

Take a Walk on the Boardwalk (or Sidewalk)



If you've played the game Monopoly then you've probably picked up the Chance card that reads, "Take a walk on the Boardwalk. If you pass Go..."

That's good advice when shopping for a new home. When you see a property you like and you're thinking of making an offer, spend some time walking around the neighbourhood. This will give you a better sense of what it's going to be like to live there.

After all, the last thing you want is to buy a dream home only to find out later that there are issues with the neighbourhood that make living there miserable.

If you have kids, see how far of a walk it is to local parks, playgrounds, schools and community centres.

If you commute, you might also check out the route from the neighbourhood to your place of work. Is there a left turn that is likely to get backed up in the mornings?

Also check out how well the neighbours take care of their properties. Homeowners tend to keep their homes looking good if they enjoy the neighbourhood.

As you walk, listen. Are there noises from nearby high schools, industrial areas, or highways that are going to be unpleasant for you? Find out if the neighbourhood is near an airport flight path, or if there is a railway in the area. (Your REALTOR® can find that out for you.)

If you get a chance, talk to some of the neighbours. Ask what they like most about living in the area. You're likely to get some candid – and useful – answers.

Finally, spend some time visualizing living in the area. Can you see yourself enjoying what the neighbourhood has to offer?

If so, then buying a home in that area will likely be a good choice for you.

A good REALTOR® can help. Call today.

How to Find a Reputable Contractor



There are so many horror stories about disreputable or incompetent home improvement contractors that television shows have been made about them. Unless you want to be a guest on one of those programs, take steps to ensure you find a good contractor.

Here are some tips that will help:

- Ask for references. Speak to the references.
- Get a detailed written estimate of the work to be done, and make sure you understand all the terms and conditions.
- Be wary of contractors who insist on large

payments upfront. The payment plan should be reasonable and tied to work as completed.

- Ask if the contractor is a member of any professional associations.
- Don't deal with a contractor who offers you a no-tax, cash-only deal.
- Ask the contractor to get the appropriate permits before starting your project.

These tips won't guarantee you'll hire a reputable contractor, but they will increase the chances that you do.

Think, Act... Live!

"The road to success is always under construction." James Miller

"Great things are done by a series of small things brought together." Vincent Van Gogh

"Be the best. If others don't see it, who cares?" Oprah Winfrey