

# Vacation Homes

EXCEPTIONAL WATERFRONT, GOLF, COUNTRY, MOUNTAIN AND VINEYARD PROPERTIES

## GREAT AMERICAN ESCAPES

Aspen, Hawaii,  
the Hamptons  
& More

### PLUS

**STABLE MARKET** | The Country's Best Equestrian Communities

**ALASKAN IDYLL** | Own a Piece of a Pristine Private Island

**VINTAGE VACATIONS** | Ultimate Estates for Wine Lovers

**TRADING UP** | Home Exchanges go High-End

## THE RIGHT SITE How to pick a lot in a resort development



KATHLEEN CHIRAS



**BUILDING A HOME** in a resort development has its privileges. Once completed, such communities offer fine dining, golf courses, spas, concierge services, and other hotel-style amenities. In their infancy, however, they are little more than piles of dirt and plenty of promises. Though resort developments provide covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CC&Rs)—and planning guidelines that show what the homes, streets, and retail establishments around the community will look like in five to 10 years—these “crystal ball” maps that give a glimpse into the future are rarely guaranteed. Still, there are measures a buyer can take to better ensure that the lot purchased today will provide an enjoyable experience tomorrow.

First, know thy neighbors. “If people own the lot in front of your ocean or mountain vista, you will want to find out how high they can build,” advises Tom Carr, a Realtor with Leverich and Carr in Aspen. “If a developer says the people in front can only build so high or cannot have trees that block your view, make sure it is in the contract.”

Likewise, in tropical areas, find out if the surrounding vegetation is likely to grow and how fast. A neighbor’s palm trees can block an ocean view in just a few short years. It is also handy to know when construction is slated to begin on the lots around the one you are considering. Additionally, you should find out about nearby developments; for example, that unscathed parcel of beachfront property located directly below a desired lot may be zoned for condominiums.

Kathleen Chiras, a Realtor who specializes in international properties and runs the website [SmartHomeSearch.org](http://SmartHomeSearch.org), says buyers should think about how the property will be used and review its accessibility. “In developing countries, such as Costa Rica, you may have to take dirt roads or cross a small river to get to your lot.” Indeed, a development that is located 10 miles from paved roads, and even farther from the airport, is probably not ideal for a weekend home.

Convenience and seasonality should be considered as well. A lot on a steep hill may be great in the summer, but could potentially be washed out or snowed in during the winter. There is also such a thing as being too close to the action. Eric Klein, an exclusive buyers agent in Colorado, says that lots that are located at the base of the mountain, for optimum access to the slopes, are convenient—but they come at a price. “People tend not to realize that they might be kept up at night from snow guns and grooming noise when they are buying in the summertime,” says Klein.

Similarly, many people find a residence that overlooks the community’s pool or is located near the clubhouse desirable. These areas, however, have a potential to be noisy, and may result in situations where neighbors are utilizing the space into the wee hours of the morning. Only the buyer can decide how close is too close. And although a lot should be relatively large if the buyer wishes to have privacy, Klein contends that size is not always the most important consideration. “What counts in the mountain estates of Colorado, where the winter days are short, is orientation and exposure to the sun,” he says. “The biggest mistake I see people make is buying the largest lot—which may face away from the sun and the mountain sunset—and end up with extravagant heating bills.” [John Morell and Jessica Taylor]

Kathleen Chiras, 800.383.7188, [www.smarthomesearch.org](http://www.smarthomesearch.org)  
[www.buyerbrokersearch.com](http://www.buyerbrokersearch.com)