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What Are You Looking for in a Home? Part III

Is it time to go house shopping? Buying a home can be a very exciting process, but it can also be frustrating if you are not clear about what type of home you want. Making a list of your most important house features before you start looking can be a big help in simplifying your search. This is the third part in an article series designed to help potential home buyers think about which factors are most important to them when buying a home. This article takes a look at the external, intangible aspects of a house.

First you need to consider the area surrounding the home. How important is it to you to live on a quiet street? Would busy automobile traffic on your street bother you? What about the safety of the neighborhood where the home is located? Does the area have a reputation for crime or violence? You should realize that even though you might get a low price in a home in such an area, there will be minimal appreciation on such a home because of the surrounding problems, and you may have trouble selling in the future. You should find out if the neighborhood has a home owner's association or a crime watch group. These will generally help keep the area safer.

Another aspect to consider is the age make-up of the neighbors. If you have children you may want to find a neighborhood with many other young families. If you are older you may prefer an older, quieter population.

For those with school-age children, finding a home close to good schools is often an important factor in choosing a house. If you are in this category, you should check out the reputation of the nearby schools. You may want to get statistics about the average class size in the schools, as well as the level of achievement test scores. Whether bus service is provided or not, the distance from the home to the schools might be a deciding factor for you.

Other distances could be important as well. First and foremost is how far your home is from your place of work? Are you comfortable with an hour-long commute, or is five minutes too long in the car? Do you need to live close to a public transportation hub in order to get to work? Is it important for you to live within a few minutes of grocery stores or other shopping? What about the distance to the nearest hospital or other medical services? This could be increasingly important in the later years of life. You should also consider how close you want to be to the fire department in case of an emergency. If you receive lots of out-of-state guests, or do a lot of flying yourself, it may be important to you to live close to an airport.

There are many, many considerations in deciding what type of home will suit your needs. Take inventory of your preferences and compare each house you view to your list. By carefully prioritizing your needs and wants and matching them up with your spouse or family's needs, your search for a home will be much easier and simpler.