



# 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 neighborhood. A community's physical and social qualities have a major impact on the market value of the house, the desirability of the neighborhood and the lifestyle of its residents.

## Top Influences in Selecting a Home

A neighborhood can be every bit as important as the dwelling itself. The 2009 National Association of REALTORS® Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers reported the results of a survey of consumers and real estate agents regarding top influential characteristics in selecting a home. Considered by 64% of individuals when deciding where to live, quality of neighborhood 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 neighborhood 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 neighborhoods 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 can be provided upon request from the school district.

## Other Worthy Neighborhood Factors:

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

## Finding the Right Neighborhood

Think about the features that matter most to you and your family. Take a walk through the neighborhood 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 centers? Ask the local residents what it's like to live in their neighborhood. 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 neighborhood, 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 Neighborhood a Better Place.

## Improve Your Neighborhood

1. Organize community picnics and block parties to get better acquainted with your neighbors.
2. Coordinate neighborhood 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 neighborhood 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.

In 1972, the National Sheriff's Association organized the National Neighborhood Watch Program. Since then, it has become a widely-used tool for fighting crime and improving neighborhood safety. You and your neighbors 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. More information about Neighborhood Watch groups is available at [www.usaonwatch.org](http://www.usaonwatch.org).

## Make a Difference

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

- Tutor or mentor children and teens.
- Lend a helping hand. Consider offering your professional expertise to neighbors; 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 senior center for various ways older members of your household can become more active in the community.