



Simple Steps to Real Estate Research for Homebuyers...

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If you are already working with an agent, this is not meant as a solicitation for that business.

Thinking about moving? Before you put a For Sale sign in your yard, you're going to need to do some research. There is a right way to do it—and a wrong way. Here are the steps to simplify the process:

Step One: Think Neighborhood, Not House.

Start by searching for areas and neighborhoods you like—not for the actual properties themselves. You may find a gorgeous home that makes your mouth water, but it may be in an area that's just too far from where you want to be. This is the danger of falling in love with property rather than neighborhood.

Step Two: Go online.

Look up the neighborhood's property taxes, crime statistics, and recent sales. It's all on the internet if you know where to look. Check out the town's municipal site, the state's site, and the sites of local real estate agents.

The internet is an amazing modern tool for this research. But many people make the mistake of using it for the entire research process. Instead, what you need to do is to go on to:

Step Three: Establish contact with a reputable agent in the neighborhood.

From websites, you've already determined who seems to have the best handle on your area. Contact that agent and tell him or her that you want to move to the area and you're looking for information.

When you meet, ask about upcoming listings that may not yet have been placed

on the MLS (Multiple Listing Service). This is the value of a person over technology. A good agent who knows the area is on the lookout for properties and can get you "in" before the rest of the world even sees the listing.

Step Four: Get out and look at houses, even ones you're not interested in.

There may be issues in the neighborhood of which you are not aware. By touring neighboring properties, you may uncover that there is a flooding problem in the area. Or that there is an infestation of beetles. These are items that a cursory online search would never reveal. It's best to look with your own eyes.

Step Five: Get your own property on the market.

Reality says that you probably can't buy the new home without selling the one you're in. The sooner you get it listed, the better. You can always include a clause that states, "The sale of this house is conditional upon my finding another home within x number of days or weeks."

Research isn't difficult when it's done properly. When you follow these simple steps—while consulting with your local real estate professional—you'll find that the process will run smoothly.

For information about a particular neighborhood, give me a call at (360) 620-2690 or send an email to mollyells@windermere.com. Tell me your research criteria and I'll find exactly what you're looking for—and exactly where you want it to be.

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