




Tips for Finding the Perfect Neighborhood

Your neighborhood has a big impact on your lifestyle. Follow these steps to find the perfect community to call home.

- Is it close to your favorite spots? Make a list of the activities — movies, health club, church, etc. — you engage in regularly 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. MapQuest or Google Maps are great sites to check drive times.
- Check out the school district. This is especially important if you have children, but it also can affect resale value. The Department of Education in the area of interest can probably provide information on test scores, class size, percentage of students who attend college, and special enrichment programs. If you have school-age children, it's advisable to visit schools in the neighborhoods you're considering. Also, ask your real estate agent if they have access to RPR (Realtor Property Resource). This system gives more specifics and ratings of every school and their district.
- Find out if the neighborhood is safe. Ask the police department for neighborhood crime statistics. Consider not only the number of crimes but also the type — such as burglaries or armed robberies — and the trend of increasing or decreasing crime. Also, is crime centered in only one part of the neighborhood, such as near a retail area? The LexisNexis crime map is a good place to start your research: <https://communitycrimemap.com>. Compare your current location's crime stats to the area you are considering to have a baseline for comparison. Also, it's a good idea to check the National Sex Offender Registry list thru the Department of Public Safety. For Arizona: <https://icrimewatch.net/index.php?AgencyID=55662>
- Determine if the neighborhood is economically stable. Check with your local city economic development office to see if income and property values in the neighborhood are stable or rising. What is the percentage of homes to apartments? Apartments don't necessarily diminish value, but do mean a more transient population. Do you see vacant businesses or homes that have been for sale for months? Your realtor should be able to assist in your research with some of these stats.
- See if you'll make money. Ask your real estate professional to provide information about price appreciation in the neighborhood. Although past performance is no

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guarantee of future results, this information may give you a sense of how good of an investment your home will be. Your realtor or the government planning agency may also be able to tell you about planned developments or other changes in the neighborhood — like a new school or highway — that might affect value.

- Make personal observations. Once you've narrowed your focus to two or three neighborhoods, go there and walk around. Are homes tidy and well maintained? Are streets quiet? How does it feel? Pick a warm day if you can and chat with people working or playing outside.

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