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## How to Buy a Home with Good Resale Potential

From Janet Wickell, Your Guide to Home Buying / Selling.

### Home Buying Decisions that Put Dollars in Your Pocket when You Sell

You might think it's strange to consider selling a home you don't even own yet, but what if you decide to move? Do you want a house that has grown in value and sells quickly? Sure you do.

Most of us won't live in the same house for the rest of our lives, so it makes sense to begin analyzing resale values from the very first day we set out to buy a home. Buying a house with good resale value might take a little longer, and it might take a bit more work on your part, but payback comes around when it sells quickly and for more money if you decide to move.

Here are some tips to help you make good home buying decisions:

#### Location is Essential

Locations regarded as *most desirable* today might not keep that status forever, but they're good models to use when you're searching for a home.

- Why are those neighborhoods in demand and how long have they been top choices?
- Are there other areas in town that are increasing in desirability?
- Does new growth seem to be headed in one direction? Will there be plenty of services (groceries, shopping, schools) in that area?
- Is the community changing—with residential areas shifting over to commercial properties? (That can sometimes be a plus for eventual value, but a negative while you live there.)

**Home Buying Tip:** Always choose a home that suits *your* needs, but if you can, find one in a location that others seem to want, too.

#### Who's Buying?

Who are the primary home buyers in your town? If it's senior citizens—or a crowd getting close to that age, your best resale potential might be a one level home, because seniors don't like to do steps.

If the majority of buyers in your area are young families with children, consider a house with a large yard that's not fronted by a busy street. Or a house with plenty of bedrooms and baths.

**Home Buying Tip:** Browse your local real estate ads. A feature that's mentioned in numerous ads is likely one that's in demand.

#### Avoid Outdated Features

- One-bath homes sell for significantly less than homes with at least two baths—and they take longer to sell.
- Electric baseboard heat and electric ceiling heat are not as desirable as central heating systems.
- Tubs and showers in outdated colors, or scratched from years of improper cleaning, might be hard to change without ripping out doors and walls.
- Popcorn ceilings date a house—you know—those bumpy ceilings that were so popular in the 1970's.

**Home Buying Tip:** Outdated features are usually a negative, but you can turn them into a positive if you buy a home *under* market value and make updates. Before you make a decision, analyze the update costs and determine how much they will add to the home's value.

## Don't Sweat the Cosmetics

- Fresh paint inside and out is a quick and relatively inexpensive fix—and sometimes makes the home look like it's had a complete overhaul.
- New appliances freshen up a kitchen. So does new cabinet hardware.
- Adding glass doors to a few kitchen cabinets gives them a new look—and lights inside them add more appeal.
- It takes some time, but painting kitchen cabinets isn't difficult—and it can change the entire character of your kitchen without buying new cabinets. Use smooth, micropore paint rollers for excellent results.
- Skylights and sun tunnels brighten a dark home. Be sure to buy top-quality products and install them with care.
- New light fixtures do wonders to lighten rooms and enhance character.
- New switch plates are an inexpensive way to make a room look nicer. Browse the options at a home improvement store.

**Home Buying Tip:** Sometimes attention to cosmetics is all a home needs to make it shine. Watch for homes in need of cosmetics, because they're often priced under market value.

## What Are Buyers Looking For?

- Closets—lots of closets, preferably walk-in, and as much additional storage space as possible.
- The term *light and bright* is a little overused, but it's an accurate description of one buyer favorite. Homes with lots of natural lighting are very popular.
- Split bedroom plans, with bedrooms on each end of the home, are increasingly popular with buyers.
- If you live in a scenic area, having a view can help you sell.

**Home Buying Tip:** Popular features differ from region to region, so try to determine what's in demand in your town. Ask your real estate agent which features are *always* on buyer want lists.

## Bottom Line

Your first objective is to buy a home that's right for you, but do consider its resale value before you make the final decision, especially if you know you'll move again within three to five years. A careful purchase now will help give you extra funds to move up with the next time you buy a home.