

# New real estate listing debuts

**CLICK TO BUY:** *Amherst-based WNYbyowner.com rolls out for sale, rent listings online.*

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An Amherst-based online real estate listing business is carving out a niche for no-nonsense homeowners and buyers by making its debut in the world of desktop shopping.

Robyn Sansone, president of WNYbyowner.com, dove into the do-it-yourself real estate market after she joined the growing mass of homeowners wanting to sell or rent their properties without the usual frill and price attached with conventional real estate agencies.

"We started it because my husband and I sold our home on our own and really saw a need for a Web site dedicated to owners in Western New York for the sale and rental of their properties," Sansone said. "When we looked at classified ads, you look at a few black and white lines. Whereas if you can see the listings and photos of the home, it makes your search a more effective one and it saves you a lot of time."

Each listing is accompanied by five photos and can be edited or deleted 24 hours a day. Homeowners have the option of listing a home for a month or a year. WNYbyowner.com provides easy Internet exposure essential to sell a home at a rate much lower than other real estate options, Sansone said.

"If you were going to pay a real estate fee of 6 percent on a \$600,000 home, that is \$36,000.

If you have a \$300,000 home, that's \$18,000," she said. "Other people are doing it. It's possible and you can save thousands and thousands of dollars."

The online listing also effectively eliminates the middle-man process that helps sellers save on agent fees. With WNYbyowner.com owners and buyers connect directly.

"We feel you're the best person to rent or sell your own house," she said. "You're the one that knows about it and has invested interest in it."

But real estate agents feel differently. Phil Aquila, general manager of M.J. Peterson in Williamsville, said selling or buying a home isn't as easy as it seems.

"You shouldn't buy or sell your home on your own," he said. "The public doesn't know how difficult it is to buy or sell a house. It's the most important thing you do in life, money wise."

The concept of Internet house-hunting may be cutting edge, but it isn't new. Other predecessors include America's Choice, also an Amherst-based company, and Craig's List, which lists everything from vintage furniture, roommates and homes. Each has been an advertising resource for years.

But Sansone said monopolizing the property market isn't in her company's business charter.

"The numbers show you it's worth trying it on your own," she said. "We're not trying to overhaul the real estate market. But we're providing a more effective way for people, who are selling their property on their own, to get the exposure

## Buying or selling a home?

■ **WHAT:** Real estate listing

■ **CLICK IT:**

www.WNYbyowner.com

■ **MORE INFO:** For more information on listings and cost details, call 523-8508

that they need."

Nevertheless, unlike Craig's List, which is popular among college students and young adults, Sansone said the property listing Web site isn't just for the technologically savvy. Owners can either call or mail in photos and listings to be updated on the site.

"I've gone on the Craig's List; it's not as easy to navigate or to follow," she said. "Our focus is Western New York. (And) we have a more extended description. A lot of people don't know about Craig's List and an awful lot of people, surprisingly, don't feel like they're savvy enough to put the listings on for themselves."

Jeremy Bartee, chief operating officer of America's Choice, is skeptical of just how much online exposure a new real estate listing receives.

"Just because there's a Web site doesn't mean people know it's there," he said. "It takes a lot of marketing to get a branding. We dwarf most real estate companies in terms of page views and it's done by spending thousands of dollars with continuous advertising."

Since its mid-summer debut, WNYbyowner.com has listed nearly 200 homes. Many properties have been sold or rented as a result.

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