

7 Things to Look for in a New Neighborhood

Whether seeking solace, activity, schools, churches, or green space, every homebuyer looks for a different combination of attributes in a new community. Choosing a neighborhood that suits your needs and wants is one of the most important decisions you'll make in the home-buying process; your choice of environment will affect the way you experience your new home. This is a very personal decision, influenced by countless unique factors coloring your own lives, but you should always keep the following in mind:

1. If you're considering buying a home in a community that is unfamiliar to you, get to know its lay-out, offerings, and ambiance. Take some time to walk or drive through the neighborhood, both during the day and at night, familiarizing yourself with the sights, sounds, and smells.
2. What amenities does the neighborhood have to offer? Is public transportation readily accessible? Are there schools, churches, parks, or grocery stores within reach? Consider visiting schools in the area if you have children.
3. What is the nature of the job market in the area? Keep in mind that if area employers are producing more jobs, you can expect property values to increase, especially if the jobs offered fall within a higher salary bracket.
4. Speak with the neighbors. Ask questions. They can offer you a wealth of information, from an inside perspective.
5. How will you be affected by a new commute to work? Drive the route between the new neighborhood and your office during the appropriate times to gauge the volume of traffic you could expect to encounter, and the amount of time you'd need to put aside for daily travel.
6. Contact local land-use and zoning officials to determine existing development plans or potential for development in the area. A strong agenda for neighborhood planning and local zoning will increase the value and draw of a neighborhood. Keep in mind that any large, tree-covered area may be a target for future development in popular communities.
7. Determine whether financial resources have been put in place to support infrastructure projects in the area. These construction projects might include building, replacing, or improving anything from schools to roads, and are usually part of a city or town's long-term plan. While disruptive, construction could also be a benefit to your experience of a community, influencing the long-term value of the area.