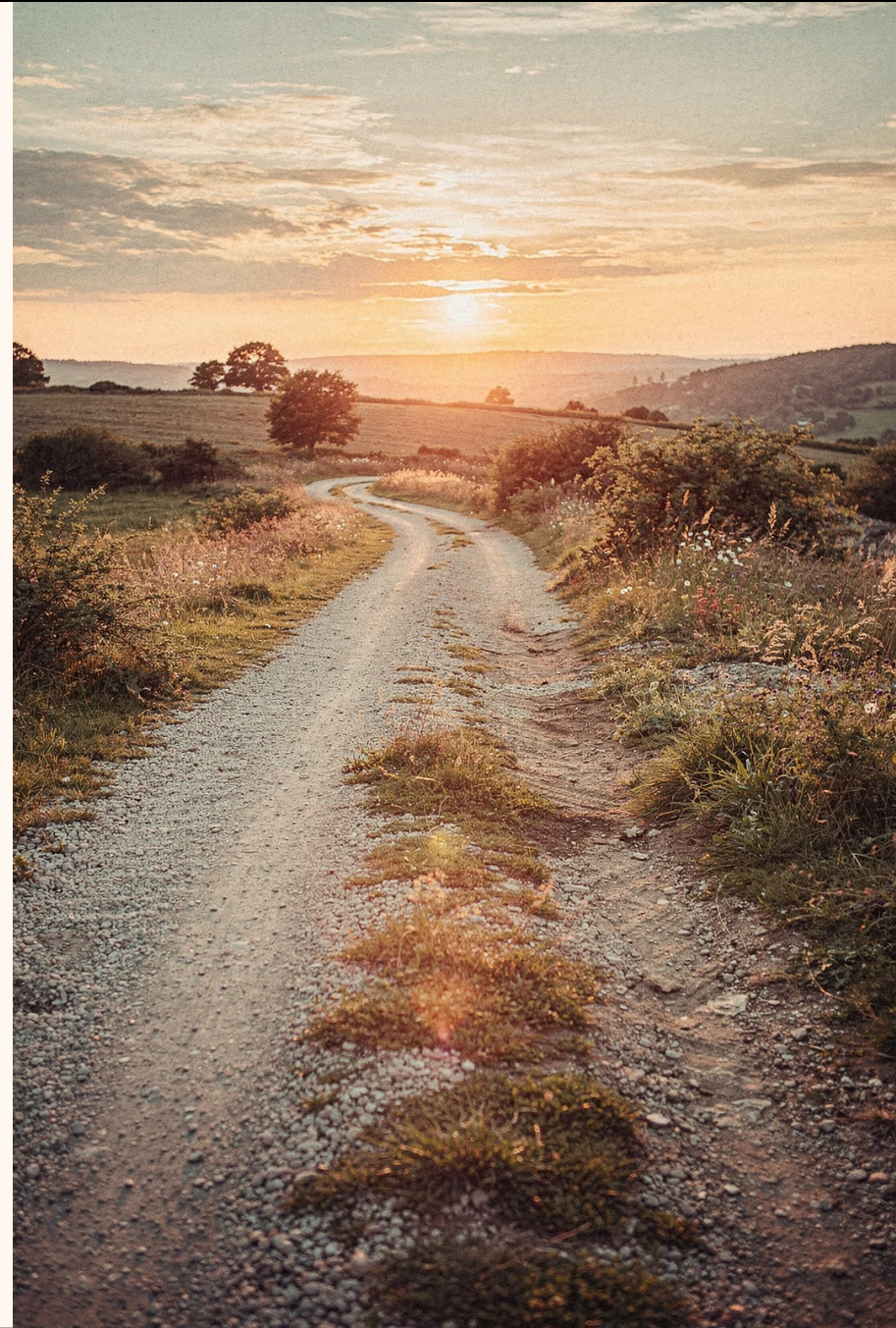
There is no single definition — and no single correct path. The right choice depends on your lifestyle, your priorities, and what matters most to you today.



Two Common Downsizing Paths

Most downsizers follow **one of two approaches**. Both are valid strategies that work well in different circumstances. The right one depends on your finances, timing preferences, and comfort level with transition logistics.

Understanding these two paths early helps clarify which strategy aligns best with your situation — and allows for better planning from the start.



Option 1: Sell First, Then Buy



This approach is common when:

- Equity from the current home is needed to purchase the next one
- Carrying two properties isn't financially feasible
- Financial certainty is a priority

01

Prepare and List

Get your current home ready for market and list it with professional marketing

03

Use Proceeds

Apply sale proceeds toward your next home purchase with clear financial certainty

Advantages

- Clear financial picture before committing
- No overlap of ownership or expenses
- Lower financial risk overall
- Simpler logistics in many cases

02

Accept Offer with Flexibility

Negotiate a longer closing period or possession flexibility to allow time for your next purchase

04

Direct Transition

Move directly into your new home, avoiding the need for temporary housing when possible

Key Considerations

- Timing coordination is critical
- Temporary housing may be needed in some scenarios
- Market conditions have greater impact
- Requires flexibility during transition

Option 2: Buy First, Then Sell

This approach is common when:

- Financial flexibility allows for temporary ownership overlap
- Privacy and convenience during the sale are priorities
- A smoother, less disruptive transition is preferred
- You want to avoid showings while still living in your home



1

Purchase Next Home

Secure your next property without the pressure of selling first

2

Move Comfortably

Take your time moving, organizing, and settling into the new space

3

Prepare & Sell

List your now-vacant home in optimal condition for showings

Advantages

- No showings while you're living there
- Significantly less disruption to daily life
- Vacant homes often present better
- More control over timing and pacing

Key Considerations

- Temporary overlap of mortgage payments and expenses
- Requires careful financial planning and reserves
- Not the right fit for every budget
- May involve bridge financing in some cases

Choosing the Right Path

There is no "better" option — only the option that fits **your** situation. The right path depends on several interconnected factors that are unique to each household.



Available Equity

How much equity exists in your current home, and how much is needed for the next purchase?



Cash Reserves

Do you have sufficient reserves to cover overlap costs if buying first?



Market Conditions

What are current buyer demand and inventory levels in your area and target area?



Health & Mobility

Are there physical considerations that affect timing or logistics?



Risk Tolerance

How comfortable are you with financial overlap or timing uncertainty?



Desired Timeline

Is there urgency, or do you have flexibility in when you move?

This is where experienced guidance matters. An informed discussion of these factors helps clarify which approach aligns with your goals and constraints — and sets realistic expectations from the beginning.



What the Downsizing Process Looks Like

Regardless of which path you choose — sell first or buy first — the fundamental steps of the downsizing process remain similar. Understanding the full sequence helps you prepare mentally, logistically, and financially.

What follows is a practical walkthrough of each phase, from initial planning to final transition. Each step has purpose, and each builds toward a successful outcome.

Step 1: Clarify Priorities



Before looking at homes or discussing timelines, it's important to identify what matters most. Clarity at this stage prevents unnecessary compromises later and keeps decisions grounded in what actually fits your life.

Key questions to consider:

- What do you want *less* of? (Maintenance, space, stairs, yard work)
- What do you want *more* of? (Convenience, proximity, accessibility, community)
- What are your non-negotiables? (Location, layout, budget, amenities)

This keeps decisions practical and focused on real needs rather than abstract ideals.

Step 2: Prepare the Current Home

When it's time to sell, preparation focuses on making your home appeal to the broadest range of serious buyers. This doesn't mean expensive renovations — it means presenting what's already there in the best possible light.

Decluttering & Organization

Remove excess belongings, clear surfaces, and create visual space. Buyers need to see the home, not the contents.

Minor Repairs & Updates

Address small issues that could become objections: leaky faucets, chipped paint, loose handles, outdated fixtures.

Professional Presentation

Clean thoroughly, maximize natural light, and stage key areas to highlight functionality and flow.

I provide guidance and referrals to trusted local resources when helpful — painters, cleaners, handymen, organizers. You choose what makes sense for your situation and budget. Not every home needs the same level of preparation.

Step 3: Establish Market Value

Accurate pricing is essential.

Price too high, and a home can sit longer than necessary.

Price too low, and you risk leaving money on the table.

The goal is a price that reflects current market conditions and attracts serious, qualified buyers.

Pricing is based on three key factors:

Recent comparable sales — *What* similar homes in your area have sold for in the past 6 months

Recent Sale Outcomes — *How* comparable homes in your price range have ultimately sold, including:

- How long they typically remained on the market before going under contract
- Whether price adjustments were needed prior to sale
- How final sale prices compared to original list prices, including seller concessions

Local Market Conditions - Broader conditions affecting your area, such as:

- Inventory levels
- Average days on market
- Seasonal patterns that influence timing and demand

This is not guesswork. It's data-driven analysis combined with local market knowledge and experience with buyer behavior.



Step 4: Market the Home Effectively

Marketing today is primarily digital. Buyers start their search online, which means your home's first impression happens on a screen — often on a phone. Professional presentation at this stage is non-negotiable.

High-Quality Photography

Professional photos that show each room clearly, with proper lighting and angles that make spaces feel open and inviting.

Video & Virtual Tours

When appropriate, video walkthroughs or 3D tours give buyers a comprehensive view before scheduling a showing.

Targeted Online Exposure

Strategic placement on major listing platforms, social media channels, and email campaigns to reach active buyers and agents.

Presentation matters — especially in a downsizing sale, where buyers often compare multiple properties closely. Your home needs to stand out in a crowded digital marketplace.

Step 5: Showings and Feedback



Showings are handled professionally and efficiently. The goal is to make the process as smooth as possible while gathering meaningful feedback that informs next steps.

You receive:

- **Clear feedback** from showings — What buyers liked, what concerned them, and how your home compares to others they're viewing
- **Regular updates** on showing activity, market changes, and buyer interest levels
- **Guidance on next steps** — Whether adjustments are needed or if the current strategy is working

This happens without unnecessary involvement or disruption to your routine. You stay informed without being overwhelmed by details.



Step 6: Evaluate Offers Strategically

When offers come in, they're reviewed based on multiple factors — not just price. The strongest offer is not always the highest number. It's the one that best balances price, terms, and certainty.



Price

The offer amount relative to your asking price and market value



Terms

Contingencies, inspection requirements, and any special conditions



Financing Strength

Type of financing, pre-approval quality, and likelihood of closing



Timing & Flexibility

Closing date, possession terms, and ability to accommodate your timeline

Decisions are made with full information. I explain trade-offs clearly and help you weigh options realistically. You choose what matters most to you.

My Role in Your Downsizing Process

My role is not to steer you toward a single strategy. It is to provide the structure, information, and professional coordination that makes the transition smoother.

Specifically, I:

- **Explain options clearly** — No jargon, no pressure, just straightforward information you can use
- **Provide realistic expectations** — About pricing, timing, market conditions, and what's achievable in your situation
- **Offer guidance grounded in experience** — Based on years of helping homeowners navigate similar transitions
- **Coordinate the real estate side professionally** — Marketing, showings, negotiations, closing logistics

You make the decisions. I provide structure and clarity so you can make those decisions confidently.





A Thoughtful Transition

Downsizing is a practical decision that benefits from clarity, preparation, and experienced guidance throughout the process.



Clear Information

Accurate data about market conditions, pricing, and realistic timelines



Good Planning

Strategic coordination of steps to minimize stress and maximize efficiency



Honest Guidance

Straightforward advice based on data, knowledge, and experience, not sales pressure

That is the framework I bring to every downsizing conversation. You deserve an agent who treats this transition as the significant life decision it is — with competence, realism, and respect.

Let's Talk Through Your Options



If you're considering downsizing and want to understand how it could work in *your* situation, I'm happy to walk through the possibilities with you. No obligation and no pressure — just a clear conversation about what makes sense for your circumstances.

Michelle Clemons, REALTOR®

Charles Burt Realtors — Joplin, Missouri

📞 [417-438-5018](tel:417-438-5018) | [417-782-1234](tel:417-782-1234)

✉️ michelleclemons@charlesburt.com

🌐 michelleclemonsrealtor.com

With over a decade of experience, I help homeowners make informed decisions about their next chapter.