

# Home Search Checklist

By Nicole Nichols-West

- Home interior**
  - Square footage** The number of rooms can be misleading at times. If the square footage seems minimal for the number of bedrooms, some of the rooms may be ridiculously small.
  - Number of bedrooms/bathrooms** Think about your family's future needs - two siblings sharing a room now may not wish to do so forever, and only one bath for a large family spells trouble.
  - Flooring** All white carpet with kids and pets can lead to costly replacements. Tile or wood is more durable, and increases the value of the home.
  - Central heat/air** Depending on your location, air conditioning and heating may be a priority - or not. Have an HVAC specialist check out existing units.
- Home exterior**
  - Landscaping** Look at the other houses in the neighborhood. Does your prospective home measure up - or will you need a landscaping company?
  - Fencing** Is there an existing fence - and if so, is it in good condition? Check with local fencing contractors to price out a replacement if needed.
  - Sprinkler systems** Arid climates will need some form of automated watering system unless you like standing in the yard holding a water hose.
  - Lawn service.** Ask the neighbors - is there a good local service that can help keep the yard looking nice?
  - Pool** Check the liner, filtration system, and security - a pool should be fenced in to avoid accidents. Locate a local pool service to inspect the pool for problems.
  - Security** If a security system is in place, find out if it is active. If not, contact a local security firm for pricing and details.
- Home location**
  - Schools** If you are in school or have children, this will be a major factor in your decision. Check out achievement scores for the local schools/university and find out about bus schedules
  - Doctors/hospitals** If you have health issues access to excellent medical care may be a priority. You may need to obtain referrals to specialists in your area.
  - Emergency services** Ensure that your home is easily accessible to police, fire, rescue and emergency medical personnel.
  - Worship centers** Depending on your faith, you may wish to live close to a house of worship and this can impact your home buying decision.
  - Shopping/entertainment** You may need access to shopping, dry cleaning, beauty salons/barber shops, banking, dining and entertainment.
  - Parking** Is there adequate parking for your vehicle(s)? Research local parking ordinances if there is no private driveway or garage.
  - Transportation** In some areas, keeping a vehicle may not be feasible. In such cases, easy access to public transportation (taxicabs, bus line, subway, elevated train) is essential.

- Commute** You may wish to factor in your place of employment when choosing a home to cut down on hours spent commuting.
- Noise** Homes located near major freeways, airports or elevated trains may be extremely loud at certain times of day or night. Visit the location at different times to evaluate noise and traffic levels.
- Zoning/restrictions** Some communities have strict rules about pets or animals, so find out if this will be an issue, particularly if you own certain breeds of dog that may be banned.
- Financials**
  - Homeowners association** If your neighborhood is part of a local association, you may have regular dues to pay.
  - Property taxes** Find out what the average taxes are annually, and factor them into your budget - taking into account that they can change at any time.
  - Utilities** Depending on the size and energy efficiency of the home, your utilities may be as large a financial obligation as your house payment.
  - Inspection** Have the home inspected by a licensed home inspector to reveal any problems or bargaining points. If possible, make any needed repairs the responsibility of the seller.
  - Asking price** Have independent research done to determine if the asking price is reasonable and negotiate if possible.