



finding the right neighborhood

The right neighborhood will accommodate, enhance, or improve your lifestyle. Here are some important questions to help you find the right fit.

1. **Does it accommodate your daily lifestyle?** Write down your normal activities (job, church, grocery store, health club, movie theatre, stores, mall, etc.) and see how far you have to travel for each.
2. **How is the school district?** If you have school-age children, visit the schools in the neighborhood(s) you're considering. Even if you don't have children, a house in a good school district is a wise investment because it will be easier to sell in the future. Check the standardized test scores. You should be able to get information on test scores, class size, enrichment programs and the percentage of graduating students who attend college from The Department of Education or the school district's website.
3. **Is the neighborhood safe?** Talk to the police or sheriff's department and ask for neighborhood crime statistics. Is the crime trend increasing or decreasing? Is crime focused on only one part of the neighborhood (near retail stores, etc.)? Are there bars on the windows and/or doors of the homes? Do you see evidence of gang graffiti on walls and/or walkways? Consider both the amount of crime and the type of crime (burglaries, armed robberies, drugs, etc.).
4. **Is the neighborhood economically stable?** Ask your real estate professional or the city's economic development office if income in the neighborhood is stable or rising. Are there homes and/or businesses that are vacant and have been on the market for months? Have property taxes gone up or down? What is the percentage of homes to apartments? While apartments won't necessarily diminish value, they indicate a more transient population.
5. **Have property values gone up or down?** Ask your real estate professional for information on price trends in the neighborhood for the past 10 years. Will you make money if you decide to sell in the future? Is there new construction planned for the future (i.e. schools, housing developments, shopping centers, highways, etc.) that may affect your property value? Although there are no guarantees, this is a good barometer to help you plan smartly and avoid unpleasant surprises.
6. **How was your experience there?** See for yourself. Once you've narrowed down your choices, go to the neighborhood(s). Walk around. Talk to neighbors. Are they friendly? If you have children, are there other children to play with? Are homes and yards clean and well kept? Are the streets quiet? The complexion of a neighborhood can change at night, so it's worth your time to drive through the neighborhood at night, especially a weekend night, if you have any doubts.



Reality Check: Remember no neighborhood is perfect. If you're looking in-town, you may not be able to get away from noise and traffic. Look at the pros and cons and see what is best for you.