



Where to Buy (Even) Now

Sure, things are tough around Denver, but good options exist—if you know where to look. We've found 14 neighborhoods offering safe bets in a shaky market. Plus, real estate insiders dish on up-and-coming areas where deals abound.

By Lindsey B. Koehler, photographs by Stephen Collector

It's a rocky time for our real estate market. In 2007, Colorado saw more than 39,000 foreclosures, and real estate prices dropped 4.5 percent in Denver. For many, buying a house in this unstable market feels more than a bit uncertain. To help eliminate the house-hunting butterflies, 5280 hosted a panel of eight local real estate agents, who filtered through Denver's neighborhoods and came up with 14 still-reliable buys. Bonus: Meet the Neighbors: Why do people love living in Park Hill? What's the drawback to Wash Park? The neighbors dish on real life in Denver's best 'hoods at the bottom of each neighborhood profile.

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Of course, not all of Colorado's real estate statistics have been rosy. There were more than 39,000 foreclosure filings statewide in '07, and prices are down on average about 4.5 percent across Denver. Certain areas, such as Green Valley Ranch, Montbello, and East Colfax, have been pounded by the subprime mortgage crisis. And typically hot 'hoods like Platt Park,

Cherry Creek, and the Golden Triangle aren't doing as well as one might think. But there are upsides to the local market. Plenty of them.

To find out more, we assembled an expert panel of metro-area Realtors to suss out what's really happening in the market. We debated and analyzed what makes certain areas thrive while others don't, hoping to name the top neighborhoods that represent a genuine safe bet in a less-than-solid market. And although these eight experts had different geographic areas of specialty and diverse opinions, they all said the same thing: Denver's market is holding its own.

"You have to think locally, not nationally," says Patrick Finney, a broker associate with the Finney Group at Re/Max Alliance Central. Brigitte Furst, a Boulder-specific Realtor with Re/Max, agrees, quoting the National Association of Realtors' chief economist, Dr. Lawrence Yun, who says that all real estate is local and "national data are not meaningful." According to Paul Tamburello, a longtime Denver Realtor with Distinctive Properties, the Denver market as a whole has been relatively flat over the past year or so, and that's a good thing—especially when many other markets are way down. To further the point, Finney says that overall sales in 2007 were only down 1.8 percent from 2006—a good sign after the plummeting sales from 2005 to 2006.

But even better than merely stabilizing, prices in many areas of metro Denver are actually up: In the Highland neighborhood prices increased by 4 percent from 2006 to 2007, as did prices in Cherry Hills (7 percent), South Park Hill (5 percent), Washington Park (9 percent), Louisville (7.3 percent), and Bonnie Brae (13 percent). And even when prices did fall in the metro area, they didn't completely crash and burn—Congress Park took only a small 2 percent hit over the past year.

The good news? There's no need to sit it out if you need to buy or sell. Many neighborhoods in Denver continue to offer a stable option in a less-than-perfect market. We identified the factors that make for solid bets—things like location, great schools, light-rail access, low inventory, scarcity of land, an established identity, an alluring neighborhood anchor, a strong neighborhood organization—and narrowed down our list to the top performers. Some of them are the usual suspects—many popular Denver 'hoods have also been longtime good investments. But others may surprise you. All of them, however, are places where you can buy and sell without losing your mind—or your shirt.

Berkeley

Boundaries: 38th Avenue, 48th Avenue, Sheridan Boulevard, Federal Boulevard

The Neighborhood: The Berkeley neighborhood has been riding the coattails of the Highland 'hood for years—until now. Bookended by beautiful parks with lakes—Berkeley Lake and Rocky Mountain Lake—the area's big trees, sidewalk culture, older homes, and diversity of residents appeal to young families, first-time home buyers, and an older set that has been in the area for years. Of course, the Tennyson Street retail district stands at the center of the neighborhood's renaissance. With an ever-expanding set of shops and eateries, like Strut boutique, Mouthfuls, Parisi, DJ's Berkeley Cafe, the French Flat, and Big Hoss BBQ, Tennyson serves as a hip and funky neighborhood anchor. Plus, area options include Café Brazil for date night and Sunflower Market for organic and gourmet foodstuffs. The community's location is hard to beat, with direct access to I-70 and an easy 10-minute commute downtown. Although Berkeley has safely made it past the "emerging 'hood" days, it's still a little ragged around the edges; smart buyers will want to be at least one full block off 38th Avenue (it's noisy and attracts a rougher crowd) and 48th (which butts up against I-70). The primo spots rest between 40th and 44th, within two or three blocks of Tennyson.

Why It's a Safe Bet: It shares boundaries—and therefore some cachet—with the hip Highland area, but with a more affordable price point. There are plenty of housing options, including scrapes, lofts, row houses, and a cadre of fixer-upper bungalows and solid '50s ranches. While less architecturally consistent and charming than nearby Harkness Heights and Highland, the neighborhood has quiet, pleasant streets. A burgeoning retail, restaurant, and arts scene means that most everything is walkable.

Average Sale Price: \$274,000; 5 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Neighborhood Organization: www.berkeleyparkneighbors.com



Meet a Neighbor: Will Kimmel
Former owner French Flat
Neighborhood Resident: 5 years

Loves: “We always lived in Southeast Denver (Arapahoe Boulevard and Holly Street) and this is more like a neighborhood or a town. Here you meet your neighbors, people walk their dogs and their babies, and it’s quiet.”

Doesn’t love: “They are scrapping the old houses and building new apartments, which are larger and grander. It changes the tenor of the neighborhood. A lot of the houses are quaint

and different and these new buildings just don't fit.”

Advice to Prospective Buyers: “Walk and take the bus. We wanted some place where we could walk to the supermarket or bus stop. Here you can go anywhere you need without taking out a car. Even when I'm going downtown to a Rockies game, I can take the bus.”

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Cherry Hills Village

Boundaries: Hampden Avenue, Belleview Avenue, Happy Canyon Road, Clarkson Street

The Neighborhood: About 6,000 people call the six square miles of the city of Cherry Hills Village home. One of the most affluent areas in the country, Cherry Hills attracts a fortysomething and older crowd to its multibedroom, multibath, multimillion-dollar, 5,000- to 12,000-square-foot mansions. Prospective buyers can peruse a variety of neighborhoods: Old Cherry Hills Village features older, more architecturally diverse homes with mature landscaping and big yards, while homes in Glenmoor of Cherry Hills often line the golf course. With such an assortment of subdivisions, residents living within just a mile of each other can live in drastically different homes: a large 1940s-built Tudor, a two-story Spanish villa-style home built in 2000, or a five-bedroom Colonial near the Highline Canal built in 1981. Large horse properties are also common. The community meets and greets at the Cherry Hills Country Club, supports the Kent Denver School (one of the more prestigious private academies in Colorado), and enjoys a quick six-mile jaunt to downtown Denver. Although nearly every street in Cherry Hills elicits "oohs" and "aahhs," homes along Quincy Street, just across from Kent Denver School, smack of absolute decadence.

Why It's a Safe Bet: The steep price tags in this semi-suburb keep the typical real estate fluctuations at bay. But a close-to-the-city location, access to Cherry Creek public schools as well as local private academies, an established upper-crust identity, and access to the hiking, biking, and winding equestrian trails of Highline Canal provide market stability as well.

Average Sale Price: \$2,016,500; 7 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Website: www.cherryhillsvillage.com



Meet a Neighbor: John Stepien
 Chairman and Chief Revenue Officer, NAS Recruitment
 Communications
 Neighborhood Resident: 20 years

Loves: "This is a definite community geared toward the resident. We don't have any commercial companies. It is a bedroom community—rural in its scope and in nature but still close to all the amenities of downtown Denver. We are just 10 to 15 minutes from downtown and even closer to the Denver Tech Center."

Doesn't Love: "We are a small community with about 6,000 residents, but we are bordered on three sides by major throughways—Bellevue, University, and Hampden. There's a traffic problem and it just keeps increasing. There's also been a lot more commercial business developed in the surrounding communities."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "Meet the neighbors. Knowing the people across from you and next to you, you get into the community much more easily. There are also the Glenmoor and Cherry Hills Country Clubs where you have an immediate vehicle to meet people."

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Congress Park

Boundaries: Colfax Avenue, Sixth Avenue, York Street, Colorado Boulevard

The Neighborhood: What began as a streetcar suburb in the early 1900s is now one of Denver's most popular urban neighborhoods. Congress Park, a 17-block-by-nine-block area just east of downtown, often lures families with school-age kiddos with its large Denver Squares, Victorians, and bungalows. Both Detroit Street and Seventh Avenue Parkway display spectacular dream homes, while the intersections of 12th Avenue and Madison Street and 12th Avenue and Elizabeth Street bask in their proximity to retail districts—Shells and Sauce, Chef Zorba's Greek Restaurant, and Peter's Chinese snuggle in at Elizabeth, while Wildflowers gifts, Pudge Bros. Pizza, Berenices salon, and Under the Umbrella Café prosper at Madison. As an added bonus, Congress Park rests adjacent to Colorado Boulevard's riot of convenience, as well as the hospitals at Ninth Avenue.

Why It's a Safe Bet: It's a city-adjacent location, Teller Elementary receives high-achieving marks, retail abounds in every direction, and the area's namesake park offers recreation,

including a swimming pool.

Average Sale Price: \$408,000; down 2 percent from 2006 to 2007

Neighborhood Organization: www.congressparkneighbors.org



Meet a Neighbor: Michele Foust
Outreach Chairman, Teller Elementary School PTA
Neighborhood Resident: 11 years

Loves: "Even though we are living in an urban area our neighborhood feels like a small town. I know a lot of people who walk to school and to the pool. Most of our children's friends live within a five-to-six-block radius, and my world is a five-minute commute. Don't underestimate how easy your life gets when you live seven blocks from your neighborhood school."

Doesn't Love: "I wish more people would go to the neighborhood schools. I wish more of our young neighborhood families would have their parents' mentalities and trust the schools in their backyards. Then I would know all the children I see and our neighborhood would be a more tight-knit community."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "It's a ritual. On Friday afternoon, you have to go to the Daily Scoop [ice cream shop]. We all walk over after school. There's always something like 20 kids playing outside."

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Country Club Historic District

Boundaries: First Avenue, Fourth Avenue, Sixth Avenue along Circle Drive, University Boulevard, Downing Street

The Neighborhood: One of the toniest addresses in the Denver area, the Country Club neighborhood suffers not from the fluctuations of the real estate market. That's mostly due to the hefty price tags; however, the district's unparalleled location and strikingly beautiful and

architecturally diverse properties don't hurt either. The neighborhood—developed mostly in the 1910s and 1920s by some of Denver's then-prominent architects—showcases elaborate Denver Squares, Gothics, Colonials, Mediterraneans, and other early 20th-century eclectic revival styles. The area is so geographically, architecturally, and historically significant that in 1979 it landed on the National Register of Historic Places; it was designated a Landmark District in 1990. Residents, who lean toward a slightly older demographic, enjoy a high walkability factor in their 'hood: The adjacent Cherry Creek retail extravaganza and the Denver Country Club, which was built in conjunction with the neighborhood, both offer plenty of destination options for a sunny afternoon stroll.

Why It's a Safe Bet: Why wouldn't it be? Inventory is low, there's a dearth of buildable land, the location is spectacular, the neighborhood has built an identity that high-end buyers know and desire, the walkability factor is high, and the country club and Cherry Creek serve as strong anchors.

Average Sale Price: \$1,082,000; 26 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Neighborhood Organization: www.neighborhoodlink.com/denver/cchn



Meet a Neighbor: Bruce Stouffer

Vice President, Perreault Birmingham Group and President of Country Club

Historic Neighborhood Association

Neighborhood Resident: 9 years

Loves: "You have large homes that are in a central area. You can walk to Cherry Creek or to Washington Park. We do that almost every weekend. In the summer, I ride my bike to work. The neighborhood sits right on the Cherry Creek bike path."

Doesn't Love: "The large and increasing volume of traffic on First Avenue. There's noise and congestion. It takes longer to get out of the neighborhood and into downtown. Also, people who are trying to avoid traffic cut through the neighborhood."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "Be social. The neighborhood is more social than any place I've ever lived. The neighborhood held an ice-skating party the second week of February and lots of neighbors met people they didn't know. We do a Fourth of July event for kids, too."

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Highland & West Highland

Boundaries: West 38th Avenue, I-25, West 29th Avenue/Speer Boulevard, Sheridan Boulevard

The Neighborhood: Perched atop the hill that rises to the northwest of downtown, the broad expanse generally called the Highland neighborhood has become Denver's "it" spot over the past five years. Blocks of mostly small- to medium-size bungalows radiate from Highland Square, the bustling town center of the area, home to restaurants, boutiques, and spas. Singletons, couples, and young families gravitate to the newly hip 'hood, taking advantage of its walkability and delighting in neighborhood renewal gone right. Houses on streets closest to the square fetch higher prices. Hayward Street garners high praise and high prices, possibly because it's not a through street, which cuts down on traffic. As 38th develops, housing on the far north boundary of the neighborhood should also appreciate.

Why It's a Safe Bet: Proximity to downtown, strong neighborhood organizations that arrange community festivals and band together to oppose businesses like Wal-Mart, and a main square anchor. Plus, Highland has developed an identity with which people connect—and that they desire.

Average Sale Price: \$305,011; 4 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Neighborhood Organizations: www.denverhighland.org;
www.neighborhoodlink.com/denver/whna



Meet a Neighbor: Lois Harvey
Co-owner, West Side Books
Neighborhood Resident: 27 years

Loves: "You can pretty much get anything you need in a one-mile radius. There are the coffee shops Common Grounds and Peaberry's, and I go to the TK name (Pasquini's?) pizza shop for Friday night pizza. (Doesn't everybody?) The other thing is you recognize people by sight or name when you're walking down the street. I sort of feel like Highland is a small town in a big city."

Doesn't Love: "Parking. I do notice that my back roadways are more congested. Also, I'm not so keen on the scrape-and-build-out-to-the-edge-of-the-property thing that's happening. There used to be a community feeling with people out working in their gardens. Now there's less

sense of shared space.

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "Plan on staying here 20 years. People here are friendly and they are going to talk to you. If you just move in and move out, you're not going to get it. It's not just a property value thing."

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Highlands Ranch

Boundaries: Douglas County Line, Quebec Street, Santa Fe Boulevard, Daniels Park

The Neighborhood: People talk about Highlands Ranch as if it's one big subdivision, a neighborhood of cookie-cutter homes awash in beige. But Highlands Ranch, an unincorporated community of nearly 90,000, is so much more—especially if you're raising a family. Nearly half of Highlands Ranch households have children under the age of 18. Which means the housing—mostly larger, new-build homes with backyards located in subdivision formats—suits the needs of families with teenagers who want their own rooms and triplets whose toys would take over your average bungalow. The rewards of living in Highlands Ranch—safe streets, superior schools, big-box stores on every corner, bigger homes for less money—outweigh the often-talked-about downsides like suburban sprawl.

Why It's a Safe Bet: People will always have families—and families often need more space than an inner-city home affords. Plus, schools like Highlands Ranch High School, Mountain Ridge Middle School, and Fox Creek Elementary School rank high-to-excellent.

Average Sale Price: \$319,000 (average of Redstone and Coyote Creek); 1.5 percent increase from '06 to '07

Website: www.highlandsranch.org



Meet a Neighbor: Claudia Ullevig
Adult Services Department Head, Highlands Ranch Library
Neighborhood Resident: 23 years

Loves: "The rec centers are a great resource. Also, I like the way the neighborhood is laid out. There are parks and trails, and wide streets, like University

[Boulevard], which means that the traffic flow is pretty decent."

Doesn't Love: "I don't like having to ask the Home Owners Association for approval on the color I paint my house. That bugs me. I mean even if I'm painting my house the same color, I have to get approval. I'd rather they paid attention to weeds in public spaces."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "If you really mind Big Brother watching you, then you shouldn't live here. It just depends what you can put up with, because Douglas County also has a great school system."

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Ken-Caryl Valley

Boundaries: Neighborhoods west of C-470 and the Dakota Hogback

The Neighborhood: Tucked into the base of the foothills just on the western side of the Dakota Hogback ridge rest the neighborhoods of Ken-Caryl Valley. A combination of newer and older homes, the valley attracts families and couples of the outdoorsy persuasion. Miles and miles of hiking, biking, and horseback trails wind their way through nearly 4,800 acres of adjacent open space, which is home to deer herds, turkeys, coyotes, grouse, elk, and even mountain lions and black bears. Enveloped by Ken-Caryl Valley are at least 20 different neighborhoods, of which North Ranch, Barrington Ridge, and Manor Ridge remain the most highly sought-after for their larger lots that melt into open space and custom homes with spacious floor plans. The master-planned community also offers playgrounds, ball fields, swimming pools, and an equestrian center. Although there are plenty of housing options east of the Hogback ridge, housing in the valley maintains its appeal, mostly due to its striking geography.

Why It's a Safe Bet: Yes, it's 20 miles from downtown Denver, but your backyard isn't just near the foothills—it is the foothills. Plus, Jeffco schools dot the rolling landscape, C-470 takes you where you want to go quickly, and there's a scarcity of buildable land due to the surrounding open space.

Average Sale Price: \$564,000; 5 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Website: www.ken-carylranh.org

**Meet a Neighbor:** Pat Karns

Managing Partner, Colorado Pure Distilling and Athletic Trainer

Neighborhood Resident: 9 years

Loves: "There's really only one thing: the serenity. You drive behind the Hogbacks, the rock ridge that juts out from Golden, and you're away from everything. When you drive into the valley, it's like a breath of fresh air. You learn to co-exist with coyotes and elk."

Doesn't Love: "Because of the separation [from the city], you have a slight temperature change. It's like a wind tunnel, when it gets blowing back there. Also, you are tucked away. You drive five to seven minutes for what everyone else drives a minute."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "Cash in your country club membership and buy a mountain bike. Trade in your frou-frou dog for a golden retriever. You are going to walk. Almost all my neighbors would rather be biking with their kids than playing golf."

Louisville

Boundaries: Louisville is loosely bordered by U.S. Highway 36, West Baseline Road, Highway 42, and McCaslin Boulevard.

The Neighborhood: More of a real town than a neighborhood, Louisville has been racking up the accolades: In 2007 the city was listed number three on Money magazine's Best in the West section of its Best Places to Live. With about 20,000 residents, this small mining-town-cum-classic-suburb between Denver and Boulder is a sleeping giant of real estate. With a quaint downtown area that hosts events like concerts, holiday parades, and ice skating, Louisville is the quintessential family-friendly spot. Homes are mostly from the '80s and newer, but blocks of older houses huddle around the outskirts of the town center. Areas that feed into the Fireside and Coal Creek elementary schools as well as the Monarch K-8 and High School are highly sought after. The Mayberry-style ambience hits a hard-to-find note in the metro area, but Louisville's access to job centers—the tech industry in its backyard, University of Colorado, and Denver only 35 minutes away—makes it even more attractive.

Why It's a Safe Bet: Great schools, upcoming rail access, proximity to jobs (including the redevelopment of the Sun Microsystems site by Phillips-Conoco), and a community-building Main Street.

Average Sale Price: \$392,000 in 2007 and early 2008; up 7.3 percent from 2006

Website: www.ci.louisville.co.us



Meet a Neighbor: Dougald MacDonald

Freelance Writer and Editor

Neighborhood Resident: 7 years

Loves: "Louisville is very close to the trails and rock climbs of the foothills (less than 15 minutes' drive to Eldorado Canyon, for example), and to the restaurants and shops in Boulder, but you can get twice the house for the money than you would in Boulder. There's also a huge trail network in Louisville itself. And the town is very safe: We once accidentally left our garage door open when we were away all weekend, with all of our bikes and skis, etc., lit up by the overhead light like they were on display, and nothing was missing."

Doesn't Love: "Much of the town has the same drawbacks as any suburb (along with the attributes). Unless you live or work in the old town, there's not really any "there" there. And like most residents, we have to get in the car to do any form of shopping or to go out to eat."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "Explore the neighborhoods carefully before choosing a home in Louisville (or dismissing the town). The style, size, and desirability of homes often changes from block to block, and many of the best areas are in hidden-away pockets. You're definitely not seeing the best of Louisville if all you do is cruise along McCaslin or South Boulder Road."

Related Articles: [Welcome to the Neighborhood](#)

Mayfair

Boundaries: Monaco Parkway, Colfax Avenue, Sixth Avenue, Eudora Street

The Neighborhood: Saturated with doctors, nurses, and other medically inclined residents, Mayfair is the sweet little neighbor to the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Rose Medical Center, and the Veterans Affairs hospital. Modest bungalows and ranches stand along the wide-open streets in this neighborhood of singletons, young couples, and young families. Some of the most beautiful, architecturally diverse, and highly coveted blocks rest

between Sixth and Eighth avenues from Fairfax Street to Monaco Parkway. The neighborhood has a relaxed, quiet feel, but Mayfair residents will soon see changes to their 'hood. With University Hospital bailing for the Fitzsimons campus, new development is on its way. Construction on a mixed-use development by Shea Properties begins in January '09—meaning sleepy Mayfair will likely get an infusion of retail spots, residential areas, and restaurants along Ninth Avenue.

Why It's a Safe Bet: Any 'hood with an important anchor—like Mayfair's hospitals—will have staying power. Plus, doctors, nurses, and postgraduate students keep the area infused with an intelligent, motivated, and diverse population.

Average Sale Price: \$671,000 (average of Montclair and Hilltop); 10 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Neighborhood Organization: www.mayfairdenver.org



Meet a Neighbor: Nancy Gilder

Director of Positive Youth Development, The Mayor's Office for Education and Children

Neighborhood Resident: 13 years

Loves: "Because we have small homes on big lots, everyone's in their yards. People learn to be neighborly while doing yard work. For me as a single woman, with no family, my neighbors have become family. We do everything a family would do for each other."

Doesn't Love: "When neighbors don't talk to each other to work things out. If there are barking dogs or something loud, you have walk over and talk to each other before you seek a higher authority."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "Avoid 13th Avenue. It's a throughway that is busy and hard to get across. Eighth Avenue is the same way. But the fact is that things are pretty groovy here. I ride my bike to work. When I'm riding, I'm passing people who work in my building and people who live in my neighborhood."

Related Articles: [Small Wonder](#)

Newlands (Boulder)

Boundaries: Broadway, Iris Avenue, Alpine Avenue, Third Street

The Neighborhood: Everything old is new again. At least, that's the case with Boulder's Newlands neighborhood. Known for years as the Newland Addition—named after Boulder pioneer William Newland, who originally owned the land—the area was a typical middle-class neighborhood filled with smaller single-family homes until 1995. Today, most Boulderites know the area as the Newlands neighborhood—a newly hip place to renovate or scrape existing homes and build larger, more livable abodes (although the city of Boulder is currently looking into potential laws to limit the size of these scrapes). Located only one mile from Pearl Street's shops and eateries, and resting adjacent to the Ideal Market retail plaza, Newlands has come into its own in the last decade. Residents, most of whom are young couples or young families, enjoy the proximity to the hills (it's a 10-minute walk to Mt. Sanitas), the ability to walk to the grocery store, and the relative quiet of their streets. Homeowners on the east side of North Boulder Park delight in unobstructed views of the Flatirons, while everyone else takes pleasure in park events like hiking groups, wintertime cross-country skiing, and summertime bike races. The most highly coveted lots are those that are considered "triple lots."

Why It's a Safe Bet: College towns in general are good real estate bets due to their cultural amenities, increasing influx of new residents, and diversity of housing prices—and Boulder remains one of the more alluring. After all, there's no better anchor than a major university. The Newlands neighborhood not only enjoys easy access to CU but also has other strong community anchors like the close-by Ideal Market shopping area (think Radda Trattoria, Pharmaca, and Pekoe Tea Shop), Boulder Community Hospital, Pearl Street, and the park. Newlands also benefits from high-achieving Foothills Elementary, which is located inside the neighborhood boundaries.

Average Sale Price: \$942,455; 1 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Website: www.newlandsneighbors.com



Meet a Neighbor: KC Becker
Attorney
Neighborhood Resident: 1 1/2 years

Loves: "The number of families and the friendliness. There's a group called the Newlands Neighbors that organizes events just so people have an opportunity to meet one another. They've done a progressive dinner party and an Easter egg hunt. Twice a year they do a pancake breakfast. In the fall, there's a hayride and house tour."

Doesn't Love: "The home values are so high and expensive that you don't get much diversity. This neighborhood started out as ranch homes, and people have come in and built new homes. With the new homes, the houses have gotten overpriced."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "Make sure you have a good realtor who can advise you on house prices and whether or not they are really worth it. And, start going to North Boulder Park. You'll meet a lot of people."

Related Articles: [Radda Trattoria](#)

Old Bonnie Brae

Boundaries: University Boulevard, Steele Street, Exposition Avenue, Mississippi Avenue

The Neighborhood: Beautiful curved streets wind through this south Denver neighborhood, which abuts Washington Park and rests just five minutes from the Cherry Creek retail district. Bonnie Brae, which means "pleasant hill" in Gaelic, houses a variety of 1920s and 1930s homes in the Tudor and ranch styles. However, the neighborhood is also home to a multitude of scrapes—brand-new McMansions that have replaced the area's traditional abodes. Residents love everything from the old-growth, hardwood trees to the within-walking-distance amenities like the public library, wine shop, florist, Bonnie Brae Ice Cream, Bonnie Brae Tavern, and the Saucy Noodle Ristorante. With a fairly high average price point for homes, the area sees a slightly older crowd—although there is a contingent of younger, new urbanites that call the 'hood home as well. Bonnie Brae's curved streets remain the most coveted, and smart buyers will avoid the more traffic-filled boundary streets.

Why It's a Safe Bet: The location of Bonnie Brae is a no-brainer: five minutes to Cherry Creek, less than 10 minutes to downtown, and just a hop down to I-25 and light rail. Plus, the schools are more than adequate, there's little-to-no buildable land, and with less than 10 homes on the market the inventory is ultra-low.

Average Sale Price: \$904,212; 13 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Neighborhood Organization: www.bonniebraehoa.com



Meet a Neighbor: Jean Day Maschinot
Head Coach, Bonnie Brae Travel

Neighborhood Resident: 36 years

Loves: "It only takes about 15 minutes to go from one side of town to the other, five minutes to the grocery store, and five minutes to the Cherry Creek shopping area. The neighbors are extremely helpful. One time I had a plumbing problem. I came home at 10:30 at night and I couldn't get the water off. I called my neighbor and he got out of bed to come over and turn off my water."

Doesn't Love: "The people not keeping to the speed limit. The cars don't go 25 mph. They go 35 or 40 mph, and that's either on Exposition Avenue or on Bonnie Brae Boulevard."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: Come live in Bonnie Brae. It's a residential, mature, tree-lined neighborhood. A charming community with homes, shops, and restaurants. I don't think there is anything negative about the neighborhood. Houses keep their value. We really don't have a lot of crime. And, the city is good about renovating the streets, curbs, and alleys.

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South Park Hill

Boundaries: Colorado Boulevard, Quebec Street, Colfax Avenue, 26th Avenue

The Neighborhood: Vastly residential, Park Hill's well-manicured lawns, old-growth trees, and architecturally varied homes hit a nostalgic note with those who crave a genuine neighborhood feel. Kids on bikes, young couples walking their golden retrievers, and middle-age men mowing the lawn give the area a Rockwellian touch. Neighbors seem to know one another, and often run into each other at one of the area's four small "business" corridors—23rd at Dexter, 28th at Elm, Kearny at 23rd, and Oneida at 23rd. Most notably, Perk Hill coffeeshop on Kearny creates a popular gathering spot on warm Sunday mornings for the more mature families and empty-nesters that call Park Hill home. The neighborhood boundaries surround a fairly large geographic area, and housing north of 26th Avenue and east of Monaco Parkway still retains a bit of a sketch factor that will certainly lessen over time but currently deters new buyers not ready for a riskier investment. The eastern boundary of Quebec, which used to be the beginning of the old Stapleton Airport, now serves as the gateway to the Stapleton neighborhood and all of the development that comes along with it.

Why It's a Safe Bet: Location is Park Hill's best attribute. Nearly equidistant from downtown and the new Fitzsimons medical campus, the area serves accountants as well as a host of

doctors and nurses. Park Hill's lack of buildable land also creates stability, as an influx of new-build condos and townhomes is less likely than in other nearby 'hoods.

Average Sale Price: \$456,000; 5 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Neighborhood Organization: www.neighborhoodlink.com/denver/gphc/assocon.html



Meet a Neighbor Darren Spreeuw

Owner, Perk Hill Coffee

Neighborhood Resident: 5 years

Loves: "The neighborhood feel. The wonderful tree canopy. The awesome bungalow architecture. There are all the benefits of urban living, close to downtown with all the benefits of a rural community—the yards, the gardens.

Doesn't Love: "Park Hill is expensive to get into. We bought in 2003 and barely got in. Also, I'm not a fan of some of the stucco McMansions popping up after scraping a classic Craftsman."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "Get a bike for yourself and a burley for your kids. This is the perfect place to ride a bike. Get a good road or mountain bike and commute to work."

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Stapleton

Boundaries: Quebec Street, Montview Boulevard, Peoria Street, 64th Avenue

The Neighborhood: Touted as the largest urban-redevelopment community in the nation, Stapleton certainly has a lot to offer: a 10-minute commute downtown, a 20-minute drive to DIA, three million square feet of retail space, two square miles of parks, a suburban feel within the city limits, some of the only new-build single-family homes in Denver, and plenty of community amenities like pools, tennis courts, sledding hills, and an off-leash dog park. With nearly 7,000 residents so far, the neighborhood attracts a diverse population due to the array of living options, but families reign supreme. Although there remains plenty of land in the development toward the north, most of Stapleton south of I-70 is built out—and that's a good thing for neighborhood real estate prices, which should increase as inventory decreases.

The rule of thumb when buying a house in a large redevelopment community like Stapleton is location. Buyers should stake out corner lots and streets near pocket parks, pools, schools, and town centers. Specifically, Tamarac Street, Ulster Street, Akron Street, Yosemite Street, Xenia Street, and 23rd Avenue all boast walkable access to neighborhood anchors. Homes that surround Stapleton's 80-acre Central Park are expected to one day rival the coveted homes that surround Wash Park and City Park.

Why It's a Safe Bet: Stapleton has a few downsides—available buildable land and a high inventory—but the community's assets are undeniable: good schools, great location, upcoming light-rail access, an established identity that attracts young families, a strong community organization that puts on events like the Stapleton farmers' market, the Sweet William market, the fall festival, and summer movie and concert nights, and a host of appealing neighborhood anchors such as the East 29th Avenue Town Center and Northfield at Stapleton.

Average Sale Price: \$454,000; 4 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Website: www.stapletondenver.com



Meet a Neighbor: Raj Chaudhuri
Artist and Business Designer
Neighborhood Resident: 5 years

Loves: "We are very close to our neighbors. It's almost too good to be true. We go on vacations with our neighbors. Can you believe that? We have four block parties a year. If I won the lottery, I'd buy a house somewhere else but have my primary residence here."

Doesn't Love: "There's a bit of traffic and minor crime, but that's just the city. It's nothing more than the norm."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "It's definitely a younger neighborhood. You have to be happy with kids around for the next 10 years at least. On our block there are 35 children between the ages one month and 6 years."

Related Articles: [Welcome to the Neighborhood](#)

Washington Park

Boundaries: I-25, Cherry Creek, University Boulevard, Downing Street

The Neighborhood: One of Denver's landmark neighborhoods, Wash Park has wide, tree-lined streets that house everything from large, single-family homes to smaller duplexes. The diversity of homes perfectly illustrates the district's population: girlfriends sharing small rental homes, newlyweds buying bungalows, families with tweens and teens living in larger Victorians, and grandmas and grandpas pruning roses around their Tudors. The neighborhood buzzes with an energy emitted directly from its namesake 165-acre park. The houses that line the park—on South Downing Street, Louisiana Avenue, South Franklin Street, and East Virginia Avenue—run more pricey, as do Corona and Ogden streets, which are just off the park on two-way streets.

Why It's a Safe Bet: A quick two-mile drive to downtown, decent schools, an undeniably strong anchor in the park, and a reputation that precedes it with transplants.

Average Sale Price: \$654,000; 9 percent increase from 2006 to 2007

Neighborhood Organization: www.neighborhoodlink.com/denver/washpark



Meet a Neighbor: Amber Abbuhl

Attorney

Neighborhood Resident: 7 years

Loves: "I love walking with my family and my dogs [in Washington Park] and running into friends. We regularly get over there. Either my husband or I are over there anywhere from one to five days a week."

Doesn't Love: "To be honest, we've seen an increase in small crime. Cars have been broken into and there's more graffiti. This is something that has become more prevalent in the last six months."

Advice to Prospective Buyers: "Be aware of little things. We don't keep our blinds open. Keep things locked up, and get to know your neighbors. We've lived here for seven years now. We love the neighborhood feel, that's why we've stayed here."

Related Articles: [Atmosphere March 2007](#)

Our Methodology

We define neighborhoods as distinct communities as identified by the members of that community, including residents, registered neighborhood organizations, merchants' groups, and Realtors; some recognized Denver neighborhoods do not appear on official city maps. For the "Boundaries" information in this package, we consulted with each area's neighborhood organization. In the event that information was unavailable, 5280 used city of Denver neighborhood maps. Boundaries are intended to give general scope and location of a neighborhood.

The "Average Sale Price" and percentage change information listed for each neighborhood was compiled by Lon Welsh at Your Castle Real Estate (the same company that provides other area publications with real estate data). If Your Castle Real Estate was unable to provide information on a specific neighborhood, 5280 used information compiled by real estate agents from our panel who were specialists in that particular area. The percentage change number can be volatile depending on new construction, one larger-than-normal sale, or other factors.

Buy Or Wait?

Any of these sound familiar? If so, sit it out for now—this market is not for you.

- You like every house you see, which may mean you're having a hard time defining your criteria and making a commitment.
- You hate every house you see, which may mean you aren't being realistic about the type of house you can afford.
- You are constantly trying to find the bottom of the market and the lowest interest rate.
- You aren't sure you'll be in Denver longer than three years.
- Your job isn't stable.
- You have major credit issues.
- You want to look at houses before being preapproved.
- You'll have to borrow all the money for a down payment.

Up-and-Comers

Give 'em three years and these emerging Denver-area 'hoods will be real estate hotspots.

Sunnyside (I-70, West 38th Avenue, Federal Boulevard, Inca Street.) This moderate-size patch of modest homes continues to benefit from its close proximity to both the Highland district in general and Tennyson Street in particular. But good deals are still to be had in this

neighborhood that's convenient to downtown and the mountains. As an added bonus, light rail is on the way, which should up the ante even further within at least one mile of the station. www.sunnysidedenver.org

University Hills (I-25, Colorado Boulevard, Evans Avenue, Hampden Avenue.) Most of the houses were built in the early 1950s and, not surprisingly, some of the original owners still reside in this urban 'hood that feels oh-so suburban. Prices aren't bargain-basement—after all, the area boasts easy access to I-25, Colorado Boulevard, and DU—but this area is potentially undervalued. www.uhna.com

West Colfax (Perry Street, Zenobia Street, 13th Avenue, Colfax Avenue.) Perched on a hill, this section of the West Colfax neighborhood overlooks downtown and boasts an impressive number of beautiful Tudors, bungalows, and raised ranches. Most homes rest on 6,250-square-foot lots, and prices are 30 percent to 60 percent less than Sloan Lake and Highland. The West Corridor Light Rail has begun construction along the adjacent Lakewood Gulch (basically 12th Avenue), with stops planned at Perry Street and Sheridan. The new main-street zoning on West Colfax and more than 30 acres of catalytic redevelopment sites (including the St. Anthony's Central hospital) poise this area for an urban-neighborhood renaissance.

Wellshire (Colorado Boulevard, University Boulevard, Yale Avenue, Hampden Avenue.) Ah, the mid-burbs—those seemingly invisible areas between the edge of Denver and the start of Highlands Ranch. Wellshire (and others like Willow Creek, Heritage Greens, and Southern Hills) has pretty tree-lined streets, big lots, decent schools, and ranch-style homes with good bones. Another plus: the Wellshire Golf Course and its 13.4-acre Skeel Reservoir.

Risky Business

In any Denver 'hood there are good and bad bets—here are five signs your dream house could be a resale nightmare.

1. The house you want to buy might be in a good area, but if the adjacent neighborhood gives you the heebie-jeebies your resale could be difficult.
 2. That 1940s bungalow is quaint, but competition from nearby newly built townhomes, condos, and apartments could drive down your sale price.
 3. Sure, you see plenty of next-door neighbors, but if there are too many empty homes on other nearby streets, move on.
 4. If there's open land nearby, there's little doubt someone will build houses on it. Your property value could go down depending on what, how, and how much they build.
 5. That sweet Tudor is in a great 'hood, but on a busy street. Location doesn't just mean big-picture geography; it also refers to the actual lot.
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Our Real Estate Panel

These eight local Realtors offered their input and expertise on Denver's real estate market.

Libby Dufford, Re/Max, libby@libbydufford.com

Patrick Finney, Re/Max, patrick.finney@homesincolorado.com

Brigitte Furst, Re/Max, brigitte@bfursthme.com

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Some statistical information was provided by **Lon Welsh** at Your Castle Real Estate, 303-962-4272, lonwelsh@yourcastle.org
