

# ...And Here's What's Happening In Your Neck Of The Woods

(NAPSA)—“Location, location, location” is the time-proven mantra for success in real estate. If you are buying in the neighborhood where you currently live, then you are already one step ahead in understanding the market, but what if you are looking to move into a new neighborhood or clear across the country?

The Internet can prove to be an invaluable resource for neighborhood research. Before deciding where to look for your dream home, visit one of the major real estate sites like Yahoo! Real Estate (<http://realestate.yahoo.com>), which offers free access to helpful tools and timely data on neighborhoods across the country.

“Consumers are flocking to real estate Web sites for up-to-date neighborhood and school information,” says Ryan Roslansky, Alain Pinel realtor in Northern California. “Buyers realize that when they purchase a home, they are buying more than 4 walls and a picket fence, they are buying the entire neighborhood and surrounding schools.”

Following are issues you will want consider in your new home research:

## **School rankings—Pass or Fail?**

How do local schools stack up? Not only are schools important for your own family, but good school districts maintain high house-values due to the demand from families who want to move into the area. Many sites provide details on state and national school rankings, as well as average test scores by individual school and district. Sites like The School Report (<http://www.homefair.com>) provide comprehensive data on curriculum, sports programs, SAT and ACT test scores, directories and other K-12 school information.

## **Evaluate local crime rates**

It may look like a nice neighborhood, but high crime rates indicate trouble ahead—your family's safety is at stake, and if crime



in the area continues, the value of your home will surely decrease. Many real estate sites and local state agencies provide information on local crime rates and national crime averages on the Internet for quick and easy research.

## **Comparable home sales data**

Wonder what the next door neighbor paid for a home nearly identical to yours? Need some ammunition for the bargaining table? Try visiting a site like HomeGain (<http://www.homegain.com>) for comparable home sales data for neighborhoods across the country. Enter your address and learn how home prices in your area—even on your street—have fared with the changing markets.

## **Know your neighbors**

Before you plan a wild housewarming soiree, use the Internet to learn about the demographic makeup of your new neighborhood. Yahoo! Real Estate offers comprehensive demographics for thousands of neighborhoods in every state—from a culture index to average temperatures/rainfall to cost-of-living estimates.

The decision to buy a home is likely one of the most substantial events a consumer faces, but mistakes—and poor choices—can easily be made if buyers fail to do their homework. With the help of the Internet, home buyers can avoid common pitfalls and make smarter, more informed real estate decisions.