

FACT SHEET

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CHOOSING A LOT FOR YOUR HOME

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There is a saying in real estate that the three most important considerations are LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

The location of the lot you select should both meet your family's needs and lead to the appreciation of your home's value. During these times of high energy costs, the location you select should be near your place of work, schools, shopping, recreation and community facilities.

The availability of police and fire protection is an important consideration. How far is the lot from a fire plug, and from through streets which permit police and fire equipment to move in quickly?

Check Available Utilities

The availability of utilities also should be investigated. A lot without sewer, water, electrical and gas connections nearby can create high future expenses.

The lot should provide for a sewer line drainage of $\frac{1}{8}$ inch to each foot. If the drainage is more or less than this the line may not drain properly. A homesite outside city limits most often does not have sewer connections. In this case a septic system will be required. Before purchasing such a lot, it is advisable to have a soil percolation test performed to assure that septic effluent will absorb properly. Also, check with county health officers to determine the suitability of soils for septic tank systems.

Underground installation of electrical lines is desirable from an appearance standpoint. However, both initial costs and repair costs are higher than for overhead lines. Keep in mind that in some areas natural gas may not be available, so dependable electric service becomes more important.

Another crucial consideration in selecting a lot is flood proneness. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

plots 100-year flood plains. If your lot is near such a plain, it is a good idea to buy flood insurance. Also, inquire about local flood control management.

Lot Shape Important

Other things being equal, a level lot is less expensive to build on than a sloped one. The more fill dirt required, the more costly the construction. Lending institutions often are reluctant to finance homes on steep or rocky slopes because of the higher foundation costs.

A rectangular lot more than 60 feet wide is usually easiest to work with in terms of housing planning. Wedge shaped lots take careful planning to avoid an awkward arrangement. Note whether there is sufficient space for adding on to the house. This may be an important consideration for a young family.

Restrictions Affect Building

Zoning regulates land use and community development. It is designed to protect the rights of property owners against undesirable development, and to prevent the use of land in ways that may create nuisances or hazards to public health and safety.

Deed restrictions for individual neighborhoods usually establish distances a house must be built from the front, side and rear boundaries of the lot. Become familiar with these regulations and look for a lot large enough to accommodate the house you plan to build. For example, if you have house plans drawn for a 75-foot-wide house, you might think there would be ample space on a lot 85 feet wide. However, restrictions may prevent your building within 7 feet of the side property line, which would exclude a total of 14 feet. In that case only 71 feet would be left for the house and the plan would have to be altered.

Know Your Boundaries

The exact location of the lot boundaries and any easements should be determined. For example, there may be a 50-foot public right-of-way for the street, which is only 30 feet from curb to curb. In this case the right-of-way extends 10 feet from the curb onto the lot. There also may be utility easements paralleling one or more of the boundaries, or even running diagonally across the lot. These should be marked on the official survey of the lot which you can request from the seller. It is a good idea to insist that surveyor's stakes marking the lot's corners be permanent — either iron pins or concrete stakes. This may prevent misunderstandings with your neighbors. Because many mortgage financing agencies and land title companies require a registered surveyor's plat map, many buyers take it for granted that boundary and ease-

ment questions will automatically take care of themselves. But the risk of future surprises for the owner should be avoided.

Be Cost Conscious

Finally, a good rule of thumb to follow is that the lot should cost no more than 20 percent of the cost of the house. When negotiating the purchase of a lot, make sure you have a title clear of undisclosed claims or other blemishes. Local practice determines whether the seller or buyer provides title insurance; but title insurance is recommended.

The location where you and your family are to spend so much of your life and resources is worthy of a thorough investigation. These suggestions should help you make this important decision wisely.

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