

Jennifer & Jason's Homeowner News™

Courtesy of Jennifer Lange & Jason Kogok ☎ www.luxurymovers.com

Location, Location, Location

What three factors impact a home's resale value the most? According to an old, overused saying, they are location, location and location. But what does this really mean? If you are about to buy a home, how do you evaluate its location, location and location to make sure you've got a winner? Being that these really are three different things, let's discuss them one by one.

The Neighborhood

As we all know, two homes that are exactly the same can have drastically different prices just because they are in different neighborhoods. What makes one part of town more expensive than the other? Desirability.

Neighborhoods with more desirable traits will be in higher demand, and higher demand means higher prices. At the top of the most wanted list are low crime rates, good schools and proximity to shopping. Having an easy access to the transportation network is also important, as is being close to parks, recreation and entertainment.

A neighborhood's reputation or image is also significant. Is it known as an upscale, prestigious place to live? Or is it more of a middle-class family area? Or mostly students and a younger crowd that likes to party? Are there a lot of rental properties with more transient residents? Property values and their rate of appreciation for a particular area will correspond to the purchasing power of the person most likely to live there.

The character of a neighborhood takes time to develop, so buying a home in an already established area is considered less risky than buying in a new development. However, neighborhoods can and do change, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. Buying in a marginal area and hoping that it will eventually improve can turn out to be either profitable or disastrous, depending on your timing and luck.

Immediate Surroundings

Even within the same neighborhood property values can sometimes vary. Yes, that means that there is a location within a location – the home's immediate surroundings can boost

or depress its value beyond the neighborhood norm. The biggest value enhancer is being on the

waterfront. Following close behind is being next to a greenbelt, golf course, having a nice view, or being in a gated community. The biggest value deflator is having abandoned properties nearby. Other strong negatives are trash and being close to an industrial building or a declining shopping center.

Homes that are in the middle of a community have a slight advantage over homes at the edges that are on busier streets. The same is true for homes that are in the middle of a block compared to those on street corners. And speaking of the block, its residents make a difference too. If your neighbors are the kind of

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I have built a career on caring for my clients. And it is a huge compliment for me to get your repeat business and referrals. If you are thinking of buying or selling, or know someone who is, please give me a call. I will use my knowledge, skills and dedication to help you, or anyone you refer to me, with what's often the biggest investment of one's life. Feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail. The consultation is always free, and there is never any sales pressure.

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Benefits of Using a Lockbox

A lockbox makes a home easier to sell. Why? Because it makes it convenient and simple for agents to show the home to buyers. It's no wonder that this simple device is used so frequently in the real estate industry.

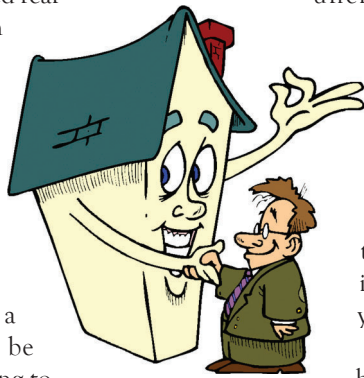
A lockbox is a small metal box which contains the key to the house. Mechanical lockboxes require a combination to open, whereas electronic lockboxes (now widely used) are opened with an electronic key. In either case, only licensed real estate agents can obtain the combination or the electronic key to open the lockbox, and they have to schedule a showing with your agent's office before they show up at your house.

Without a lockbox, a seller would have to be present for each showing to open the door. This would be obviously inconvenient for the seller – who wants to sit around all day waiting for agents and buyers to show up? And who wants to then wait around for the showing to be over? Also, buyers prefer to look at homes when the seller is not there. It helps them imagine the home as their own which is an important step towards making an offer. They can take their

time viewing the home and they are not feeling pressured to leave quickly. Plus, they can talk freely with their agent about the home and any concerns they may have.

Lockboxes make life easier for buyers agents, too. It gives them flexibility in scheduling their showings, since they don't have to coordinate with too many people. Agents are in fact so accustomed to lockboxes, that some would be very unenthusiastic about showing a property without one. In other words, by making your home easy to show, you will likely get more buyers agents (and their clients!) interested in paying your home a visit.

Before listing your home, you and your agent will discuss the use of the lockbox. You will decide what times your home will be available for the showings, and how much notice you will need. Your agent's office will notify you before each showing, and will keep a record of who visited your home and when. This way your home will be easy for buyers to see, easy for agents to show, and easy and convenient for you.



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folks who take pride in their homes, keep them well-maintained, with lush green lawns, trimmed bushes, and great curb appeal, that helps boost everyone's property value. If on the other hand their lawns are brown, driveways decorated with junk cars on cinderblocks, it's hard to tell what color the façade is supposed to be, or they are fond of noise and loud music, then the value of every house on the block will suffer.

The Town

The 1980s were difficult years for the U.S. auto industry and difficult times for the town of Flint, Michigan. Hit hard by the massive layoffs at the local auto plants, the town experienced a severe economic downturn and plummeting property values. At the same time, the U.S. computer industry was booming. The towns in California's Silicon Valley saw home prices skyrocket, thanks to the plentiful jobs and economic prosperity brought by the high tech industry. Comparing Flint with Silicon Valley may be a little unfair, but I use it to illustrate the third aspect of the "location, location, location" – the importance of the city or a wider area where the home is located. The real estate market is inseparably tied to the economy of the area, and the two move in sync. That's why in a hot town even a "dumpy" place can sell quickly and for a premium, while in an economically depressed area even the most beautiful home can remain unsold for many months.

Although it's generally the towns where one industry dominates that are more at risk of an economic downturn, it's hard to predict which way the local economy will swing. If it goes south, there's very little an individual homeowner can do to prevent the value of her home from following suit, short of towing it to a different town. And that's why the three most important things in real estate are still location, location and yes – location.

Free
Special
Report
Available

The Seven Expensive Mistakes Sellers Frequently Make is a four-page special report that no seller should be without. If you are thinking of selling your home soon, arm yourself with the knowledge that can help you avoid expensive mistakes too many people have made. Order this report today – there is no cost or obligation.

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Camping: Fun For the Whole Family

Ahh, the great outdoors. Sitting around the camp fire, roasting marshmallows, and spending time with your family. Camping can be a lot of fun, and now is a great time to try it before the summer is over. If you've never been camping, here are a few tips:

Selecting Location

For your first camping trip, it's a good idea to pick a location that's not too far from home. Finding a campground should be easy. Most of the campgrounds on public land are listed on the web site recreation.gov. This site allows you not only to find camping, but also to check availability for specific dates and make reservations. Of course, you don't have to limit yourself only to the government-run campgrounds; there are plenty of private ones out there too. Stores that sell camping equipment have local guide books that can give you ideas where to find them, or you can search on the internet.

Stuff to Bring

Food should be the first thing on the list. Bringing enough food means you won't be that camper who had to run to the convenience store three times a day for every meal. For your first outing it's good idea to keep the menu simple, and plan for meals that are quick and easy to make. As far as camping gear goes, the web site FamilyCampingGear.com has a useful checklist of the things you should bring with you. But please remember that it's not necessary to buy a lot of stuff for your first trip. Use what you already have, and consider borrowing a few items from a friend or renting them from a store that sells outdoor gear. This way you will avoid spending a lot of money on something, only to find out later you don't really need it. After you get a couple of camping trips under your belt, you will be in a better position to decide what equipment it's worthwhile buying.

Kids

If you are worried about your kids being bored on a visit to Mother Nature, look for a location that has something to keep them active. For example, look for a campground that has hiking, horseback riding, a beach, or something similar. Bring a ball for a quick game of soccer, football or baseball. Or get your children involved in creating their own trip journal! They can collect small mementos (dry leaves, flowers, shells) to place in the journal, along with photos or crayon drawings of things they see. It's a nice activity for the whole family, and it will help keep them busy.

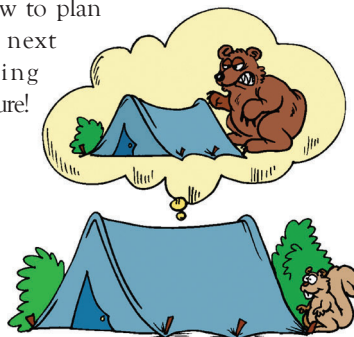


Know the Rules

While each campsite has a set of rules that you should familiarize yourself with, there are some universal ones. It should go without saying that leaving trash is a big no-no. Walking across someone else's campsite is also a no-no as every camper wants as much privacy as they can get. Keeping your pet under control and cleaning up after it is also expected. When it comes to firewood, at many campgrounds you are expected to bring your own as opposed to collecting it on site. And most campsites have quiet hours, and observing those hours helps everyone enjoy their time in the camp more.

Enjoy!

Camping is all about breathing fresh air, having fun, learning about the outdoors and meeting new people. I hope this short article gave you a few ideas on how to plan your next camping adventure!



Q: Can I, as a seller, be present at showings?

A: Can you? Yes. Should you? No. Buyers feel more comfortable looking at homes when sellers are not hanging around. They feel more relaxed, can take their time to look around, and feel free to discuss the home amongst themselves and with the agent. Speaking of agents, they are more in tune with what a particular buyer is looking for than the seller is. You may be really proud of your newly remodeled kitchen and feel compelled to focus on that when talking to the buyer, when what the buyer is really impressed about is your home's three-car garage. When a showing is scheduled, hop over to the neighborhood coffee shop for a few minutes and let your agent do the work you've hired him or her to do.

Have a tough real estate question you need answered? Just give us a call or send us an e-mail

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ARCHITECTURE CORNER

STICK HOUSE

“To us, our house was not insentient matter – it has a heart and a soul and eyes to see us... and approvals and solicitudes and deep sympathies; it was of us, and we were in its confidence.” This is what Mark Twain had to say about his Stick House near Hartford, Connecticut. He loved his house so much, that when he was forced to rent it out due to financial troubles, according to his contemporaries he seemed to have suffered almost as much as if he had lost a close friend.

Stick style is one of several sub-types of Victorian architecture. The most recognizable characteristic is the “stick work” – decorative half-timbering on the outside walls, similar to the Tudor style. However, while with Tudor homes the stick work is a structural element, with Stick houses it’s just there for decoration. Other decorative elements include ornamental gable trusses, and decorative brackets and braces. Stick houses are almost always made out of wood (another difference between them and Tudor homes), have high pitched gable roofs, and have brightly painted façades. Balconies and porches are also common, and these homes are most commonly two or two-and-a-half stories high.

Stick House first appeared in 1860’s, and it was popularized by many house pattern books over the next two decades. However, by the early 1880’s it started being replaced with the more ornate and fancy Queen Anne style. Still, many fine examples can be found today, and Stick House had definitely earned its place on the list of most beloved American architectural styles.

