

Finding the Right Neighborhood

The neighborhood you choose is a prime factor in how good an investment your home turns out to be. You already know how much you can afford to spend on a home. Start your search for a house by finding a neighborhood you like that has homes in your price range.

Set Your Own Neighborhood Standards: Here is a list of things about a neighborhood that may be important to you:

- General safety and desirability
- Condition of other homes in the area
- Quality of local schools
- Distance from your job
- Availability of public transportation
- Recreational activities, parks and playgrounds
- Easy access to shopping
- Places of worship

Get to know neighborhoods: Go back to the area at different times of day to get a better sense for it. Visit the neighborhood at night. If you are not comfortable looking at homes there at night, reconsider purchasing a house in the neighborhood. Visit the police station and get crime statistics. This is public information available to you. The Neighborhood checklist below will help you compare communities you may be considering.

Check out local schools: To check out the local schools, visit them during the school day. Do they appear to be under control? Does a school look fresh and feel interesting?

Find out the property tax rate: To find out what the property tax rate is in an area, call the tax assessor's office (listed in the phone book) or ask a real estate agent.

Find out Insurance rates: To find out insurance rates for homeowners and car insurance, call your insurance agent. Meet with your spouse, children, parents and other members of your family to make a list of neighborhood qualities that are important to all of the different people who live in your household. If your wants and needs conflict, talk about them and agree on the qualities you all want in a new neighborhood.

Neighborhood Checklist

The "Neighborhood Checklist" below will help you compare the communities you may be considering. Make copies of the checklist to use throughout the house hunting process. Use it to rate the strengths and weaknesses of neighborhoods you look at. Keep in mind that some things may not be important to you — such as schools because you have no children — but they may be important to the value of your home when you want to sell it.

1=Weakest 5=Strongest					
COMMUNITY SERVICE					
Schools	1	2	3	4	5
Child Care	1	2	3	4	5
Parks/recreational facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Religious institutions	1	2	3	4	5
Hospitals	1	2	3	4	5

Entertainment	1	2	3	4	5
Police station	1	2	3	4	5
Fire station	1	2	3	4	5
CONVENIENCE					
Close to job	1	2	3	4	5
Near grocery and other stores	1	2	3	4	5
Near public transportation	1	2	3	4	5
Easy access to highway	1	2	3	4	5
NEIGHBORS					
Near relatives or friends	1	2	3	4	5
Children	1	2	3	4	5
Active community groups	1	2	3	4	5
OTHER					
Write in things that are important to you					