Is the **Neighbourhood as Ideal as it Appears?**

You've probably heard the saying, "First impressions can be deceiving." That can be true, especially when you're looking for a new home.

If you're exploring potential neighbourhoods to target with your home search, a quick drive around the area can be revealing. You can discover a lot about the character of the community.

However, if you're seriously considering buying a home in a particular neighbourhood, you should find out if it's as ideal as it appears through the dashboard window. One way to do that is to park the car and walk around. Explore the streets and pathways. Get a "shoes on the ground" perspective. If the opportunity arises, chat with a homeowner.

Another way is to access data on the area. In most cases, you can find details such as owner-to-renter ratio, noise rating, and more. You can also determine if any planned local development might impact your lifestyle in the future.

And, don't forget about those characteristics you can't see at

first glance but might have a big impact. For example, if you plan to take transit to work, you don't want to find out, after you move in, that the nearest transit stop is a 20-minute walk away!

Chances are your first impression of a neighbourhood is correct. But, take the time to find out for sure.

Dealing with **Information Overload**

If you have a question and search the internet, what happens? Do you struggle to find enough information? Probably not! It's usually just the opposite! You're inundated with *too much* information.

So, what should you do if you want specific answers and not an avalanche of data?

Take real estate as an example.

Say you want to know the state of the housing market. If you searched that topic on Google, you'd be mired in news reports, statistics, and opinions. You'd be overwhelmed when all you wanted to do was figure out if this is a good time to sell your home!

A much better approach is to start by understanding what specific information you need to make the best decision. If you're thinking of selling your home, you'll want to know a few simple things:

- What is the local (neighbourhood) real estate scene like right now?
- What will your home likely sell for if it were listed today?
- Will you qualify to buy the kind of new home you want in a neighbourhood you desire?

Drilling down to those essential questions would give you the information you need.

Get those answers, and you'll gain clarity.

Is our **Home Ready** for its Close-Up?

Some actors in the movie industry dread closeups. They know their face will fill the screen, causing every blemish, however minor, to be noticeable.

In a way, the same is true of a home for sale. If it were an actor, it might also shy away from close scrutiny.

For example, imagine viewing a listed home, strolling into the beautifully staged kitchen, and being impressed. But then, as you inspect the kitchen more closely, you notice that the cabinets have several worn and stained areas. That might alter your initial impression of the room — at least, to some extent.

So, when you stage your home for a sale, it's important to consider details buyers are likely to look at more closely. Those include:

- Kitchen cabinets and countertops.
- Kitchen and bathroom sinks.
- En suite washroom. (Often closely scrutinized.)
- Foyer area (where the initial impression is made!)
- Closets and other storage areas. (Buyers are interested in capacity.)
- Internet access capabilities. (A modem with the "connected" light on.)
- Windows that need cleaning.
- Maintenance concerns, such as a dripping faucet.

- Noticeably aged features that will need to be replaced soon, such as 20-year old carpeting.

In most cases, when buyers see a home, they form most of their opinion based on a macro view. They walk into each room. They imagine how their furniture will fit. They decide what they like and don't like. So, "big picture" staging is essential.

But, don't forget the little things. Buyers will look at specific features more closely. Be sure to take that reality into account. Always make sure your home is ready for its wide shot *and* its close-up!