

MASSIVE HOME LOAN

How to hotspot without leaving your house

Even before stepping into a suburb there are some tried and tested methods to start recognising the desirable and undesirable areas, and with the rise of the internet the information has never been more accessible.

"It's so easy now, the best way for a buyer who isn't from the area would be to hop online and look at properties in their price range, and then when you go online it tells you what's near them. Google the maps, have a look at the street view," Century 21 Castle Hill principal and award-winning real estate agent, Jane Booty, advises.

"Sites like Residex and RP Data will give you a cheap report on the suburbs and they give you the breakdowns of the demographics and dynamics. Those reports are fabulous; the information can be hard for a buyer to collate otherwise."

Local papers can also be a fantastic source, not only for the articles that give a general feel for a locality, but also for the police reports and Council development notices.

"They will let you know what's going on around the area. Even if you don't live in the area then get hold of the local paper and start reading them for a few weeks as you will start to get an idea of where has a burglary or vandalism problem as the same streets and areas do tend to reappear," she says.

The majority of local newspapers are now available online.

Propertybuyer founder and buyers' agent Rich Harvey agrees that the specific location of the street within an area is crucially important to understand.

"To find the right street within the suburb is about looking for general appeal, its proximity to shops and how close it is to the 'highlights' in the suburb," Mr Harvey explains.

These highlights can be anything from the big Westfield the suburb holds, a preferred community hub or a prestigious café strip.

When these items have been identified, Mr Harvey recommends using 'Walk Score', an online algorithm that simply gives the address a rating from 0 to 100 based on how close it is to selected facilities.

According to an independent study from CEOs for Cities, one Walk Score point is worth \$3,000 of perceived house value.

"Walk Score should be one of the first things you look at," Mr Harvey says. This is because being a quick walk to shopping centres, transport hubs and cafés is often a decisive factor for prospective buyers and tenants looking at the properties in the area.

Quick 'from-home' resources for investors:

- + Residex reports
- + RP Data statistics
- + Google Maps/Street View
- + Council website
- + Local paper
- + Business chamber website
- + 'Walk Score'

People to call:

- + Pest inspectors
- + Real estate agents
- + Property managers
- + Council members
- + Buyer's agents