



# BUYING A NEW HOME: COMMUNITY INCLUDED

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Today, new developments are most often planned communities that range from large-scale developments with hundreds of homes to private enclaves of less than 50 homes and downtown condo towers. The ideal "community" is a very personal thing that varies from person to person.

It is important to have realistic expectations and to know what

you're looking for before you buy. As you visit builders' sales offices and model homes or suites, be sure to ask about the community at the same time.

## WHO IS THE TARGET MARKET?

Ask the builder or salesperson to describe the community and the homeowners it is designed for. Inquire about the mixture of homes in terms of size, styles and price range, and ask for a profile of people who have bought to date; who lives there?

Some communities, notably those aimed at mature adults and seniors, may also set criteria for who can buy in that building.

If the development is already partially built and lived in, stop to chat with people on the street, or try knocking on somebody's door to ask a few questions.

## WHAT COMMON FACILITIES AND COMMUNITY AMENITIES ARE PLANNED?

Builders and developers put a great deal of effort into planning a community that will work well for the intended residents. In a neighbourhood development, common facilities like parks and community centres might be part of the plan. In condominiums, a wide range of common amenities can be included, from health clubs



and pools, to party rooms. Ask what is planned for the community or condominium development.

The example pictured here is HAVAN developer Tien Sher's multi-family project, Venue, located in Surrey. The 3,600-sq.-ft. 'roof park' includes barbecues and two lounge areas, plus ample space for a round of bocce, or some yoga on the astro turf. The building's U-shaped footprint also allows for a public yet private-feeling courtyard with meandering paths and plenty of seating. Buffered from the city noise and seamlessly integrating with previous phases, this quiet retreat encourages a more social, engaged style of living.

#### WHAT ON-GOING SERVICES WILL BE OFFERED?

Services provided to individual homeowners by communities vary greatly, so be sure to ask for detailed information,

including costs. In condominium developments, security and most maintenance of areas outside of your living unit will be professionally managed. In some neighbourhood developments, services like gardening and snow removal are sometimes mandatory to keep the community attractive and safe. Seniors' developments may include health and recreational services.

#### MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY PLAN

The layout and design of a new community will affect how residents interact, which will impact your daily routine. Look for narrow or curved streets to slow down traffic, and sidewalks and pathways for pedestrians and bicycles for getting around easily and safely. Check if shops and services are within walking distance, and note the location of schools, hospitals, and other amenities, plus access to

transportation and connections to other parts of the city.

#### COMMUTING TO YOUR WORKPLACE

Options for getting to and from work should be taken into consideration. If you plan to go by car, drive your commute route at rush hour to get a sense of the time involved. If you plan on using transit, find out about schedules and routes that will work for you.

*Bob de Wit, CEO of the Homebuilders Association of Vancouver (HAVAN), which represents the residential construction industry in the Greater Vancouver Area. Established in 1974, HAVAN is a not-for-profit society, with 1,100+ members, proudly affiliated with the provincial and national Canadian Home Builders' Associations. You can reach Bob at bob@havan.ca.*

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