



A Place to Call HOME

Location, location, location! The most important characteristic when determining the value of real estate continues to prevail. When you decide where to live, you are not only choosing a home, you are buying into a neighbourhood. A community's physical and social qualities have a major impact on the market value of the house, the desirability of the neighbourhood and the lifestyle of its residents.

Top Influences in Selecting a Home

A neighbourhood can be every bit as important as the dwelling itself. In a recent survey, consumers and real estate agents revealed the top influential characteristics in selecting a home. Considered by 64% of individuals when deciding where to live, quality of neighbourhood was one of the most cited factors. Additional attributes that those surveyed deemed important:

- **Convenience to jobs: 50%**
Commuting costs are a key factor in neighbourhood selection. Of buyers who were questioned, 78% said the cost of transportation is at least somewhat important.
- **Overall affordability of homes: 43%**
Your real estate agent can inform you of price appreciation trends in order to give you an idea of how solid your investment is or will be. Visit the local government planning agency to ask about future developments such as new roadways, commercial construction and housing developments that may affect values.
- **Convenience to family and friends: 37%**
With limited time and money, people prefer to live near the places they frequent as well as have access to public transportation.
- **Quality of the school district: 26%**
Local schools that are recognized for their excellence help add value to surrounding neighbourhoods and are an important selling point for homes on the market. Details such as test scores, class size, special programs and the percentage of students who go on to college or university can be provided upon request from the school district.

Other Significant Neighbourhood Factors:

26%	23%	21%
Convenience to Shopping	Neighbourhood Design	Convenience to Schools

Finding the Right Neighbourhood

Think about the features that matter most to you and your family. Take a walk through the neighbourhood that surrounds the home you're considering for purchase. Are the other homes well maintained? Is the environment peaceful? Are there nearby amenities you are interested in, such as parks, libraries, restaurants and retail centres? Ask the local residents what it's like to live in their neighbourhood. Find out if there are any events that help residents connect. Spend time in the community at various hours and days of the week to get an accurate gauge of noise and activity levels before making your decision.

When searching for the ideal neighbourhood, your real estate agent can be a valuable guide. By assessing your needs, your agent can help identify a community that you will enjoy being a part of now and in the years to come.



You Can Make Your Neighbourhood a Better Place.

Improve Your Neighbourhood

1. Organize community picnics and block parties to get better acquainted with your neighbours.
2. Coordinate neighbourhood restoration projects or encourage businesses to adopt a street to maintain.
3. Work with local law enforcement organizations to establish a community policing team.
4. Join a local planning or zoning board to become involved in neighbourhood initiatives. If your area is overseen by a homeowners association, take part in the meetings to stay informed and have a degree of influence over decisions governing repairs, grounds maintenance and other issues that affect home values.

You and your neighbours are the ones most likely to notice suspicious people or situations and witness crime. You are also in the best position to report code violations and unsafe conditions. Citizens and police are coming together to share information and exchange crime prevention tips through programs like Neighbourhood Watch and Block Watch. Contact your local police department for more information.

Make a Difference

As a member of a community, there are plenty of ways to connect with your neighbours and add value to your neighbourhood. Below are a few suggestions:

- Tutor or mentor children and teens.
- Lend a helping hand. Consider offering your professional expertise to neighbours; they are likely to reciprocate.
- Help to build or repair homes for families in need.
- Clear brush from canyons and vacant lots.
- Serve as a member of a Community Emergency Response Team.
- Join an environmental improvement project, such as a local park clean-up.
- Deliver meals to elderly or ill residents.
- Assist local non-profit organizations by fund raising, recruiting volunteers, serving on boards or contributing other skills.

Involve the Entire Family



Seek out ways to get your children involved in the community. A good way for them to meet others their own age outside of school is through local parks and recreation programs. These programs offer many activities, especially during the summer break. Check

the local seniors' centre for various ways older members of your household can become more active in the community.

