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PICKING THE RIGHT NEIGHBOURHOOD

You have decided to buy a home. You've analyzed your budget, talked to a REALTOR and figured out what kind of house you want. But, the most important step may have been left until last: picking the right neighbourhood.

Choosing not only the proper community, but also the right neighbourhood, can have a tremendous impact on your family's happiness and the value of your investment.

The first thing many people do when considering a move is drive around various communities gaining a sense of which areas they like. Buyers find out how close the major highways are and if the neighbours keep their yards tidy. Most will make sure they know the location of the closest mall. But what about public transit, colleges, schools, libraries, parks, recreation centres and fire or ambulance stations? Is the local police station close to your prospective neighbourhood? All of these factors can make or break a decision to buy a certain property.

Your REALTOR can provide you with a wealth of general information on different neighbourhoods. For detailed information, it's a good idea to contact the appropriate agency directly. Here are a few suggestions to consider:

Contact the municipality

Municipalities have a wealth of information on hand. Some distribute brochures and booklets containing the locations of colleges, libraries, ambulance stations, hospitals, parks and transit stops. It's also a good idea to check the location of recreation centres, swimming pools, ice rinks and the like, along with the programs they offer.

Call the local police and fire departments

Ask them how many stations service the community and their locations. Also ask about response time to emergencies.

Contact local School Boards

The Greater Victoria, Saanich, Sooke and Gulf Islands School Districts will be able to give you information on the locations of elementary and secondary schools within their jurisdictions. It's a good idea to mark the routes your children would take and then walk them yourself.

Your REALTOR and MLS®

Your REALTOR will be able to offer you general advice and information on many of the above topics. Remember, your REALTOR has access to the Multiple Listing Service® (MLS®) and can provide you with a customized list of properties available for sale in the neighbourhood of your choice that meet your needs, wants and budget.