



# ***Deciding to Buy a Home***

## ***Shopping for Your Home***

# ***Deciding to Buy a Home: Shopping for Your Home***

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## **Shop on Your Own**

With a checklist of what you want and can afford, you are ready to start looking at houses. Begin the search by reading real estate ads, driving around neighborhoods to spot “For Sale” signs, and attending open houses and builder’s home shows. Model homes and those displayed in home shows are often furnished to show ideas for using the space. This can help you think of how your furnishings might fit, especially if you have some oversized pieces.

Free real estate magazines and flyers are available at supermarkets and convenience stores. If you use a computer, you can search on the Internet for local real estate listings, go to a “for sale by owner” Web site, and go to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Web site. This site includes homes for sale by HUD and many other Federal agencies. The Web address is listed at the end of this module.

## **Shop with a Real Estate Professional**

If you don't have time to do research and find the right house yourself, you can begin the search by consulting a real estate professional. The section on selecting a real estate professional in the Home-Buying Process module can help you determine if you want to work with a buyer's agent or a seller's agent.

Discuss your needs and wants with the real estate professional so he or she can look for houses

that fit your criteria in terms of price, location and other items. Most real estate professionals have access to Multiple Listing Service (MLS). This service lists all properties of participating real estate brokerages and contains information and photographs of hundreds of homes in your area. MLS is now computer-based and a seasoned realtor can easily and quickly find many homes of possible interest to you.

## **Keeping Track**

As you look at houses compare them to your wish list and with each other. It is important to keep a record of each good candidate. It is difficult to remember which house had the fireplace you liked and which had really great closets. Use a copy of the Needs and Wants Work Sheet to keep a record of each house you see to compare prices and features.

Take notes of your observations about the interior and exterior of the house, including your first impression. Be sure that you are reacting to the house itself, not the furniture or the décor. Train yourself to look critically at each house in terms of your needs. For example, in many model homes the doors have been removed which makes rooms look bigger than they are. Ask the real estate professionals and owners questions and expect satisfactory answers. However, remember they are trying to sell to you.

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## Guidelines

As you start the house search you need to decide where you want your house to be located. Real estate professionals often tell buyers that the three most important things in looking for a house are location, location and location. Since you will very likely live there for quite some time, make sure the house is located in an environment that is comfortable for your lifestyle and needs.

Select the major location (urban, suburban or rural) and a neighborhood. Your price range is one important factor that will affect the neighborhoods in which you look. Another factor is whether you want a newly constructed home or an older home. Even your preference for the style of home might influence your neighborhood selection. It is a good idea to drive around potential neighborhoods. You can do this before working with a real estate professional. When you find a neighborhood that seems suitable, visit it at different times of the day and week to get a feel for the activity there. Some questions to answer to help you with this decision include:

- Do you want to live in a city, a small town near a larger city, a suburb, or in a rural area?
- Do you need to be close to public transportation or to your work?
- How important is it to be in a certain school system?
- Does the school your child will attend have a good reputation?
- How far is the school from home and work?
- How important is the security of the neighborhood?
- How important is it to be close to medical facilities?
- How much are the taxes in the area?

- If applicable, what are the homeowners association dues, fees, covenants and restrictions?
- Are there any special zoning restrictions or plans to change zoning?
- Are the properties well kept?
- Are there many houses in the neighborhood for sale?
- How far is it to your work or other family members' work?
- What is the crime rate in the neighborhood?
- What is the location of the nearest fire station?
- How far is the nearest fire hydrant from the potential home (this can effect your homeowner insurance costs)?
- Are there any issues with air, noise or water pollution?

If you are looking in a rural area, find out if there are zoning laws that will determine what can be put on vacant property. Be sure to locate the stores, schools or any other things needed on a regular basis. Check on utilities including water, electricity, telephone and Internet access. Also, find out about various public services such as waste disposal, fire protection and public safety.

If you have trouble getting the answers to your questions, call the listing agent who should be able to answer any questions or direct you to where the information can be found.

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*This resource is one in a series on Deciding to Buy a Home which include:*

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### **Homeownership Considerations**

Deciding to Own

Needs and Wants

### **Finding the Right Home**

How Much House You Can Afford

The Cost of a Home

Shopping for a Home

### **Housing Types and Construction**

Types of Construction

Choosing Site-Built Homes

Choosing Manufactured Homes

### **Types of Homeownership**

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