

REAL ESTATE

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Why Nosy Neighbors are Welcome at Open Houses

Have you ever seen a notice for a Sunday open house in your neighborhood...wanted and planned to attend... and then – at the last minute – stayed away because you didn't want the owner to think of you as a nosy neighbor?

Or if you got past that hurdle, have you ever tried to sneak through the open house unnoticed, blending into the crowd, declining to sign the register and avoiding eye contact with the real estate agent hosting the event because you felt you were not there for a legitimate purpose?

Or once upstairs in the master bathroom, have you ever felt uneasy when you bumped into six other people you know – all, like you, checking out your neighbor's house?

If you have, you're not alone. These feelings and behaviors are actually quite common. But there's really no need to be hesitant about visiting a neighbor's open house, or to be apologetic or embarrassed or to act in a clandestine manner once you get there. That's because owners and agents alike want and expect neighbors to visit. In fact, smart agents encourage it, and make it a practice to invite neighbors to their open house events.

Why? First of all, neighbors often know people who would like to live near them, and who may be interested in buying the property being showcased at the open house. These potential buyers sometimes are people who are not actively looking and might otherwise never be aware of the opportunity.

Neighbors can also be great salespersons for open house properties. I recently

heard an anecdote about a "nosy neighbor" whom one of the most successful agents in town credits with bringing about the sale of a home that she had listed.

The neighbor reportedly struck up a conversation with interested buyers at an open house and proceeded to convince them of the home's superiority versus similarly-priced properties nearby. She offered her opinion about the home's desirability in terms of location, school district, neighborhood demographics and personality, as well as other factors that the agent either would not have known or ethically would not have been at liberty to articulate. The result was an accepted offer on the property the very next day.

A more obvious reason why real estate agents welcome neighbors at open houses is that they're always looking to meet prospective future buyers and sellers. Open houses are the perfect low-pressure forum for accomplishing this. Yes, you may find yourself added to an agent's mailing list afterwards, but that's not such a bad thing. Good agents' mailings typically contain useful market information or other home buying or selling tips that will be of interest to you.

Also, attending open houses on a regular basis will make you more educated and knowledgeable about local real estate market conditions. Agents appreciate this most of all, because market-savvy buyers and sellers are the best kind of clients to work with.

A final reason for welcoming neighbors at open houses is that seeing what's on the market sometimes unexpectedly prompts people to take action. To upsize. To downsize. To move to a different part of town. To trade in a stately colonial in a family neighborhood for a bold waterfront contemporary. Having the opportunity to become involved in your transaction is most definitely of interest to the

agents hosting open houses in your neighborhood!

The bottom line is that you are not wasting the agent's time or offending the owner when you attend an open house in your neighborhood – even though you may not be remotely close to being in the market for a new home, and your motivation may be pure curiosity. That's as legitimate a purpose as any for attending.

So don't hesitate to come out to see us on Sundays. Although the primary objective of holding an open house is to expose the property to as many people as possible in order to bring about a sale, a close second is to get to know you.

If we do our job right, maybe you won't mind if we do that.

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