



September 2010

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## 12 Thoughts on Residential Real Estate to Consider

September is shaping up to be a record month for the number of closings for Covenant Realty. I am thankful to be a part of such a strong team and contribute to this success. As I was thinking about all of the experiences I've had with my clients over the last month, it got me thinking about this article. There is a great deal that goes into buying and selling real estate. On the surface, it might look undemanding until you have an actual opportunity to participate in a true home sale. Just think about it for a moment. Your home - not just any house, is the place where you have most likely built some of your families' most treasured memories. Some of those memories you look back on with warmth. Others remind you of painful growth that you wouldn't take away if you could. Now it is going to open its doors to complete strangers! What if you're the buyer in this case? It is usually no less of a burden. If you've ever been negotiating for a home that you were "all in" on emotionally only to see it slip through your fingers over items that might have seemed inconsequential a short time before, you might know what I mean.

Being involved in residential real estate with Covenant Realty Corp. is a pretty emotional job. This comes from working with buyers and sellers on one of the biggest transactions of their lives. In most cases, I feel the emotional highs and lows right along with those that entrust me to work for them. Reflecting upon this, it got me thinking. I give out a lot of advice that people act upon very frequently concerning real estate. Out of all of this advice that I've picked up along my journey, what are some of the best nuggets that I could give you to help better equip you when the time comes in your family's life to purchase or sell real estate?

Below are 12 pieces of advice that have served me well and should help you.

1. Always buy less than the bank says that you can afford.
2. You can't find your home until you find your area.
3. Condos are not worthy of buying solely as a real estate investment.
4. The last cookie in the jar is worth the most.
5. Never fall in love with a house that you are buying to the point where you see no way to back out, as it can cloud your judgment. It can't love you back and neither can your mortgage.
6. It is a good rule of thumb to *try* to purchase the lowest priced home (per square foot) in the best neighborhood out of your choices.
7. Real estate profit is made on the buy side, not the sell side.
8. Never buy another home until you've sold your current home, or at the very least have that as a contingency on any real estate contract.
9. A home priced incorrectly will usually sell for less than if it were priced correctly in the first place.
10. When buying, focus on the parts of the house that can't be changed, not the parts that can.
11. Home buying is a process of elimination, not selection.
12. And last....and you knew it was going to be in here. Location, Location, Location. After that I'll add Condition, Condition, Condition unless of course, you want a fixer upper!

# How It Pays To 'Think Forward' When Buying

Recently, I've had the pleasure of working with Scott Sims and Candice (soon to be Sims!). I am helping them with the purchase of a home in the Midway Hollow area of Dallas where they plan to live for at least the next five years. Scott has always had an eye for homes at a discount and the house that I dug up for them here is no exception. He is prepared to roll up his sleeves and do a little work to this particular 1950's pier and beam home. This should help him realize an even greater return when he goes to sell it. The process up to this point has been an arduous one as a buyer and seller rarely see eye to eye and this was no exception. In his defense though, I have also heard that he has a pretty good real estate agent working for him as well!

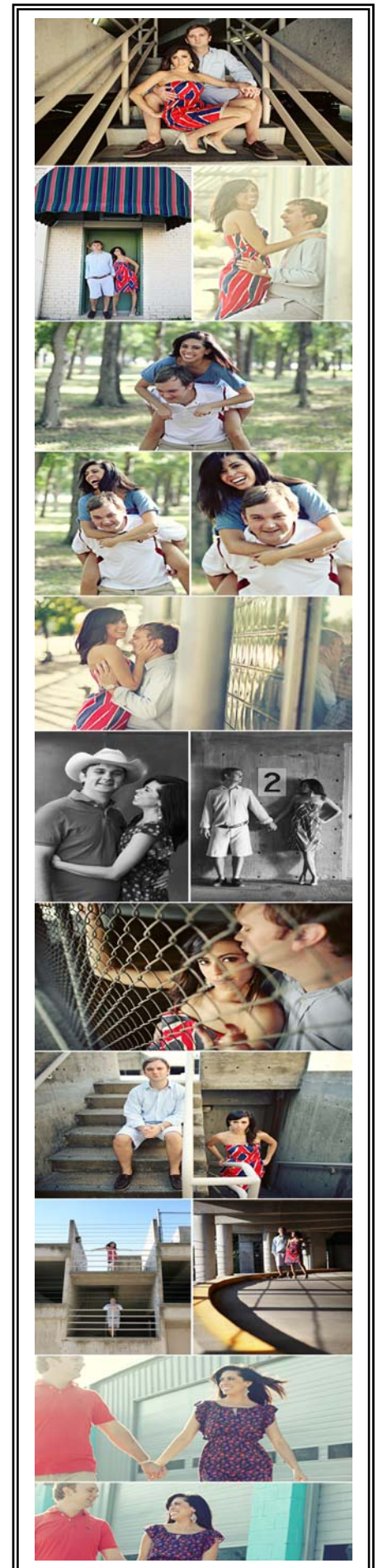
This most recent real estate transaction got me thinking. How can a buyer think like Scott even if almost every need or want they are looking for might be completely different. For example, what if you're looking in Plano vs. Dallas. Maybe your price point is completely different as well. You might have a preference of newer construction vs. older. The list goes on and on.

Well, I think I can organize the thought process for buyers into a few general key areas that can help you make a good decision in your home purchase as well. First of all, If you're looking to buy a home that you can live in forever, you should consider future-proofing. Future-proofing aptly describes the process of buying a home with an eye to the future. It's about where you are in your life and where you're going. Are you a couple thinking about becoming parents? Are you a family with kids who will soon leave the nest? Or are you a savvy buyer looking for location? In all cases, future-proofing is the way to go.

First, check for amenities that suit your current and future lifestyles. If you're family-conscious, that means more than establishing whether there's a school nearby. It means ensuring that there are lots of young families in the neighborhood, as evidenced by parked bikes, swing sets and toys. You'll want to make certain there are parks nearby, as well as libraries, recreation centers and cultural activities. A daytime scouting trip should give you a feel for this, but as important is an evening drive. Those charming bars and cafes that lend sophistication to a neighborhood in daytime may become sources of noise and mischief at night.

Safety should be a key concern. Can the kids safely walk to school? Are there bike lanes or a block parent program? There should be sidewalks on at least one side of the road, maybe traffic calming devices and, of course, good street lighting. Does the neighborhood feel safe? While you might be happy that there are stores and restaurants in your new area, if you're planning to be there for the long term, be sure to check with the city planning department to ensure that there are no upcoming unpleasant surprises, such as a new highway two blocks over. Your real estate agent can help with this. Think sustainability. A neighborhood that preserves its natural assets and prizes green space will be a good place to live for a long time. Old shade trees, big yards and gardens, and walking trails are not only environmentally sensible, but make the neighborhood a prettier place to live, now and in the future.

In the end, whether you're looking in an established subdivision of Dallas like Caruth Terrace or the Midway Hollow area or a newer development like Starwood or Heritage Lakes in Frisco, a strong real estate agent with local knowledge can help you successfully find, negotiate and buy a home right while minimizing potential future regrets from a bad purchase.





# TOWN SQUARE FINANCIAL

Term	Rate	APR
30 Year Fixed Rate	4.375%	4.5%
15 Year Fixed Rate	3.75%	3.943%
FHA 30 Year Fixed Rate	4.25%	4.89%
FHA 15 Year Fixed Rate	4.00%	4.852%
VA-Contact Lender		

\*As of 9/16/2010 and are subject to change. All rates for FHA assume 3.5% down payment and are based on a loan amount of \$150,000. Subject to credit and income requirements. All conventional rates and APR assume 80% financing on \$187,500 loan to value and a maximum of \$417,000. A signed loan application is required to lock the rate. APR will change if the loan amount and percentage of the home changes.

Town Square Financial in Frisco, TX has agreed to waive some of the closing fees associated with refinancing. If you are interested in what refinancing options are available, please call Jeff Jannasch, Branch Manager/Executive VP of Town Square Financial at 972-292-7599. Jeff will give you a free refinance consultation to determine if refinancing is a good option.



In any real estate market, it pays to present your house well if you want to sell it quickly and get your asking price. At Covenant Realty we strive to offer only **top shelf service as we know that extraordinary homes deserve outstanding Realtors.**



To find out how, ask for my free guide, "50 Essential Tips to Prepare Your Home For a Quick Sale."

Just call me at 214-912-1703 and I'll send it right out to you

## Why Laughter Is Such Good Medicine

Laughter may really be the best medicine after all. At least that's what researchers at the University of Maryland believe after studying the science behind a good old-fashioned belly laugh. Following are some of the things that laughter does:

- Reduces stress and anxiety.
- Increases circulation, which also helps improve the supply of oxygen and nutrients throughout the body, and increases lymph circulation, which helps the immune system.
- Produces a long list of good brain and body chemicals, including endorphins, serotonin and interleukins, and improves mood.
- Boosts energy and diminishes pain.

Another study estimates that the chemicals manufactured by the body during one hearty laughing session are worth roughly \$10,000 if you purchase the same compounds from a laboratory or pharmacy. Since your body produces the chemicals for free, it's clear that laughing more is a good investment.

## Five Cool Apps to Make Your iPad Jump

Think you can resist the newly released iPad? The following apps just might change your mind:

- 1. Entertainment on the Go:** iPad has an impressive lineup of vendors for streaming video, audio and the latest books.
- 2. Dragon Dictation:** You will love this voice-enabled speech recognition app. Simply speak, and then it writes the text for you.

- 3. Voice Memos:** Transform your iPad into an instant recorder and eliminate one more electronic gadget from your arsenal.

- 4. iWork:** Need a word processor, presentation and spreadsheet application that is streamlined yet productive? Try the iWork suite.

- 5. Fairy Tale:** The new Fairy Tale iPad app encourages the love of reading with spectacular effects.

## Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

**I'm thinking of buying my first home. What extra expenses should I factor in to the total cost?**

**Moving Expenses:** Truck rentals, time off of work and, of course, - gasoline ... moving takes money whether you do it yourself or pay others to do it for you so plan accordingly.

**Maintenance:** From lawn care to fixing a door knob, owning your own home involves maintenance. Don't be caught by surprise because this is one area where expenses can add up fast. Set aside funds for a lawn service and pool maintenance, or plan to purchase the tools required to do it yourself, including lawnmowers, garden and hand tools plus other general maintenance items.

**Utilities & Communication:** New home buyers are frequently surprised by the cost of utilities since many apartments include basics like cable, trash, or water. Set aside enough funds for deposits and the first payment for utilities, phone, cable and other necessities.



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## **A Marketing Plan With Free Professional Home Staging? Covenant Realty Corporation**

**The key to selling a home is first, price. After price, presentation is a close second. For many homeowners, they have heard of staging, but they don't know too much about it and it is probably too expensive, right? You have enough expenses to handle to get the house ready for its big day. Professional home stagers are practiced in the art of preparing a home for resale. They work with the "flow" of a home, eliminate clutter, edit and arrange furniture, and even assist in enhancing curb-appeal. With the aid of a professional home stager, your house can make a notable first impression on potential homebuyers.**

**For a limited time Covenant Realty Corporation is offering to pick up the tab for the first two months of the professional staging fee (an average savings of \$1,500). When you compliment that with professional photography, a home that is priced correctly through a comparative market analysis, print advertising as well as your home being syndicated over 35 of the most popular computer real estate networks, you're going to give your home the best opportunity for a high priced sale.**

*Full Service, Full Time, For Your Peace Of Mind - Covenant Realty Corporation*