

Guide to Buying Your Dream Home

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Introduction

If you are currently living in an apartment or renting a house, you may be thinking about buying a home of your own for yourself and your family. This can be an exciting time. Looking at properties, deciding whether to buy a home or build a new one, and finding financing will take up a lot of your time.

There will be a long list of things you will need to do before you buy a home. This list includes:

- Finding the right neighborhood
- Finding a home that is big enough
- Finding the features you are looking for
- Choosing the right size yard
- Choosing a realtor
- Understanding the housing market
- The ins and outs of home inspection
- Financing
- Making an offer, and
- Reading contracts

This list does not include all of the decorating, home improvement, and other decisions you will have to make once you have purchased the home.

If you are a first time home buyer, you will be nervous about finding the right home, investing money on a down payment, and being approved for financing. Once you have found a home, it will usually take between two or three months before you will be able to move in. In the meantime, you should plan the following:

- Moving arrangements

- Home inspections
- Yard sales
- Budgeting for paint and other supplies
- Taking time off from work, and
- Finding a lawyer if necessary

Proper planning will help you transition into your new home much easier than if you wait until the last minute to deal with these details. If you are planning on moving yourself, you should find a few friends or family members that will be willing to help as soon as possible.

New Homes vs. Older Homes

Another decision you will have to make is whether to buy a new home or look for an older one. Most first time homebuyers usually buy an older home, but this should not deter you from visiting a few builders to see what they are charging for the size home you are looking for.

Older homes may cost less, but they can be riddled with problems. In this book, you will learn what to look for when viewing a home, what to include in your purchase offer, and what to expect from a home inspection. There are many older homes that will need only minor repairs.

Which Home To Choose?

After you have looked into all of your options, you will be wondering which home to choose. There are many ways to find the home that is right for you. When looking at homes, you should keep these criteria in mind:

- Size
- Price
- Neighborhood

- Mortgage payments
- Repairs, and
- Additional features

While this is a short list, throughout this book you will learn other ways to find your dream home. In the end, you will just know when you have found the right home.

Moving into your first home will be an experience you will never forget. You should be excited as this is a little piece of the world that is just yours. Whether this is the home you will live in for a long time or just for a short time, buying a home will give you a sense of pride and of purpose. Not only will you have a mortgage to pay, you will also be responsible for making the home your own. When thinking about purchasing a home, you should begin saving your money for closing costs, repairs, and decorating materials.

One of the more rewarding moments will be when you get the keys to your new home and you begin making it your own with a little paint, furniture, and personal style.

Chapter 1 - Location, Location, Location

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Choosing where to live is almost as important as the type of home you want to live in. While this is a very personal decision, there are pros and cons to every neighborhood. But wherever you want to live, you will have to know where the highways are located, grocery stores, schools, and how far from work you will be. Buying a home means more than the structure you will be living in. It is also the community and the accessibility to places and events that mean the most to you and to your family.

Finding The Right Neighborhood

How will you know you have found the right neighborhood? There are many ways to tell:

- You may feel a sense of calm
- The neighborhood may remind you of a happy memory
- You will be close to places you frequent often
- The neighborhood aesthetics are pleasing, or
- The rest of your family is pleased

You may feel one emotion or five when you turn the corner onto the street where you want to live. This will be an exciting time, especially if you have been searching for a home for the past few months.

When looking for the right location, you should consider the following:

- How clean is this neighborhood?
- Is this a high crime area?
- What is the average home value in the neighborhood?
- Are there community bylaws?
- What is the home close to?
- Is there garbage pickup?

While these questions may not include everything you are looking for when buying a home, they should be considered carefully as they will affect your life once you move into the home.

How Clean Is This Neighborhood?

You should look at the neighborhood at different times during the day to see how those who live in the neighborhood take care of it. If there is a lot of trash on the

ground, the yards are not kept up properly, or there are old signs posted on trees and telephone poles, then the neighborhood may not be for you.

If the neighborhood looks clean and you see people outside caring for their lawns, then you may have found a community of people who care about where they live. This is an important factor if you are planning on living in the neighborhood for many years. All too often people will buy homes only to discover that they live in a neighborhood where people do not have respect for their property or the property of others. This can make selling the home much more difficult in the future.

Is This A High Crime Area?

While all neighborhoods will experience some crime, you should consider buying a home in an area that has a high crime rate very carefully. While the home itself may be the right price for your budget, it may not be located in an area that is right for your well-being.

Drive by the neighborhood at nighttime to see if there is adequate street lighting, suspicious activity, or anything else that might cause you to use caution. Research the neighborhood and find out how the crime rate compares to other neighborhoods. If the crime rate is too high, then it may be best to look somewhere else.

What Is The Average Home Value In The Neighborhood?

You can find this information out very easily by asking your realtor or by looking up this information at the county clerk's office or on their web site. You should be aware of the home values that are in your neighborhood for several reasons:

- Housing prices will vary depending on the neighborhood and region. You want to buy a home that you will be able to make a profit on when you decide to sell.
- You do not want to pay too much for a home.
- Giving a solid offer for the home means knowing what other homes that are similar in size are selling for.

Are There Community Bylaws?

If you are looking at a home that is inside a community, you should be aware of yearly dues, rules about what can be in your yard (pool, lawn decorations, ect.), and any other rules that they may have.

Many people enjoy living in a community because they feel safe and want to meet others in the neighborhood. Communities usually have picnics and other events during the year where neighbors can meet each other. Some communities have pools, tennis courts, and other amenities.

What Is The Home Close To?

When choosing a home, you will need to find the nearest grocery store, schools, route to work, and other necessities that will make living in the neighborhood more convenient. Drive around the neighborhood to see what is around it. This will help make your decision to buy a home in a particular neighborhood much easier.

Is There Garbage Pickup?

While this may not seem like something you are interested in, when it comes to disposing of your trash, you may need to haul it to the dump yourself. Ask about trash pickup so that you can decide if this is something you really want to do on the weekend.

City Life vs. Country Living

Choosing the neighborhood you want to live in will also include deciding whether you want to live in the city, country, or suburbs. Many people with families usually want to live in the suburbs because there is more room for children to grow, but is still close enough for parents to commute to work.

But there are advantages to city and country living as well. Those who live in the city will be close to work, close to restaurants, activities, and events. Those who live in the country may have a longer commute to work, but they will be able to enjoy the peace and quiet of having fewer people around them.

Whichever lifestyle you prefer, you should construct a pros and cons list that will give you a better idea of what to expect when looking for a home. Once you have looked at your list, you will have a better idea of which to choose. The following will get you started:

City Life

Pros

- Easy access to cultural events
- More options when eating out
- More grocery store and clothing store options
- Public transportation
- More people
- Choice of home styles, such as houses, condos, apartments, and
- Private and public schools

Cons

- Crime rates higher
- Pollution
- More people
- Higher housing costs
- Higher taxes
- Higher cost of living, and
- Not as much housing is available

Country Living

Pros

- More land available
- New homes available
- Less people, and
- Cost of living is lower

Cons

- Fewer schools to choose from
- Further from grocery stores and other stores
- Less people
- Not as many cultural events, and
- Longer commute to work

Suburban Living

Pros

- Close to city and country

- More land
- Cost of living less is expensive than city living
- Close to cultural events, and
- Community feeling

Cons

- More people in a smaller area
- Fewer schools to choose from, and
- Long commute to work

When choosing the type of environment you would like to live in, the following may play a role in your final decision:

- Finances
- Schools
- Size of home desired
- Amount of land desired
- Taxes, and
- Length of your commute to work

You should check out both city and country living. While there will always be pros and cons, you should be able to find a home that will help you lead the type of lifestyle that is important to you and your family.

Making The Commute

You will have to count on the amount of traveling you will have to endure to and from your job when buying your first home. Unless you are relocating, you will have to find a neighborhood that is close enough to drive to or is accessible by public transportation. While some people enjoy sitting on a bus or a train for an hour or two during the day, you may not want to use your time this way.

Unfortunately, living in the suburbs or in the country may require you to make a longer commute.

If you want to remain relatively close to your job, you should not search further than a thirty mile radius. Inform your real estate agent or drive thirty miles in any direction and see what is out there. Many times there will be neighborhoods you have never even heard of. You should find back roads as well as highway accessible roads that will make your commute easier.

You should also look for a home during different times of day in order to figure out the traffic patterns. If possible, live in an area that goes against normal traffic patterns. That way you will not be stuck in traffic going to work or when coming home.

Commuting to work can easily turn into a forty, fifty, or even an hour long drive depending on the time of day. While this may be inevitable, you should consider all of your options before purchasing a home.

Schools In The Area

If you have school age children, then you will want to find a home that is close to schools in the area. This goes for both public and private schools. If you find a neighborhood that you like, find out which school district it is located in. Not all districts are alike and you will have to send your children to the school district your home is located in.

While your children do not have to walk to school, being relatively close to home will make it easier to pick them up, participate in after school events, and give them a sense of community.

If you are planning on living in the country, the nearest school could be very close to home or very far away depending on where you move. The bus ride to and from school can be an hour or more. This could take time away from getting

homework done or playing with friends. Be sure to weigh all of your options when choosing a home if you have children. Also, find out where the middle school and high schools are in the area. Eventually, your children will be attending these schools. Be prepared and find out everything you can about these schools as well.

Grocery Shopping And Other Necessities

While living in the country may seem peaceful, be prepared to do a lot more driving. The nearest grocery store or pharmacy may be thirty minutes or more. This is another factor you will have to consider when buying your first home. While small towns have centralized areas where the shops and grocery stores are located, unless you live in town, you will have to drive in order to get there.

Many people that live in the country will adjust their lives as well as their priorities. They may go to the grocery stores once every two weeks; they will not eat at restaurants as often, and will not go to the movies or other social events as often either. You will have to decide what is important to you.

Before buying a home, survey the town to see what is available. This will give you a good idea of what it would be like to live in an area. Spend a few days there if possible. This will save you from making a huge mistake later on.

If you are planning to stay in the city, you will have the advantages of public transportation, but you may still need a car for larger grocery shops. While the city can be convenient in many ways, parking a car is not one of them. You will have to pay for garage parking in many instances, which will end up costing you more money than if you lived in the country. But, you will be able to get to these stores quickly and easily at any time during the day.

Other Location Considerations

Other location considerations include:

- Weather
- Road conditions
- Location of property in the neighborhood, and
- Room to grow

You should be thinking ahead in terms of the weather. If you are planning on living in the country, for example, you should pay attention to possible flooding, snow, and other weather that could affect you getting to work. If the road is a dirt road, you should ask if the county will clear the road and how often they will do so. This is another advantage of living in the city because you could always use public transportation if you do not want to drive.

The location of the property is also important. If the property is located at the bottom of a slope, you may have flooding issues after a rainstorm. Also, as your family grows, you may need more room. You should find property that can hold a home addition if necessary. Investing in a home requires a great deal of thought and planning. Even if you do not have a family, you should find a home that will allow you to grow as your interests change.

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