

Finding A Home

- **Meeting your needs**

Some 6 million new and existing homes are sold each year. There's no shortage of housing options in most areas, but with so many choices the challenge becomes finding the property which best meets your needs and desires.

The housing market is always fast-paced because the stock of homes for sale is always in flux. If you had a complete list of every home for sale at this very moment in a given community, such a list would become obsolete within seconds as new homes become available and properties now for sale are sold.

In effect, home buyers are looking at a moving target in a marketplace that is never still. Because of this, it is important to know as much as possible about the choices and options in preferred markets, and the way to do that is by working closely with a local Realtor or agent who knows the area.

- **What are you looking for?**

A home is more than just a collection of kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms. Several properties -- each with four bedrooms, two and half baths, and the same price -- may well have radically different designs, commuting distances, lot sizes, tax costs, kitchen colors, and exterior finishes.

Everyone is different and so it's important to list the benefits and features you would like to enjoy in your new home. Consider such things as pricing, location, size, amenities (extras such as a pool, deck or large kitchen) and design (one floor or two, colonial, modern or hi-tech, etc.).

Next, it's important to consider your options and priorities. If you can't get a home at your price with all the features you would like, then what features are most important to you? For instance, would you trade fewer bedrooms for a larger den? A shorter commute for a smaller lot and higher cost?

Lastly, consider your needs several years down the road. If you'll need a larger home, maybe now is the time to buy a bigger house rather than moving or expanding in the future. If you expect your income to increase, perhaps you should consider a more expensive home financed with a loan program where monthly payments increase sometime in the near future. Do you plan on kicking the kids out and retiring soon? You might want to size down.

- **Where should you look?**

All neighborhoods and communities have something special that gives them identity and value. One community may be well known for historic homes while another offers both suburban living as well as easy access to office areas.

With millions of homes online, the internet has the largest source of property information now. You can look at homes to contact listing brokers, lenders and a host of other new services.

- **How do you find a house?**

Some buyers like to search the internet by looking at listings on the basis of location or price; others prefer to have local Realtors suggest properties and then go look at each one; and many buyers prefer a combination of both approaches.

Either way, it's important to target your search. By the click of a mouse you can find many properties in the general location and price range you desire, You can even refine your search and focus on homes that offer the most available features and financing.

As a guide, you should maintain a folder with links to each of the homes, real estate offices and lenders you like. You can print out listing pages, contracts and loan schedules from the internet and then make notes for each one -- what you like, questions, contact data, etc.

- *Still shopping for your home? Find a **Lender Here!***