



House Sitters Help Sell Homes

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ATLANTA — Crashing at someone's house while they're away has become a thriving business and a help to the suffering luxury real estate market.

Carol Katz moved out of her upscale home in suburban Atlanta six months ago, hoping to sell it quickly, but so far she hasn't even received a contract yet, calling the whole experience "very frustrating."

She decided to try out an interim resident manager -- someone who lives in the home while it's being shown and agrees to vacate within 30 days of a sale.

Real estate agent Peggy Feldman said sales of houses ranging from \$500,000 to \$1 million has been hurt the most in the current market.

But interim resident managers help sales, she said, because luxury and sub-luxury homes that are furnished and lived-in sell more successfully than those that are vacant. "We usually get a house sold within 90 days from the date that we put the home manager in."

Don Clarke, owner of Creative Show Homes, Inc., which supervises interim resident managers in exchange for collecting rent, said the temporary dwellers get a great deal.

"Because it's an interim relationship, they don't have to sign a long-term lease. It's not unusual to occupy a \$1.2 million, \$1.4 million property for as little as \$700 or \$800 a month."