

5 Need-to-Knows Before You Move Into the Neighborhood

Buying a home can feel like the most intense research project ever. From mortgages to contracts to property condition issues, there's a lot to look at. An additional area you'll definitely want to investigate in detail: your new neighborhood. Here are five items you definitely need to know.

1. Details on shady dealings

Before you buy a home or move into a neighborhood, do the research and check out things like Megan's Law databases to see where registered sex offenders live..

2. How recession-resistant it is

Let's face facts: some locations have fared better than others over the course of the recession. And some of the hardest-hit neighborhoods are where the best deals are to be found. But know that the harder-hit areas might take longer to see an uptick in home values, so you may want to stay put longer before you sell.

3. The neighborhood's flavor

Is the area you're considering popular for outdoor adventures and family events at the park, or fancy restaurants and wine tastings at the museum?

4. Neighborhood hot spots

Before you buy or move into an area, find out where all the stores, farmer's markets, parks, restaurants and other hot spots your family will want to use are located vis-a-vis your home-to-be.

5. The vibe at different times of day or week

A home, and a neighborhood, might feel different at various times and days, so visit several times and vary when you go. On sunny Sunday afternoon you might hear birds singing and see children playing, but at night you could notice graffiti or music blasting from a nearby home. Also, knock on neighbor's doors and see what insider info they can share.

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