

QUESTIONS TO ASK

About the Neighborhood

Where you live should reflect your lifestyle. These questions will help you find the best community for you.

Is it close to my favorite spots?

Make a list of activities you engage in and stores you visit frequently. See how far you would have to travel from each neighborhood you're considering to engage in your most common activities. How long is my work commute?

Is it safe?

Check crime maps online or contact the police department to obtain neighborhood crime statistics. Consider not only the number of crimes but also the type and trend. (Is crime going up or down?). Pay attention to see where in the neighborhood the crime is happening.

Is it economically stable?

Check online for neighborhood demographics or with your local economic development office to see if household income and property values in the neighborhood are stable or rising. What is the ratio of owner-occupied homes to rentals? Apartments don't necessarily diminish value, but they indicate a more transient population. Are there vacant businesses or homes that have been on the market for months? Check news sources to find out if new development is planned.

Is it a good investment?

Ask a local REALTOR® about price appreciation in the neighborhood. Although past performance is no guarantee of future results, this information may give you a sense of how a home's value might grow. A REALTOR® also may be able to tell you about planned developments or other changes coming to the neighborhood — such as a new school or highway — that might affect its value.

Do I like what I see?

Once you've narrowed your focus to two or three neighborhoods, go and get a feel for what it might be like to live there. Take notes: Are homes tidy and well maintained? Are streets bustling or quiet? How does it feel? Pick a pleasant day if you can, and chat with people working or playing outside. Walk around the neighborhood streets at different times of day, night, and weekends to get a feel for the area.

What's the school district like?

This is especially important if you have children, but it also can affect resale value. The local school district can probably provide information on test scores, class size, the percentage of students who attend college, and special enrichment programs. If you have school-age children, visit schools in neighborhoods you're considering.

