

28 Things You Must Know When Choosing a Planned Community

- If there are more than 15-20% resales in a community, you need to look into it further. Fifteen to twenty percent is high and may be an indication of other problems. Talk to the people living in the community.
- Will there be any limitations (“Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions – CC&R’s”) in your deed that governs the way you are allowed to use your property? What are they? Make sure they are compatible with your lifestyle.
- Is there a published list of Rules and Regulations for the Community?
- Are there Architectural Design Restrictions and Requirements? What are they? Who are they governed by?
- What is the financial strength of the Developer? Of the Homeowners Association?
- When will the amenities, roads, lighting, paving, curbing, drainage, utilities and landscaping be complete?
- In order to get people to buy homes in a community, the developer loads up on the initial amenities he provides. They are sustained by funds from the initial marketing budget, to entice people to the community. The association fees or common charges seem low, at that point. Who will sustain all the amenities after the developer leaves? Who will manage them? How much will the association fees and common charges increase? Who maintains the amenities? Who owns them? Who manages them? Are the improvements bonded to assure completion?
- Are the roads private or public? Who maintains them?
- Does the community have a variety of housing types that fit your needs, and are they designed with Universal Design Principles that will accommodate your changing physical needs as you age?
- Must I have an architect design my house?
- Will new construction block my views?
- Is there a requirement of a minimum lot size? Is there a requirement of a minimum or maximum house size?

- Are people in the community allowed to rent their house to others? Is there a minimum or maximum time allowed?
- What direction will your house be facing? (If you like beautiful airy light, it had better be facing south!)
- Are there medical facilities, restaurants and shopping nearby?
- Is public transportation available to and from the community?
- Is the community handicapped accessible?
- Does the community have sidewalks?
- Make sure you talk to other residents when visiting a community. Many communities host special events that will give you a chance to meet other residents. You'll hear first hand what people like and don't like. What they feel is good and what they think could be better. I also like to talk to residents randomly on my own, as I visit a community.
- If you're buying a town home or a condominium with a common wall between units, check the noise ordinance of the community. What is permissible by law? You should also inquire as to the sound proofing between units.
- Does the community have adequate parking for its residents and their guests?
- How will repairs and improvements be paid for? Is there a "fund" in place for emergencies and "capital" improvements?
- Visit the community at different times of the day, and night, during the week and on weekends. Listen for excessive noise from neighbors, delivery trucks, and building equipment. Observe the activities within the community and of you're soon to be neighbors. Visit during the good season, weather wise, and the bad season. Spend some extended time in the town, so you get a true feel for it. Talk to the people you meet in the local restaurants and shops. If you need a short term rental try www.homeaway.com.
- Is the community well lit, safe and secure?
- Do you have the right and ability to expand you house later? What does the process involve?
- You can spend 10-15% of the cost of construction on a set of "signed and sealed" building plans from a licensed architect, to build you house. Many towns do not require a "signed and sealed" set of drawings, so you can save \$30,000 on a house that costs \$300,000 to build.
- If you buy a homesite, make sure you inquire as to any regulations the community might have as to when you must start construction and complete it.

- How much land will stay forever green and how many more lots will be developed? You don't want the developer to create an overabundance of housing units in the community which can decrease your value. Limited future development helps preserve your value.