

Weight your four

NEIGHBORHOOD PRIORITIES CHECKLIST

1

Before you look at a single house, decide what actually matters. Fill this in now, before you tour anything. Your answers will drift once you fall in love with a kitchen.

Distribute 100 points across the four. They must total 100. That is what forces the tradeoff.

Commute

How close you need to be to work, family, the airport, the places you actually go

School quality

The specific zoned school, not the district's reputation

Budget, size, finishes

How much house, how much land, how new

Vibe and lifestyle

How the place feels to live in day to day

TOTAL

= 100

If you can't get it under 100, you haven't prioritized yet. That is the exercise.

Date completed

Fill this in before you tour. Re-read it the day you write an offer.

List every place you will drive to more than twice a month. Not just work.

DESTINATION	WHO GOES THERE	HOW OFTEN	ACCEPTABLE DRIVE

Then do this: map each one at the actual time you would travel. A 20 minute drive at 11am can be 45 at 8am.

Be sure to map out any location you plan to frequent, whether it is a family member's house or a specific grocery store. It's worth the effort.

My hard limit on a one-way commute is minutes.

Only fill this in if schools carry real weight for you. If they don't, skip it and say so. Plenty of buyers pay for school districts they will never use.

Grades I need, and when

Public, private, or open to both

Do I need this to hold for the next 10 years, or the next 3

The trap: the city on the mailing address does not determine the school. Assignment is by specific address, and it can change with redistricting.

For any home you are serious about, confirm the actual assigned elementary, middle and high school with the district before you write an offer.

ADDRESS CONSIDERED	ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE	HIGH	CONFIRMED?

Tick one column for each row. Being honest about the "don't care" column is what buys you options later.

	MUST HAVE	NICE TO HAVE	DON'T CARE
Bedrooms	☐	☐	☐
Bathrooms	☐	☐	☐
Square footage	☐	☐	☐
Lot size / yard	☐	☐	☐
Garage	☐	☐	☐
Single story	☐	☐	☐
Move-in ready vs. project	☐	☐	☐
New build vs. established	☐	☐	☐
Basement	☐	☐	☐
Home office	☐	☐	☐

Now the honest question. For the same money, would you rather have more house or a better location? You will have to choose, and knowing which way you lean saves months.

☐ More house ☐ Better location

One thing I will not compromise on:

The most personal of the four, and the one that causes the most regret when skipped. Rate each from 1 to 5. 1 means you don't care, 5 means essential.

Walkable downtown	1-5	
Restaurants and nightlife	1-5	
Shopping	1-5	
Parks, trails, outdoors, water access	1-5	
Quiet residential streets	1-5	
Historic character	1-5	
Newer, planned, uniform	1-5	
Sense of community, neighbors you know	1-5	
Youth sports and activities	1-5	
Space and privacy from neighbors	1-5	

That sentence is worth more than the whole grid above it. It tells you what you are actually buying.

Don't decide from listings. Schedule a trip and spend a few days in the areas in person.

Before you fly

- ☐ This checklist filled in, all four weighted
- ☐ 2 to 3 target areas picked, not the whole metro
- ☐ Homes in your range saved for each area
- ☐ Commutes mapped at real times of day
- ☐ Call booked with Marc so you're not touring blind

While you're here

- ☐ Drive your actual commute, at your actual hour
- ☐ Walk the downtown of each area, on a weekend
- ☐ Buy something at the grocery store you'd use
- ☐ Drive the neighborhood after dark
- ☐ Sit somewhere for thirty minutes and just watch

After each area, score it out of your 100

AREA	COMMUTE	SCHOOLS	BUDGET/SIZE	VIBE	TOTAL

Score against the weights you set on page 1. Highest total wins. If the number disagrees with your gut, that is worth a conversation, not an override.