

# real estate

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## SMART MOVES

### Don't rush the buying process

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After her father gave her \$20,000 toward a down payment, a professional writer of 28 was emboldened to buy her first home. Seizing the opportunity before prices rose further, she called a real estate agent and hastily arranged to tour property in a popular area.

Within hours, she'd signed a contract to buy a small one-level contemporary on a wooded cul-de-sac. But the property was a mismatch for the lifestyle of a single woman seeking an active social life. As it turned out, nearly all her neighbors were young families.

"It was crazy for this young lady to pick such a child-friendly neighborhood when her top priority was really to date and hang out with friends her age," says Merrill Ottwein, longtime real estate broker. "Far too many buyers see a house in isolation from the rest of their lives," he says.

Skylar Olsen, a senior economist for real estate data firm Zillow, sees signs that an increasing number of buyers in their 20s and early 30s are delaying a purchase until they can afford a place they'd keep for 10 years or longer.

Here are a few pointers for buyers:

#### Envision your future on paper.

Partners often differ on ideal housing choices. That's why Kiley says it's helpful for both to write down their respective visions and then seek to shape them into a single statement.

Written statements help people clarify their thinking and refine the details of their plans, as they move through successive drafts. They're also a way to help reconcile differing views.

"In my work, all the time I come across husbands and wives who start with different visions," Kiley says.

#### Carefully ponder the issues around commuting time.

As Ottwein says, one of the most wrenching tradeoffs many families face is between a larger, newer house with a longer commute and a smaller, older place that's closer to the city center and the workplace of one or both partners.

Homebuyers who consider an outer-tier suburb are often driven by the desire for a larger property or what they perceive to be better schools.

But before you opt for a distant suburb, Ottwein recommends you do morning and afternoon rush-hour test drives. This way, you'll know more precisely what sort of traffic to expect if you buy there.

#### Don't automatically assume a large yard is essential for kids.

Many people with young children hang on tightly to the hope that their offspring will have a large backyard where they can frolic. This aspiration can influence them to pick an outlying suburb at the expense of their convenience and commuting time.

But are the tradeoffs necessary to acquire a large piece of land worth it? Not necessary, says Ottwein, noting that today's children often spend much more time in organized athletic and recreational activities than did their parents.

#### Give yourself the comfort of a deliberative home search.

These days, those seeking to own a home in a popular neighborhood can face fierce competition. They feel pressured to act quickly, lest they lose out to a rival. Because of that, many buyers take regrettable shortcuts -- often rushing into a purchase without analyzing whether the property they've picked truly matches their lifestyle.

But because so much is at stake, Ottwein urges buyers to slow the process down or face the prospect of a taking a wrong turn.

"Some buyers get hyped by a hot market. These are people who want to win at any cost. But you don't want to look back one day to realize that you've won the battle but lost the war," he says.

## GIVE THE GREEN HOME TOUR A GO



The 2,238 square-foot ranch house in north Durham's horse country was built by M Squared Builders to the Silver level of National Green Building Standards. The green kitchen has KCMA certified cabinets which are resource efficient and provide better indoor air quality.

Story by Sally Keeney // Photos Contributed

Whether you're looking at a Green ranch house in north Durham's horse country or a Green cottage with soaring ceilings near Eastwood Lake in Chapel Hill, when you take the 2017 Green Home Tour you'll find beautiful designs and comfortable homes.

"We're very proud of the diverse collection of high performance homes on tour this year," Rebecca R. Newsome, chair of the Green Tour Committee, said. "Our 22 participating builders have worked diligently to provide excellent examples of high performance building practices and products. Building professionals in each tour home are looking forward to answering questions and pointing out high performance features."

Of the 30 homes on tour, 17 are for sale in different towns and counties and built in a variety of traditional styles -- from Arts and Crafts to hip-roofed bungalow and steep-pitched two-story. There are four modernist custom homes by three different builders in Mebane, Carrboro and Hillsborough to inspire those who dream of building a contemporary.

The tour, which is free, self-guided and open to the public, will take place Saturdays and Sundays the last weekend of April and first weekend in May from noon to 5 p.m. Homes are throughout Durham, Orange, Chatham and Wake counties with one home in Granville County and a quadruplex in Person County.

There are two cohousing communities -- Elderberry Retirement Village in Rougemont and Durham Central Park Cohousing Community in downtown Durham. Both will be showcasing Green construction and/or energy-efficient designs and products. Both are also participating in the National Cohousing Open House Saturday, April 29, along with four other cohousing communities in Durham, Chapel Hill and Carrboro (see inset). Both Elderberry built by M Squared Builders, and Durham Coho built by Vickers Ventures LLC, have a unit for sale.

For 12 years, the Green Home Tour

### A visit is worth a thousand words

**National Cohousing Open House** Saturday, April 29 (Hours Vary)

Cohousing communities across the country are welcoming the public for tours and visits. Attend this free event that celebrates the rewards of living in collaborative, intentional neighborhoods.

**Elderberry Cohousing**, 60 Elderberry Lane, Rougemont, NC Noon - 5 pm [elderberrycohousing.com](http://elderberrycohousing.com)

**Pacifico Cohousing**, 141 Viburnum Way, Carrboro [pacificooutreachcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:pacificooutreachcommittee@gmail.com)

**Arcadia Cohousing**, Common House at 134 Circadian Way, Chapel Hill Noon-5 pm [arcadiacohousing.com](http://arcadiacohousing.com)

**Solterra, Common House** at 98 Solterra Way, Durham 10 am - 2 pm [Solterra.net](http://Solterra.net)

**Eno Commons Cohousing Neighborhood**, 1 Indigo Creek Trail, Durham 2 - 5 pm [enocommons.org](http://enocommons.org)

**Durham Central Park Cohousing Community**, 130 Hunt Street, Durham 10 am-2 pm (Parking across the street in the Senior Center lot) [durhamcoho.com](http://durhamcoho.com)

**3 forming communities** will have tables at Durham Central Park Cohousing Community.

**Intown Neighborhood Place** [jimmccrae@earthlink.net](mailto:jimmccrae@earthlink.net)

**Raleigh Cohousing** [raleigh-cohousing.com](http://raleigh-cohousing.com)

**Village Hearth Cohousing** [villagehearthcohousing.com](http://villagehearthcohousing.com)

For more information go online to [cohousing.org/openhouse2017](http://cohousing.org/openhouse2017).

has focused on homes built to National Green Building Standard (NGBS) and LEED for Homes certifications. This year, 10 homes built to ENERGY STAR® certifications and 10 others built to EcoSelect certifications have been added to the Green Home Tour. Homes built to Energy Star and EcoSelect certifications are focused primarily on energy efficiency and represent the key first steps to constructing a high-performance home, Michele Myers said.

Myers, president of M Squared Builders and Designers since 1996, is a founding member of the Green Home Builders of the Triangle and served as chair over the past two years as the group refocused its efforts and changed its name to the High Performance Building Council of the Triangle.

High-performance homes are designed and constructed to be more durable and require less maintenance, have lower monthly operating costs -- 30 percent lower on average -- and help residents breathe and sleep better, Joe Norwood writes in the 2017 Green Home Tour booklets. Norwood is Education Chair of the High

Performance Building Council of the Triangle.

"Our council is trying to engage and reward builders in both the Energy Star and EcoSelect programs and show them the way to comprehensive NGBS certifications," Myers said. "I really do believe our customers want energy efficient homes that are also more environmentally friendly than a home built to (State) code-minimum standards.

Myers has two entries in this year's tour: a quadruplex certified NGBS Silver and Energy Star at Elderberry Retirement Village which includes a "tiny" unit (325 square feet); and an Active/Passive solar farmhouse on the old Hester Farm in North Durham County that is currently NGBS Silver and will be NGBS Gold and Energy Star certified.

Green Home Tour guidebooks are available at all area Whole Foods and Harris Teeter stores, HBA offices and area Realtor Association offices. For more information about the tour, go to [trianglegreenhometour.com](http://trianglegreenhometour.com).