

Attending Open Houses can be an enjoyable weekend activity when you're looking for a new home to purchase. Seeing a variety of homes up-close and checking out the different neighborhoods is a good way to start your search.

OPEN HOUSE THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Your Home Preferences
- Neighborhoods You Prefer
- Open House Listings
- Open House Protocol
- Questions to Ask the Hosting Agent
- Disclosure Documents
- Looking Beyond Staging

YOUR HOME PREFERENCES:

What is the size and kind of home you are looking for? Consider:

- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms
- Closets
- Storage Space
- Basement
- Extra Rooms
- Land Acreage
- And other specific features that you need in your new home purchase

NEIGHBORHOODS:

Get familiar with the communities that interest you. Make a list of neighborhoods that match up with your needs regarding commute time to work, nearby schools, shopping and other preferences.

If you are not familiar with the different neighborhoods in the Charlottesville area, we provide a good resource where you can explore some details about these communities. Go to the <http://www.CAAR.com> home page and follow the link under BUYERS & SELLERS, see Central VA Community Info & More.

In real estate, one routinely hears it's all about location, location, location. Homes in desirable areas are worth more than similar homes in other locations. When considering neighborhoods ask:

- What types of other properties are located nearby?
- What are the neighborhood demographics? Talk to the neighbors, or ask your Realtor about the area and do neighborhood research at the library.
- Where are the schools? Schools are a huge concern to parents with small children.
- Are there nuisance factors? Traffic from nearby restaurants or stores may be an irritant. With freeways in the distance, you might not hear the noise during the

day, but as night falls, the clatter and constant hum may get louder. Even barking dogs can become a problem.

If you would like to know details about local crime rate, it's best to visit the local police station or go on-line for a crime search.

OPEN HOUSES AVAILABLE THIS WEEKEND:

Find out which houses are for sale and are scheduled to be open for touring. The most comprehensive list of all the Open Houses scheduled for the coming weekend can be found listed in the current issue of CAAR Real Estate Weekly and on the Open House Hot Sheet: <http://www.RewHotSheet.com> Make a list of properties you would like to visit this weekend or just print out the Hot Sheet pdf from the web site.

OPEN HOUSE PROTOCOL:

No need to knock or ring the door bell, this is an OPEN house; just open the door and walk in. If the agent is not present to greet you, call out announcing your presence.

- Sign-in the guest register with your contact information.
- Ask permission to take pictures inside and outside. Most home sellers and agents are fine with picture taking, but always ask permission first.
- Indicate if the agent can contact you.
- If you have an agent already, provide your agents name.

Open houses are intended for looking, not for buying. Be patient and don't feel pressured; just enjoy looking, taking notes, and asking questions. You may have to visit several open houses before you find a home that really appeals to you.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What are homes in this area selling for?
- How long has this home been on the market?
- What sets this home apart from others in this area?
- Does this community have schools in the area?
- Are there community parks nearby?
- Is there a shopping mall or village close by?
- Inquire about recent improvements:
 - o HVAC System
 - o Plumbing
 - o Electric
 - o Insulation
 - o Other recent upgrades
- Ask about:
 - o Utility costs
 - o Taxes
 - o Landscaping Costs
 - o Trash Removal

DISCLOSURE DOCUMENTS:

Ask if there are “Disclosure Documents”. **Virginia State Law** requires home sellers to disclose in written form all known defects - such as foundation faults, leaky roofs, old failing windows, or other structural damage.

LOOKING BEYOND STAGING:

Look beyond the best-face staging of fresh paint, flowers and trendy decor and take note of the mechanical elements and structural construction of the home.

- How old is the roof? Newer roofs have a life expectancy of anywhere from 15 to 50 years or more, depending on its materials.
- What is the type of foundation? Raised foundations allow access under the home to reach plumbing and electrical, as do homes with basements. Slab foundations are more common in newer construction.
- Does the home have insulation in the walls and attic? In colder climates, insulation is more important, and each locale sets standards for the R factor.
- Have any appliances or systems been replaced and, if so, when? It's a plus if older plumbing and electrical have been updated. Moreover, some older appliances can't be repaired because parts are no longer available.
- If there is a basement, check for ground wall seepage.
- Condition of the cabinets, the floors and carpets, the walls and ceilings.

REW WEEKEND HOT SHEET

<http://www.rewhotsheet.com> is updated and posted live on-line every Friday at 4:00 pm for the coming weekend. Browse through the pages to see the available open houses you would be interested in attending.

Here's another great resource we offer: Go to CAAR.com/search where you can select the particular home preferences you would like.

- Price Range
- Number of Bedrooms
- Acreage
- Community

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