

# Best Suburbs

Johnson  
DEVELOPMENT

## NEW HOME BUYER'S GUIDE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION



Interest rates are near historic lows.





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# What To Know: Mortgages

*Interest rates are historically low, which is good news for those thinking of upgrading their current home or making the leap into home ownership. Luckily, much of the work in locating your dream home can be done online. Before you start browsing, here's a little more intel to further you along the path to homeownership.*

## Which Loan Is Best for Me?

Homebuyers have plenty of loan options, including those that don't require a 20 percent down payment. Here are a few choices:

- **Conventional, fixed-rate mortgages** are available in 10-, 15-, 20-, 30- and 40-year terms, but 15-year and 30-year mortgages are most common. Typical down payment is 20 percent without the need for mortgage insurance. However, some programs with a lower down payment are available.
- **Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM) loans** have an interest rate that changes throughout the life of the loan. This is more popular when buyers think interest rates will go down.
- **FHA loans** are insured by the Federal Housing Administration and permit down payments as low as 3.5 percent. Borrowers must have a credit score of around 580 or higher. Check to find out the loan limit in your county.
- **VA loans** are for veterans of the U.S. armed forces and are guaranteed by the Department of Veterans Affairs and sometimes require no down payment at all.

More exotic loans such as a combination loan, balloon mortgage (pay only interest for a specified time and then the principal amount all at once) and jumbo loans for more expensive home purchases also are available.

### *Lower interest rates mean more savings*

*Each 1% decrease in the mortgage rate can mean tens of thousands in savings over the course of the loan, giving buyers extra money to add in that outdoor kitchen and still have a lower mortgage payment.*



Lower interest rates mean you can buy more home **OR** — if buying a new home — can possibly even spend more at the design center to customize the home to your own style and family.





Lower interest rates coupled with builder incentives can make a new home even more affordable. Builders sometimes offer a variety of money-saving options, including reductions in closing costs, design center credit and more. These incentives are typically for a limited time. Check the community and/or builder websites or speak to a builder sales representative for more information.



## Why Rent?

**For a \$300,000 Home**

**Money Down \$10,500**  
w/ FHA Loan

**Monthly Pymt \$1,253**  
(Taxes not included)  
at 3.2% interest rate

\*This information is provided as a resource. Taxes, Insurance and HOA fees not included.





# Benefits of Living in a Master-Planned Community

In the past, neighborhoods were built with only that particular subdivision in mind. Little to no thought was given to the surrounding area, which means any grocery stores, schools, parks, shopping and other area amenities were usually built with no thought between them. Conversely, master-planned communities are thoughtfully planned in advance for a more cohesive design that contributes to ease of living.

There are many benefits to master-planned communities:

- **Convenience.** Often master-planned communities are located close enough to large metropolitan areas to allow residents to work in the city while living in a suburb that allows for plentiful open spaces.
- **Resort-style amenities.** Many master-planned communities offer high-end amenities like waterparks and ways to connect with nature such as walking/jogging/biking trails, playgrounds and more.
- **Schools.** Land developers work with school districts for future planning of schools — often these communities are served by the region's more desirable schools.
- **Stabilized values.** Homeowner associations help preserve property values since homeowners must keep their homes in good condition by adhering to certain guidelines set by the community.
- **Quality builders.** Homebuilders in master-planned communities are purposefully selected, which can translate to quality construction from national builders with years of experience.

## A Way of Life Like Nowhere Else

In Johnson Development communities, you'll find lifestyle coordinators who are the "Directors of Fun" planning festivals, cooking classes, casino nights, kid activities and outings. Our Directors of Fun plan a full calendar of events for all ages, helping you meet others in the neighborhood — you soon may find yourself gathering for play dates in the park, sipping wine at the fire pit, lounging by the pool or enjoying backyard barbecues. Because your life's journey should be a celebration.

*We want to help make that happen.*



From townhomes to luxury estate homes and everything in between, our incredible communities offer housing styles for every age and stage of your life.





## Designing Your Home, Your Way

When building a new home, most homebuilders offer a consultation at a design center. Select your perfect brick, flooring, paint and other options that would have been a costly renovation in an older home.



# 10 Benefits of Buying New Construction vs. Resale

*One way to help cut through the clutter of the vast array of home choices is to think about why new construction is better than buying a previously owned home. Here are just a few reasons:*

## 1. More Control Over Design

While you can certainly renovate an older home, the process tends to be laborious and costly. Even with a generous budget, you may still find your options limited for what you can add, remove or modify. With a home that is newly built, you won't lack for options. You can work with your builder to customize a floor plan and finishes to your needs so your new home is one that feels perfect just for you.

## 2. Save Money in the Long Term

You can escape the hassle and expense of maintaining an older home when you buy new. The older the home, the more you can expect to spend every year on keeping it well-maintained, from roof repairs to replacing appliances like air conditioning units and hot water heaters. Home insurance typically costs more for older houses, as well. New homes are also more energy-efficient because of new appliances, windows and insulation, which will make a big difference to your monthly utility bill.

## 3. Newer Construction Is Likely Safer Construction

From the latest circuit breakers to roofs with radiant barriers and the newest paint and finishes, newer homes typically offer enhanced safety features.

## 4. Modern Conveniences Come with the Home

One of the first things people say when they move from an old home into a new construction is how relieved they are to finally have a modern shower, windows, lights, smart home technology, etc. Imagine the benefits and the modern conveniences of having everything new.

## 5. The Right Size Home For You

If you've been in your current home for some time, it's likely it has become too small or too large for your current needs — and the configuration could be all wrong. Families with young children might want play areas within sight. Teens, however, likely prefer a place they can claim as their own. It can be difficult to find an existing home that is exactly the right size for you, which is one reason why many prefer to build their dream home.



## 6. Peace of Mind That Comes from Warranties

New homes aren't impervious to problems, but at least you know that many potential issues would be covered by your home warranty. You can't say that about most older homes, unless you purchase a third-party warranty on top of the price of the home. Also, most third-party warranties won't cover as much as a builder's warranty, which is why you have to be careful about checking your contract.

## 7. Access to Nearby Amenities

Many homeowners move to a new home because they want to live in a community that offers numerous opportunities for relaxation with amenities like pools, parks, playgrounds, walking paths and lakes for fishing. Nearby amenities are also a fantastic way of bringing friends and family to visit.

## 8. Streaming at Lightning Speed

New homes often feature enhanced structured wiring with Cat-5 or Cat-6 cables and RG6 coaxial cables, all of which allow for faster internet speeds and can accommodate multiple systems — telephone, audio equipment, cable television, home security, home computer networks and internet access. As more people work from home, this is an important feature.

## 9. You Can Ask the Builder for References

With a new home, you can often get references from those who bought from the same builder who can tell you what they think about their decision — a big advantage.

## 10. Talk to Your (Soon-to-Be) Neighbors

Active master-planned communities have loads of new construction homes, which often means many residents are new to the community and eager to meet their neighbors. If you want to know what life is like here, all you have to do is ask them!

*The benefits seem endless with a new home*

If you're ready to end the house-hunting process and want to enjoy all 10 of the benefits listed above, consider buying a new home in a Johnson community. We offer a wide range of brand-new homes and communities with resort-quality amenities, abundant natural surroundings, on-site schools, everyday conveniences just around the corner and an active and vibrant lifestyle. To learn more, visit [NewHomesBestSuburbs.com](http://NewHomesBestSuburbs.com).



## High-Tech Home Solutions

Many homebuilders offer options for connectivity, and most new construction homes offer built-in smart home features, energy-efficient products, and other upgrades.





There are big decisions and then there are really big decisions when buying a home. For parents, the biggest might be picking the right school for their child.



# Choose the Right School

*For parents of older children, a child's interests can go a long way in selecting the right school. Is your child obsessed with swimming? Not all school districts have a natatorium, so that could help narrow your search. Is your child meant for the stage? You'll want to look for a strong theater arts program. For those with younger children — or who are hoping to have children — you don't have the luxury of knowing if you have a natural athlete or a future scientist. You're going to have to dig deeper.*

## 1. District and School Websites

A school district's website is a natural place to begin. There, you'll not only find useful, how-to information, but you can learn about the district's vision, bond programs and points of pride. From there, move to the school's website where you can see types of classes offered, clubs and organizations, links to parent organization websites and staff emails if you have a question.

## 2. Social Media

Most school districts and schools have active social media pages, with two of the most popular being Facebook and Twitter. See what they post and read the comments — this will help you measure the school's or district's "personality."

## 3. More Online Research

The Texas Education Agency website is a treasure trove of information. But don't become too attached to an overall score. Dig deeper to see how grades performed on various state-mandated tests. Great Schools.org is another website chockful of ratings and insights and you can check local news sites, as well.

## 4. Visit the School

Ask to tour the school you're considering. Ask about the school's approach to learning as well as technology and students' access to it. Also ask about how parent-teacher organizations support teachers and students.

## 5. Ask Around

If you have friends in the area with school-aged children, they will probably have information regarding a school's reputation. Don't know anyone? If you're working with a real estate agent, you're in luck — they are typically well schooled in the strengths and weaknesses of area schools.



# So You're Relocating to Texas

*Relocating to the Lone Star State? You aren't alone. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's latest population estimates, Texas is growing at a rate of 1,000 people per day. Why? Inexpensive homes., no state income tax and the best barbecue in the nation (just because it's our opinion doesn't mean it isn't true). What should you know before moving? Just a few things.*

## 1. Homes are Affordable

Compared to most cities, homes in Texas are affordable and you get a lot for your money — more square footage, better schools and master-planned communities filled with resort-style amenities.

In Houston, the median listing home price is \$289,900 while in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, the median price is approximately \$256,000. The median home price in Austin is \$401,999 but it's possible to find new homes for less in many Austin-area suburbs.

## 2. Texas is Tax-Friendly

Texans don't pay state income tax on their personal income. That means more money for other expenses and a lot less paperwork when April 15 rolls around.

## 3. Commuting is a Part of Life

Texas is only second to Alaska in size, and it is the largest of the contiguous 48 states, so commuting is a part of life. It's not as bad as you think, though. Many master-planned communities are located less than 30 minutes from major employment centers.

## 4. Be Prepared to Live Outdoors

If you love the outdoors, Texas is chock full of state and national parks. Hiking, camping and boating are all popular activities. If you love the beach, Galveston is a great vacation spot. The Texas Hill Country is great for hiking. Cities like Houston are full of green spaces. Even the suburbs offer lakes, trails, green spaces and parks.

## 5. Texans Are Very Friendly

Texans are friendly, welcoming and warm. They are ready to make you feel at home so don't be surprised if the entire neighborhood welcomes you with cookies, cakes and pies. No matter where you live, you'll be greeted with a "Howdy" and a smile.





## *If you're downsizing*

Two things you have to do when downsizing — decluttering and shedding possessions — can be done simultaneously. Here are a few helpful tips:

- Take photos of your current home — it will not only preserve memories but could help you identify what you want to keep.
- Keep things you want, use, need or like to look at.
- Don't over-save for the next generation. Go ahead and gift some of your legacy pieces.
- Lots of photo bulky photo albums? Digitize them.
- Take only the favorites from your collections.
- Don't move anything that doesn't have a designated space in your new home.
- Get rid of duplicates. Only make yes or no piles — no maybes.

# Downsizing & Retiring in the Suburbs

When retiring, people consider changing their home for many reasons — the kids have moved out and they don't need as much space, they want to live in a particular area or maybe their financial situation has changed. Whatever the reason, some big things need to be done before you can make the move.

## 1. Prep Your Current Home for Resale

If you are planning to sell your current home, you may have some work to do — particularly if you've been in your home for many years. The first thing experts recommend is decluttering, which is something you'll have to do anyway if you're making the move to a smaller home. You also want to de-personalize — take down family photos and box up personal items.

## 2. Brighten Up Your Home

Investing in a major upgrade for your existing home might not be the best idea. Instead, why not use that money as an allowance for the new buyer to make renovations suited to their style? That doesn't mean you shouldn't do any fixes, however. Neutralize and lighten any dark paint to be in line with current trends, tidy up the yard and plant flowers, and change out light bulbs to LED to brighten rooms. If a project is going to cost only a few hundred dollars and only takes a weekend to complete, go ahead and do it — buyers don't want to be faced with a multitude of items that need to be repaired before or as soon as they've moved in.

Some people prefer to have their home inspected before it's listed — then there are fewer surprises that may delay the sale of your home. Find out what's wrong now and either fix it or adjust the price of your home.

## 3. Find a Real Estate Agent

You could sell your home and buy your home without a real estate agent, but why? Realtors understand the paperwork and the buying process. They have invaluable information about local neighborhoods and communities. And they understand the current housing market and can negotiate the best price for your home.

When choosing your Realtor, make sure to talk to more than one; not only will this help you choose someone who best matches your personality, but also who would be more knowledgeable about selling your home and helping you find your new home. Some homeowners may



be wary of downsizing, thinking they are sacrificing luxury. A real estate agent will know which communities offer well-appointed, smaller homes with designer features.

Ask your prospective Realtor how much they would price your home — those that give you similar pricing are probably in the right range. An agent who says they would list your home for much higher may just be trying to get your business with an over-inflated price.

#### 4. Decide Where to Move

As with any home purchase, you're not just buying a house — you're buying a community. When choosing where your next home should be, take a serious look at your lifestyle.

Are you over 55? You may want a community that offers a lock-and-leave lifestyle such as Bonterra at Woodforest, Bonterra at Cross Creek Ranch, Del Webb in Trinity Falls and Elements at Viridian. Is walking your main form of exercise? Grand Central Park has miles of authentic natural trails. Do you envision an active social life? Look for a community that has a packed calendar of activities for all ages. Matching your community to your lifestyle will have you enjoying your new home more than ever.

#### 5. Life in Your New Home

One final tip — after you've successfully transitioned into a new home, only taking the things that give you joy and fit into your new space — make sure to keep it that way with a one-in, one-out policy. It will help closets, cabinets and drawers from overflowing.







## *Oh, the cyclical stages of life.*

First, you have the carefree lifestyle of youth and can possibly choose to live wherever you want. For many, marriage and children come next and finding the right school district factors into your home buying decision. Then, you find yourself an empty nester, but proximity to your job dictates where you live. But retirement? You're once again carefree and can choose a home location. The suburbs are well worth the consideration. Here's why:

### **1. Suburbs are Often Less Expensive**

If you're used to living in the city, the first thing you'll notice is the cost of homes is probably much less — potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars less for the size of home you're currently living in. And if you — like many retirees — are downsizing from your current home, the price continues along the downward path. Also, those buying new find that the enhanced energy efficiency of a new home leads to lower utility payments and no costly appliance repairs.

In addition, many times home and auto insurance policies can be lower in suburban counties.

### **2. Access to Healthcare**

Excellent healthcare isn't limited to big cities — many suburbs boast highly regarded hospitals that are often affiliated with facilities found in town. Plus, most doctors have satellite offices in the suburbs. It's comforting for many to know that if an emergency arises, excellent care is nearby.

### **3. A Safer Environment**

Suburbs are by no means crime-free, but they tend to be much safer than living in the city. Property crime is often significantly lower in the suburbs than in major cities and instances of violent crime in the suburbs are usually a fraction of what is reported in the city.

### **4. There's Plenty to Do**

Whether you like browsing art galleries, visiting a museum or attending a play, you'll find plenty of choices in the suburbs — and it's not all community theater or local orchestras. The Smart Financial Centre in Sugar Land has played host to Willie Nelson, comedian Ron White, John Legend and others. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion in north Houston is one of the area's major venues, with performances by the Houston Symphony, Jimmy Buffett, the Zac Brown Band and other

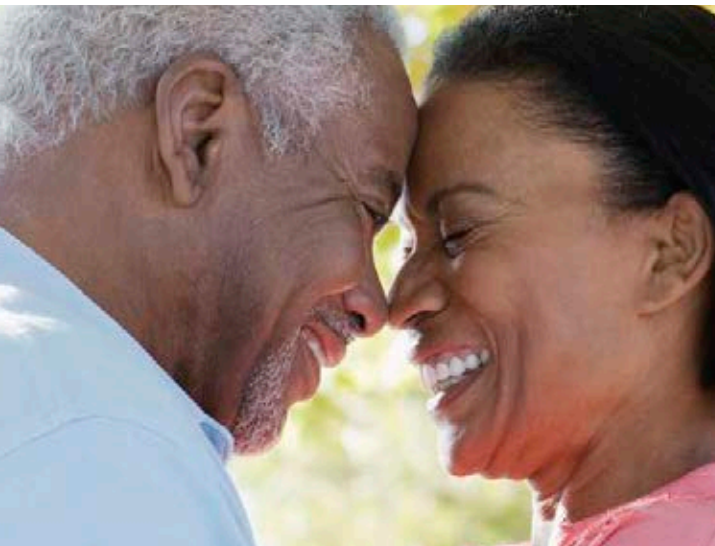


popular acts. Trinity Falls is minutes from shopping, dining, festivals and entertainment in historic downtown McKinney. And for those drawn to city centers, Viridian in Arlington is only 20 minutes from both downtown Dallas and downtown Fort Worth, which means attending a Dallas Symphony Orchestra concert at Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center or seeing a Broadway show at Bass Performance Hall is a short drive away. Viridian's location is also popular with sports enthusiasts who don't have far to travel to see the Dallas Cowboys or Texas Rangers play.

## 5. A Lifestyle for You

Not all suburbs or master-planned communities within a suburb are created equal. Look for one that has activities for residents of all ages — not just Easter egg hunts and Halloween festivals for the kids.

Are there adult-only evenings and parties? Wine tastings? Tennis or other sports leagues? Also, is there access to fitness activities you might enjoy — trails for walking or perhaps a lap pool for low-impact swimming? Dog owners know that a dog park replaces the playground for meeting your neighbors.



### *Just for Those 55 and Up*

Some communities — including four by Johnson Development — have neighborhoods specifically for people age 55 and older. Homes are all one-story with age-friendly modifications and lifestyle directors plan events just for those residents. These active-adult communities also have clubhouses, pools, sports courts and other amenities just for people who live there.

## 6. It's Where the Grandchildren are

While retirees can find lots to like in the suburbs, so do young families. That's why so many choose to raise their children there. So perhaps the biggest draw of a suburb is seeing your grandkids more and building a stronger bond with them.

***Do your research and you'll see it's easy to make life shine in the suburbs.***







# Johnson DEVELOPMENT

**HOUSTON • AUSTIN • DALLAS • ATLANTA**



## About the Developer

Established in 1975, Johnson Development, an award-winning residential and commercial land developer, has earned a reputation for vibrant, responsible development and innovative master planning. To date, Johnson Development has been involved in more than 100 projects and has *more top-selling communities* than any other developer in the nation since 2014.

CREATING ENVIRONMENTS *that celebrate life!* | [JOHNSONDEVELOPMENT.COM](http://JOHNSONDEVELOPMENT.COM)