

ON THE MOVE

Ten things to ask when you buy a townhome

By Leslie Mann

Townhome living has its advantages. You don't have to worry about landscaping or shoveling snow, and many exterior home maintenance issues are taken care of for you. But townhome living isn't for everyone. Some people find living in close proximity to others and abiding by community rules can be a challenge.

Be sure before you buy a townhome to learn as much as you can about the community so you know not only if it's a good financial investment but also if it'll be a good lifestyle fit for you and your family. If you're considering buying a townhome, be sure to first have your buyer's agent find out the following information.

1. What are the condominium rules?

Many townhome communities include restrictions on the type and size of pet residents you may have. In addition, to maintain the aesthetic integrity of the townhome complex, many townhome associations have rules about what can and cannot be

planted outside. Other townhome communities have guidelines regarding changes to the units. For example, you might need to obtain permission from the condo association if you're planning certain upgrades if these impact any exterior spaces (for ex: adding central air conditioning, which would require installation of an air conditioning unit outside the home.)

2. What is covered by my monthly condo fees? And are there rate increases and/or special assessments anticipated?

Inquire as to whether there are major repairs or renovations planned that might cause townhome owners to receive a special assessment or an increase in their monthly fees. Also, ask what major repairs have been completed recently.

3. Is there any additional work planned within the community (i.e., additional townhomes, new amenities, changes to the grounds, etc.)

4. How much money does the condo association have in reserve?

5. Are there any structural deficiencies that the condo association is aware of?

6. Who fixes what?

Find out which areas you are responsible for and which the condo association must remedy in case of problems.

7. How many units are currently for sale in the complex and are there any in foreclosure?

8. What you can tell me about community residents? Are they all primary residents or renters?

9. Which are the common areas of the community and what are the rules for their use?

10. Where are my parking spaces and what accommodations are there for guest parking?

Learning this information up front will help avoid unexpected expenses, and hopefully ensure a happy transition to townhome living.

Do you have a real estate question? Write to our real estate blogger Leslie Mann, c/o Hopkinton Crier, 33 New York Ave, Framingham, MA 01701 or realestatequeries@yahoo.com.