

— A FIELD CHECKLIST YOU CAN CARRY

Look Closer.

25 things to check before you fall in love with a new-home community.

A model home and a good afternoon can sell almost anyone. This is a calm, simple list to slow you down and help you notice what matters — while you are still standing there. Take it on your phone or print it, tick the boxes as you go, and finish your visit with fewer surprises later.

What you can see in person is often exactly what a website won't show you.

HOW TO USE IT **Tap or check** each box as you go. **Photograph** anything you'll want to remember.

Write down the questions that get vague answers.

01 Start with the drive

how you'll actually live here begins at the highway exit

- ☐ **1 Drive the real commute.** Take the route you'll actually use to work, school, and errands — at the hour you'll actually take it.
- ☐ **2 Come back at a different time of day.** A community feels different on a Saturday morning than at 5 p.m. on a weekday.
- ☐ **3 Notice what surrounds it.** Look at nearby roads, commercial or industrial land, and anything a map won't show — an odor, a rail line, a substation.

02 Read the edges

the perimeter tells you more than the entrance

- ☐ **4 Listen for highway noise.** Stand quietly on a lot, not just at the front gate — can you hear traffic from where a home would sit?
- ☐ **5 See what's across the street.** The view out the front matters as much as the home behind you.
- ☐ **6 Ask what backs each lot.** A greenbelt, a fence line, a busy road, or the back wall of another home are very different neighbors.
- ☐ **7 Ask about the empty land nearby.** Find out who owns it and what's planned — today's open field is often tomorrow's rooftops or road.

03 Walk an ordinary street

the model is the best face — go find the everyday one

- ☐ **8 Walk a lived-in street** away from the model, where ordinary homes are already occupied.
- ☐ **9 Check the lot spacing.** Notice how close the neighbor's windows are to where yours would be.
- ☐ **10 Look at the trees.** Mature shade takes years — newly planted saplings won't cool a yard for a long time.
- ☐ **11 Follow the sidewalks.** See whether they connect through the neighborhood or simply stop where a phase ends.
- ☐ **12 See where everyone parks.** Driveways, streets, or overflow you'd be living beside — it shows on an ordinary evening.
- ☐ **13 Look at drainage and grading.** Note low lots, retention ponds, and where water would go after a heavy storm.
- ☐ **14 Gauge the construction disruption.** Notice how many homes are actively being built near the ones for sale, and for how long that may last.

04 Ask what's still coming

a community is a moving target — record the plan

- ☐ **15 Sort amenities built from promised.** Ask which pool, park, or trail is finished today versus painted on a "coming soon" sign.
- ☐ **16 Ask what's still unbuilt.** Find the future phases and empty pads, and ask where their traffic will route.
- ☐ **17 Photograph any dated "coming soon" sign.** A promise with a date on it is easy to check against later.

05 Look closely inside the model

the model is built to sell — know what's actually included

- ☐ **18 Separate upgrades from standard.** Ask which features in the model are included and which cost extra — the gap can be large.
- ☐ **19 Test the garage.** Picture two real cars plus storage — many "two-car" garages are tighter than they look.
- ☐ **20 Get the standard-features list in writing.** Ask for what comes with your build, not just what's shown in the decorated model.

06 Understand the real monthly cost

the sticker price is only part of the picture

- ☐ **21 Ask for the total property tax rate** on a specific home — a real number, not "about two percent."
- ☐ **22 Ask about a MUD or PID district.** These special districts can add to your tax bill for years, so ask whether the community sits in one.
- ☐ **23 Ask the HOA dues and what they cover** — and, just as important, what they don't.
- ☐ **24 Read the incentive conditions.** Ask what lender, timeline, or price the offer is tied to, and get those terms in writing.

07 Before you leave

the follow-up questions are where clarity comes from

- ☐ **25 Write down the questions the representative couldn't answer.** An unanswered or changing answer isn't a red flag by itself — it's simply the thing worth following up on.

○ THE WHOLE IDEA

A website can be read in a minute. The sound of the highway from a back lot, the gap between the model and the street behind it, the answer that changed when you asked twice — none of that shows up online. That's why it's worth going to look closer, in person, before you decide.

Look Closer.

New Home Dispatch publishes independent **Community Field Reports** — firsthand, on-the-ground looks at new-home communities across Austin and Central Texas. If you'd like a second set of eyes before you commit, we can help. No pressure, no rush — just an honest read.

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