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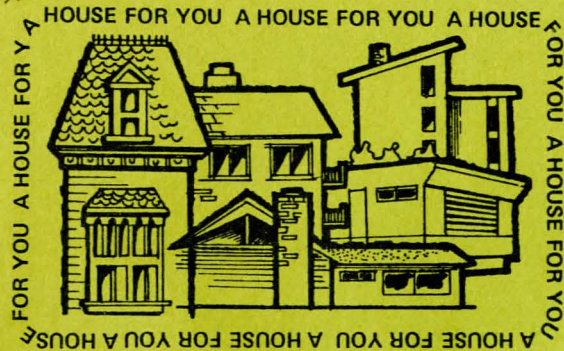
EC77-2042 Housing Choices

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Housing Choices

What is your dream house like? A beautiful split level with a family room and huge fireplace that cleans itself? A two story colonial with a large yard, on a shady, tree-lined street?

Dreaming can be very pleasant. But finding a suitable place to live is a very real, wide awake kind of problem which requires a number of decisions.

In this lesson we are going to explore the many housing choices available today. After considering all the pros and cons, you can make a decision as to what's best for your family.

Many choices are open to the average family.

One Of Your First Decisions Centers On Location

Where do you want to live? City? Town? Suburbs? Country? This decision may determine

what your housing choice must be. Wanting to live on a farm that you own would cut out the choice of renting. Living on a rented farm or ranch could limit choices to renting or buying a type of mobile home that could be moved. Building in a town or city might be limited to certain areas where lots are available.

Here are some questions to ask yourself as you make your location choice. Some may not be as important to you now as they will be later. Elementary school children eventually go to high school! Consider importance, not only to your family, but to other families in case you later need to sell.

Use This List To Check Particular Locations

I. What about proximity to conveniences?

1. Schools?
 - . (for now and later) transportation, safety of walking, quality of school, size and growth of schools.
2. Shopping areas?
 - . especially important for older persons and those without transportation.
3. Employment?
 - . transportation to and from work can mean tiring, time consuming and expensive driving.
4. Church and meeting places?
 - . important for all family members.
5. Parks and recreation areas?
 - . lack of public transportation or safe walking conditions can easily turn mother into chauffeur.
6. Utilities?
 - . could mean additional expense if not accessible to water, gas, electric lines and to sewer lines.
7. Libraries?
 - . ease of getting to the library will encourage its use by all members of the family.

Location
1

Location
2

	Location 1	Location 2
II. What about closeness to nuisances?		
1. Sewage plants? . not sweet neighbors.	_____	_____
2. City dump? . not a pleasant site.	_____	_____
3. Polluted or unsightly bodies of water? . there can be advantages to bodies of water but beware of mosquitoes, pollution and flooding.	_____	_____
4. Heavy traffic? . can be dangerous for children, may be noisy and may lower property values if streets are widened, etc.	_____	_____
5. Noisy recreation areas? . noisy or brightly lighted areas can detract from your home.	_____	_____
6. Undesirable industrial areas? . stockyards and feedlots might not be the best neighbors—especially if they are yours. . odors, noise, traffic, smoke from industrial areas (existing or future) lower desirability.	_____	_____
7. Airports and railroads? . traffic pattern of airports bring traffic and noise.	_____	_____
III. What about zoning?		
1. What type of residential housing is allowed?	_____	_____
2. Is commercial property allowed?	_____	_____
3. Any changes in zoning foreseen?	_____	_____
IV. What about taxes?		
1. How much are the taxes?	_____	_____
2. What assessments are possible?	_____	_____
3. What has been the rate of increase?	_____	_____
V. What about land conditions?		
1. Is flooding or water seepage a potential problem?	_____	_____
2. Is the type of soil good for building?	_____	_____
3. Is the land contour right for the type of house you want?	_____	_____
VI. Who would be your neighbors?		
1. Are there children in the same age bracket as yours?	_____	_____
2. Are there some people in your age bracket with similar interests?	_____	_____
VII. What is the appearance convenience and safety of the lot?		
1. Are there shade trees?	_____	_____
2. Is there adequate street lighting?	_____	_____
3. Is parking allowed on the street?	_____	_____
4. Do you want a corner lot with the extra sidewalk to care for?	_____	_____
5. Are there sidewalks in the area?	_____	_____
6. Is there adequate police and fire protection?	_____	_____

When you actually select a home, you will have basically three choices: 1. Renting; 2. Buying; 3. Building.

Let's consider some of the advantages and disadvantages of each that can help you make your choice.

RENTING

Advantages

1. Freer to move (usually with 1 month's notice)
2. Don't worry about property values
3. Know exactly what costs are
4. No down payment (maybe a deposit)
5. In some places, cost of renting has gone up slower than cost of buying

Disadvantages

1. Not getting anything permanent—no ownership, or equity which is a kind of savings
2. May not find kind and quality of housing you want
3. Don't have "pride" or "status" of ownership
4. No part of housing cost can be deducted from income tax
5. Could be asked to vacate at owner's convenience.

BUYING

1. Acquire equity in value of property—a form of savings
2. Interest and tax costs deductible from income tax
3. Have the right to change, design, improve, etc.
4. Begin to develop "pride" in ownership
5. Can "see" how the house looks and "operates" (not often possible when building)
6. Property taxes should be considered—comparing older areas with newer areas, etc.

1. You have cost and responsibility for all maintenance and repair
2. Usually requires a down payment
3. Decrease in property values will affect worth of your home
4. May be difficult to move
5. The life expectancy of older equipment should be investigated, as well as the availability of service and parts.

BUILDING

1. Same advantages as buying (see above)
2. Can have a house planned just for you
3. Could lower cost of finishing interior by doing part of it yourself.

1. *Many, many* decisions to make
2. Can be costly—extras such as landscaping, draperies, etc.
3. Can't be sure of "character" of neighborhood in newly developed area.
4. Exact cost may be difficult to determine
5. Requires time to supervise or be available for questions, etc.

Did you decide to rent, buy or build? This narrows the problem, but you still aren't through making decisions. Each of these options offers several possibilities:

Renting: Apartment or duplex; house; mobile home.

Buying: New house; older house (possibly to remodel); condominium; cooperative; modular; mobile home (single or double wide); manufactured home.

Building: Stock plan (from catalog, magazine, lumberyard, etc.); builder provides plan; pre-cut house; modular; manufactured home; architect's plan. Many of these will be familiar to you. But, let's define several which are a part of the "new" trend in housing.

A *condominium*—each family owns the particular unit it occupies. There is common ownership of some of the surrounding land for joint use.

A *cooperative*—all families jointly own all units and surrounding grounds.

A *manufactured home*—is constructed at the factory in two or more parts. It uses conventional building materials and methods. When assembled at the site it is placed on a permanent foundation.

A *mobile home*—is a movable structure which is more than 8 feet wide and 32 feet long. It is built on a chassis and designed to be used as a dwelling with or without a permanent foundation.

A *modular or double-wide mobile home*—is a mobile home consisting of two sections combined horizontally at the site. They still retain their individual chassis for possible future moving.

What is available may determine which alternative you select. Remain flexible to change if conditions are different than you anticipated or if you just change your mind. Remember there is no perfect house.

THINGS TO DO TO MAKE YOUR CHOICE EASIER

1. Be on the lookout for open houses at apartments, condominiums and private homes. See what is available without pressures or obligations.

2. Visit mobile home sales lots (at least two). Find out what is available in the different kinds of homes they sell.

3. Scan the newspapers for ads and notices of selling prices.

4. Take long drives to look at locations you may not have considered before.

5. Call a real estate agent and discuss your thoughts with him or her. What does he think you might find in features and prices.

6. Talk to builders. What services do they have? Do they have plans? Can changes be made in their plans?

7. Write different housing companies for plans and information on their types of housing.

8. Visit with local offices that might have information on zoning and future development?

9. Talk with friends and relatives. Your needs are your own. However, experiences of others might be helpful to know.

10. Complete the following questionnaire.

What's Our Choice?

Miscellaneous Questions To Ask Yourself

1. Which would be more important to you?
 - being free to move?
 - being a permanent part of a neighborhood?

2. Do you have the time and interest to maintain a house if you should build or buy?

3. Do you consider home improvement (1) a hobby and a pleasure or (2) a "we have to get that done," and therefore a drag?

4. Could you find a house to rent or buy that would have the features you want?

5. Are builders available? _____ How long would you have to wait? _____

6. Are desirable lots available on which to build?

7. Is real estate in your area considered a good investment?

8. Are tax considerations for your family in favor of owning a house?

9. How long will you be living in this area?

10. Do you *know* what you want in a permanent home or do you need more time to determine how your family lives?

11. If your needs change would there be a market for the house you choose to own?

12. Are there condominiums in your area?

13. What, if any, restrictions are placed on mobile homes of different kinds?

14. What does the future hold for the development of a particular area?

15. What is your own financial outlook?

16. Could your pocketbook take the strain of the initial costs of home ownership?

17. Is there any existing or planned rental housing for your area?

18. Are the local financial institutions willing to make housing loans?

19. Are you familiar with what mobile, modular, precut, prefab or double-wide homes have to offer?

20. Is time important in obtaining a living arrangement? _____ Considering these questions, what is your first choice? _____ What is your second choice? _____

Adapted by Betsy Gabb, Housing Specialist, from material prepared by Gwen Cooper, former Gage County Extension Agent, and Mary Dale Christensen, Former Housing Specialist.

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