



The Ultimate Relocation Guide: The Things Buyers Don't Expect

...And Many Agents Just Don't Think About

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Your Puget Sound Real Estate Experts



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1. Preface

So, it looks like we might be neighbors pretty soon! There's nothing we like better than introducing someone to the Puget Sound region!

It can be tough finding the perfect combination of town, neighborhood, and house that you like whenever you move. But it can be even tougher when you aren't all that familiar with the area. We pride ourselves on helping people make the best decision possible in the short time they have to get the lay of the land when they relocate here.

With that said, this booklet isn't going to be fluffy "welcome to the area" information — like what the best ice cream places, restaurants, and things to do are. (But we'll be glad to give you our insights and opinions on those things if you want!)

Nor does this jump right into focusing on how to find and get the best home at the best price for your wants and needs. While that is obviously a huge concern and part of the process for you, jumping right into the "fun stuff" can cause you some issues if you don't know about the things we will get into here.

This booklet is a deeper, in-between-the-lines look into some aspects of relocating that most buyers don't expect (and many agents just don't think about).

We hope this booklet will help you make as smooth a transition as possible!

2. Do You Have A “Relo Package”?

Not everyone moves to a new area due to a career change, but it’s a pretty common reason.

And when they do, there’s always a chance that the company they’re moving for will offer a “relocation package” — AKA “relo package” if you want to sound like this isn’t your first rodeo.

However, a relocation package isn’t offered to *everyone* who’s being asked to relocate for a job. So, this might not apply to you at all.

The thing is, in the excitement, some people rush right into starting their home search before knowing whether or not they *do* have a relo package... only to find out once they’ve already started the process and made some decisions. Doing this can lead to unexpected issues and, perhaps, a loss of the benefits the company is willing to offer.

So, if you’re moving to this area for a particular company and you don’t know whether or not you’re entitled to a relo package, make sure to ask the company and find out before moving forward any further.

Pro tip: If you do not have a relocation package, feel free to skip right past the next few pages and on to section 5!

3. You Don't Have To Use "Their Agent"

If you are offered a relo package, chances are good that the relocation company (and/or your employer) will more or less lead you to believe that you *have* to use one of their "approved" real estate agents to remain eligible for the benefits of the relocation package.

They'll typically give you three agents, from different companies, to choose from. In this respect, they do give you *some* choice.

They claim the agents are "certified" or trained in relocation practices... but that could simply be a few hours of in-class or online training. While the agents they recommend are "approved" by them, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're the best agents to choose from. (It also doesn't necessarily mean that the agents they refer to you *aren't* great agents.) It mostly just means that the agents they are recommending are in their system and have agreed to pay a referral fee back to the relocation company.

A great agent isn't just someone who will drive you around, give you a tour, open the door to a bunch of houses, and help you find a home you like. There's a lot more to the process, and especially so when you are relocating. So make sure to find someone who's knowledgeable, skilled, and who will represent your best interests in every aspect.

Our best recommendation is for you to do your research and choose the agent *you* want to represent you throughout the process. If the agent you find and choose isn't already approved by the relocation company, they can usually get approved by simply making a phone call or two and filling out some paperwork.

4. Benefits Aren't Always Beneficial

One last segment on relocation packages...

Getting offered a relocation package seems like a pretty sweet deal to most people, and they just sign on the dotted line before truly reading through the entire agreement and understanding exactly what the benefits (and costs) are.

Costs aren't necessarily monetary. After all, on the surface, a relocation package seems to be *giving* you monetary benefits, like (perhaps) covering the cost of movers, hotel stays, food, incidentals, and flights. But relocation packages differ. They don't *all* offer extensive benefits. And the costs to you can be subtle and only realized once you've already signed the agreement and are in the middle of the process.

While the "costs" as a relocating buyer aren't as bad as they can be as a seller, it still makes sense to take a long, hard look at what you're being offered and then determine if there are any strings attached. When it comes to buyers, the "costs" are usually along the lines of limitations in choice (of services and providers) and time frames (which can compel a rushed decision).

One of the most interesting requirements of many relo packages is that you do not discuss the terms or benefits of the package with anyone... including your real estate professional. In turn, the "approved" agents the relocation company refers to you aren't allowed to discuss the terms or benefits either.

So, it's kind of on you to analyze whether or not the package being offered is worth the costs. Just make sure to do so before you sign on the dotted line because once you do you're at their mercy.

5. Sticker Shock

In an ideal world, you're moving from an area that has a higher cost of living, and the prices of homes will be a *good* shock to you.

But quite often, when you're moving to a new area, it's an "upward" move, and the price of real estate is significantly higher than what you're used to.

There's a good chance that you've already sized that up to some degree online, but the actual reality can be even more startling once you're actually out looking at homes and seeing how far your dollar stretches.

This can be disheartening, causing you to lose time and miss out on some great homes while you come to terms with the cost difference. This is why it's best to spend some time learning what you can expect for the amount you're looking to spend as early on as possible.

Don't worry, you'll find a perfect mix of city, neighborhood, and house as long as you work with a solid real estate agent. It just takes a certain amount of understanding what the values are (and why) in one area versus another.

6. "This Isn't Kansas Anymore..."

Wherever you're moving to, things are bound to be different than where you're coming from. This is true in many ways, of course, but let's focus on the real estate differences.

It isn't just real estate values that will likely differ from where you're coming from. It's also:

- ▶ The styles of homes — the type of construction
- ▶ The sizes of homes
- ▶ The sizes of yards
- ▶ Landscaping
- ▶ Decor
- ▶ Amenities
- ▶ Types of utilities
- ▶ The feel of neighborhoods
- ▶ And many more...

A lot of people try so hard to duplicate what they have "back home." Sometimes that can be achieved, but a lot of times it just can't be. The problem with doing that is it can cause you to waste time and miss out on some great homes while you grapple with trying to find something that feels familiar to you.

Embrace the differences and change! This will be exciting. And who knows — if and when you move away from this area, you may very well be yearning for what you had here in whatever area you end up moving to.

7. Finding Your Focus

Having options is a good thing... for the most part. But having too many options can also end up costing you a lot of time.

Finding the perfect home in the perfect area can be tough even if you're local, but when you're relocating you're often pressed for time. You only have so many trips you can take out to the new area to hunt for a home, and you usually need to line something up before you get to the area.

So it's best to focus on a few specific areas before you even come out to look.

Thankfully, the Internet has made this a *lot* easier than it used to be. But it can still be tricky to get a real feel for an area until you actually see it in person.

This all sounds pretty basic, but here's the real tip for this section...

A lot of people relocating to a new area end up working with several different real estate agents in several different areas. That probably doesn't sound like a huge problem to you since you don't have to pay a buyer's agent — they earn a commission if and when you make the purchase.

But here are the issues that can arise when looking in several different areas with several agents:

- ▶ Each one will be a "cheerleader" for their area. Of course they love the area they work in (and probably live) and think you should too! That's totally natural and human, but it isn't objective.
- ▶ Because the agents only earn money if you choose to buy a house in their area, they're likely to be dismissive or recommend against another area that may be perfect for you.

So, if possible, try to work with one agent who can cover all the areas you're considering.

Also, try to rule out as many areas as possible (as quickly as possible) so you can focus your limited time and energy on the areas that *are* perfect for you.

8. Everyone's Got A Real Estate Opinion

You might already know some people who live in the area, but even if you don't already, you will — whether they're future colleagues, bosses, or just people you meet. And every one of them will have an opinion about where you should move!

Everyone has the right to their opinion on where a good place to move is, and they probably have strong opinions based upon where they've chosen to live and where they've chosen *not* to live. People generally (and probably genuinely) will want to be helpful to you.

The problem is, they won't know all of your personal wants, needs, and qualifications. So they may be recommending a great house, or a great area, but it just isn't in your budget. Or perhaps it misses the mark when it comes to some of your specific wants and needs.

This might not sound like the biggest problem in the world, but it can make you feel like other areas or houses aren't great choices when they really are. They can also make things sound like the greatest deal on earth, or most solid decision, when it really isn't. It's their opinion...not their business (literally or figuratively).

So, certainly listen to what locals have to say and recommend, but never discount your own thoughts and opinions. Form your own. And rely on a solid real estate agent who can help you objectively analyze your options and make the best overall choice for *your* wants and needs.

9. What To Look For

Certainly you want to enjoy the home and area you decide to move to. And hopefully you'll be there for quite some time, if not forever. But the reality is, many people who relocate to an area end up moving again not too many years later, especially if it's for a job. (People who relocate for a career have a tendency to be moved again.)

So, one of the most important things you need to consider is a home with good resale value.

That doesn't necessarily mean you'll find a home that you can turn a quick and healthy profit on. It means finding a home that you can resell fairly quickly and easily without losing money.

What constitutes a good area and a good home for resale? That really depends on exactly where you end up focusing and what your budget is. But in the broadest sense, most home buyers want a home in an area with good schools, low crime, access to major roads and transportation, shopping, and services. That's just a general rule of thumb. Not everyone in the world wants those things. But they do tend to be better criteria for easier resale.

To be safe, try not to choose something that is too unique or has a major deficit (like backing to power lines, train tracks, a highway, etc.).

And look at data and statistics. Granted, data and statistics change over time, so it isn't a guarantee that how quickly and easily houses sell in an area will be the same when you have to move. But try to get a feel for the price ranges that resell most readily in the area currently and in the past. That should be a pretty good indication of the future.

10. Is It A "Good" Area?

First of all, "good" is a very subjective word. What one person considers "good," another person may not. On the other hand, what someone considers a "bad" area is "good" to others.

But let's just say that when most people ask this question when it comes to real estate, they want to know if it's safe, has good schools, and has solid resale value.

So, real estate agents often get asked that very question... "Is this a good area?" And when they do, they can often come across as sounding kind of wishy-washy. It's a straightforward question, so one might think it could be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."

It's not that simple...

Agents, by law, aren't allowed to tell you whether an area is "good" or "bad." Doing so can cause them to be fined or lose their license. So if you ask, and you feel like they're avoiding the question, just know that there's a solid reason for doing so.

The best advice you can get is to spend some time in an area you are interested in. Go during different times of day. Do you *feel* safe? You can also look up statistics online, of course, and perhaps even go to the local police station and ask them some questions.

The same goes with schools. What constitutes a "good" school to one person may be different for another. So, if schools are important to you, make sure to look at reports and statistics online and even make some calls to local school administrators.

Oh, and don't even try to ask an agent questions about what race, religion, or the like is most common in the area. As you can imagine, those are off-limit subjects as well.

11. Should You Rent A Home First?

Some people wonder if it makes sense to rent a home in the area for a while before actually buying one.

This can make sense — you can get a feel for the area and not feel like you're making a rash, rushed, or wrong decision.

However, a lease can tie you down and cause you to miss some good opportunities when a home you want to buy comes on the market (or cost you some money to get out of the lease or pay it off).

So if you're going to rent, you might want to consider short-term leases or even a long-stay hotel to keep your options open.

If that's something you'd like to consider, feel free to reach out to us, and we'll be glad to give you some local options to do so.

NOTE: Renting can add to the overall cost and effort of relocating since you'll end up having to move twice, so keep that in mind when deciding to rent or purchase.

12. When To Start Looking For Your Home

It's hard to say *exactly* how long it will take you to look for and find the right home. But generally speaking, people who are relocating from a different area are more deliberate and concise in their search for a new home.

Someone who lives locally can often drag the process out, looking for a long period of time simply because they *are* local. But when you have limited time, and trips, to come to your new area and search for a home, you will likely make the most of that time.

Since the amount of time it takes one person to search for and find a home will vary, the more important thing to focus on is how long the process will take to actually close on the house you purchase once you go under contract.

Even that will vary from one area of the country to another and from deal to deal within this area. But on average, it takes about 30-45 days between the time you go under contract and closing day.

So give some thought to when you want to actually move into your new home, and then take into account that amount of time. Then, add a month or two onto that for a more leisurely process of searching for a home. (But you can certainly do a thorough search and find a winner in less time than that if you are focused and concise.)

13. Getting The Best Home At The Best Possible Price

Who doesn't want to find the best home they can? Beyond that, who wouldn't like to get it at the lowest possible price?!

Yet many people don't do either. And that's across the board, not just people who are relocating to a new area. Add into the mix the stress and time crunch of buying a house while worrying about everything else that comes along with relocating to a new area, and it makes it all the less likely to happen.

This booklet was created to give you some insights into typical issues and topics that affect people relocating to a new area and buying a home. But it doesn't get into the more universal topics and issues that affect being able to get the best home you can (at the best possible price).

We have another booklet that helps with that...

Our Ultimate Buyer's Guide is a bit longer and more in depth than this one, but it's worth your time and effort to read.

It's free, and there's no obligation. All you have to do is let us know you want a copy, and we'll get it right to you. (We can send it as a PDF by email and/or a print copy if you'd like.) Just send us an email or give us a call!

And if we don't hear from you, good luck with your move! But we do hope to hear from you!

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