Influence of Transportation on Residential Choice: A Survey of Texas REALTORS® on Factors Affecting Housing Location Choice

Preliminary Report
Influence of Transportation on Residential Choice: A Survey of Texas REALTORS® on Factors Affecting Housing Location Choice

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Influence of Transportation on Housing Location Choice

Transportation is just one factor that often plays a role in determining the location of a home during the buying process. Through a survey given to licensed Texas REALTORS® about their last transaction, this project determined which factors are most important to Texans and how these vary in Texas as a whole, in Texas’ major metropolitan areas (Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, Corpus Christi), and in rural and smaller metropolitan areas.

- This research has shown that there are numerous factors involved in the housing location decision and that transportation and traffic concerns are not the most important factors in this process.

- This report suggests a paradigm shift for how transportation improvements could be viewed. Instead of the traditional view of only addressing transportation issues using transportation means, stakeholders may be able to impact one topical area (transportation) by addressing a completely different area (e.g., crime, neighborhood quality, affordability, etc.). This new paradigm shows that while direct policy forces will affect an area like transportation, housing, safety, or education, these areas do not exist within a vacuum. In this case, other options and factors in the housing location decision specifically affect transportation.

- Not surprisingly, the property is the focal point of the location decision at every level. Buyers are likely to compromise on just about any factor if they find a suitable home. But after the property, the neighborhood—its quality of design, reputation, amenities, aesthetic value, and convenience—rules over other factors, including things such as school quality, affordability, and traffic concerns. While these other factors are important, they generally do not appear to be deciding factors.

- Respondent comments indicated that while traffic concerns initially may have been a factor, they diminish in importance (or get bumped down the list) when other factors begin to be considered. It may be that traffic concerns and other broader factors (such as crime rates, proximity to family, and school quality) form a soft boundary by which people begin their search. However, as the search progresses, these boundaries are pushed more widely as homes in previously undesirable areas become more attractive when all other factors are considered.

- Trends from the survey, however, did reveal that traffic and transportation concerns are generally more important at the neighborhood level, trumping affordability, school quality, and proximity to friends and family. While traffic does not appear to deter people from moving to a new urban area, bad traffic and long travel times do appear to deter buyers from certain neighborhoods if other, more important factors are accommodated. This suggests more-accessible neighborhoods by any transportation mode are more...
desirable to buyers. Policy makers may wish to use this information to adjust or target spending on transportation infrastructure or various mobility options.

- Researchers analyzed several underutilized corridors in the Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio metropolitan areas, using the results of the survey to determine what the existing conditions are and how the corridor may be altered through non-transportation means to increase utilization and maximize the transportation potential of the investment. Of the corridors analyzed, this report highlights two corridors in each metropolitan area and gives recommendations for how changes may be applied to maximize the return on investment of transportation infrastructure.

- Different stakeholder groups may take advantage of the findings of this research in several ways.
  - State policy makers do have several avenues of direct influence that could be used to apply the findings of this research. Changes to education, affordable housing, parks, public safety, and non-transportation infrastructure spending and funding, including public partnerships, may provide a direct avenue to affect transportation utilization. Another method that could be explored is by the state providing additional enabling authority to local governments, allowing additional land use control and flexibility at both the municipality and county levels.
  - Planners could use the information provided by this research to adjust comprehensive plans and regulation to incorporate elements that impact the housing location choice to maximize development efficiency. This can be achieved through using tools that promote high-quality housing design, landscaping and streetscaping in neighborhoods, a rich and diverse set of land uses near major housing centers, aesthetic design that reduces the perception of crime, or opportunities that keep areas affordable for all demographic groups.
  - The results of the survey show that there are numerous factors that could be included in the transportation modeling process to show where people are likely to select a home. With improvements in data quality and availability, many of these factors can be integrated directly without use of a proxy variable or estimation.
  - The development and professional community could use the results of this research to work with the state and local or regional entities to identify areas of highest interest for redevelopment or capacity utilization. By working with each stakeholder and with the specific results of this research, the professional community may be able to better meet the needs of customers, further increasing Texas’ appeal as a place to live.
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**Executive Summary**

How often have you wondered why people choose to live where they do? It is a simple yet very intricate question. How much weight do people put on factors such as traffic congestion and travel times to important places compared to other factors such as affordability, school quality, crime, neighborhood amenities, or features of the house itself? Understanding how transportation factors affect people’s home-buying experience provides a wealth of knowledge for providing better and more efficient services to the public. Governments at all levels can use this information to identify transportation and policy bottlenecks and problems, set priorities, and enhance economic development. Tax dollars could be spent more efficiently. Builders and developers could better meet the needs of their customers.

**About the Project**

Researchers at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) are examining this decision process and how Texans make these decisions—specifically, how much of a role transportation plays in the home location decision. Insight into this question will provide state policy makers evidence-based information on several issues:

- How do people make housing decisions?
- How important is transportation in these decisions?
- How do urban congestion problems affect development decisions in Texas?
- How much reliance can be placed on traditional capital or operational transportation improvements balanced with policy and planning decisions?
- Could traffic and transportation problems be more effectively addressed through non-transportation means?

Guidance from these questions will improve the type, scale, and timeliness of transportation improvements for specific corridors as needs and opportunities arise. A combination of congestion mitigation strategies will still be used in most cases, but the role of the various types of solutions will sit within a broader context.

**The Texas REALTORS® Survey**

TTI researchers partnered with the Texas Association of REALTORS® to examine a broad spectrum of factors that have been shown to influence the housing location decision. This survey, given to licensed Texas REALTORS® (referred to as respondents in this report) about their last transaction, determined which factors are most important to Texans and how these vary in Texas’ major metropolitan areas.

With this and previous research in mind, TTI researchers designed a survey that asked respondents to rank 14 criteria that may have influenced their client to choose a particular
metropolitan area and zip code (neighborhood). Each respondent then ranked 10 criteria that may have influenced their client to choose the specific house. This information, paired with demographic and other relevant data, provides a ranking of what Texans in each major metropolitan area and statewide find most important when choosing a home location, and the role transportation plays in that decision. Information was compiled for:

- Texas.
- The Austin metropolitan area.
- The Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area.
- The Houston metropolitan area.
- The San Antonio metropolitan area.
- The Corpus Christi metropolitan area.
- Rural and smaller metropolitan areas.

**Overarching Trends**

Before examining the detailed reasons why people choose to live where they do, both for the state and for individual metropolitan areas, this report presents a few overarching trends that bring clarity to the survey results.

*Decisions Are Driven by the Property*

Overwhelmingly, attributes about the property itself rose to the top of the list of important factors for choosing a home. While at the metropolitan area level this may not initially make much sense, at the neighborhood level, people appear to be more willing to sacrifice or make trade-offs with any other factor as long as they get the property they want.

*Price Is the Most Important Factor*

In the majority of cases, the price of the home is (not surprisingly) the most important factor. However, another cost-of-living factor, the cost of utilities, while important usually ranks near the bottom of the importance list. The one exception to this lies with low-income buyers, who are generally far more sensitive to the overall cost of living. The type of home purchased (single-family detached, townhouse, condominium, multifamily, etc.) generally comes in a close second behind purchase price and occasionally wins out over price. This could signal a strong preference for specific types of development, including mixed-use units or more traditional suburban homes.

*Neighborhood Is Usually Second in Importance to Price*

While the property itself usually wins out as the most important factor, the neighborhood is always a close second (and in a few cases, bests the property for the top spot). Buyers express a

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1 This could be because it is a much lower cost that may not be realized at the time of the purchase decision.
high importance for quality, desiring amenities such as walking/bicycling paths, quality landscaping, or other aesthetics. This also includes a desire to be in a reputable and appealing neighborhood. Convenient access to entertainment, services, food, and other activities, combined with neighborhood aesthetics, indicates a preference for communities that are well planned, carefully executed, and maintained. In Austin and Houston, the hipness (the cool factor or trendiness) of the neighborhood also plays an important role in selecting a location for nearly all groups (though low in importance, it was still significant). In these cities, encouraging trendy development and services or designs centered on nightlife may improve certain areas.

**Traffic Is Initially Not a High Priority**

Overwhelmingly, specific transportation concerns such as traffic congestion and commute times, while viewed as important factors, are almost always trumped by neighborhood quality, including a neighborhood’s reputation, amenities (quality of overall design, trails, parks, etc.), and convenience (being close to extracurricular activities, services, food, and entertainment). However, respondents commented that while traffic concerns may have at first played a more important role in the home and neighborhood location decision, other factors overtook traffic further into the process.

When new buyers are moving to a new urban area or from out of state, transportation concerns rank fairly low in importance. Moving to a city with a short commute time or low traffic congestion is not as important overall as being relocated there for a new job, the community’s crime rate, or the metropolitan area’s affordability. However, traffic concerns are rated much more important in larger urban areas such as Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth than in smaller urban or rural areas.

**Traffic Becomes More Important at the Neighborhood Level**

While transportation concerns lack importance overall when selecting a new city or urban area, respondents indicated that it is a much more important concern when buyers are selecting a neighborhood or area of town. At this level, traffic nearly always bests a neighborhood’s affordability, school quality, nearness to family and friends, or the hipness of an area. This indicates a strong connection between a neighborhood’s connectivity with other areas of town and its attractiveness to new buyers.

While traffic and transportation concerns differ greatly between metropolitan areas and among demographic groups, respondents representing those who are single, have no children, or are millennials indicated that their clients rank traffic the highest among their comparison groups.

Respondents indicated that traffic concerns are part of a trade-off opportunity for buyers. Buyers often opt to split the difference between commutes (either between two different jobs or between a job and their children’s school). Many respondents also commented that buyers express a desire to live near transit or in a walkable/bikeable community.
Low-Income Buyers Differ

While the choices of middle- and high-income buyers generally match one another, low-income buyers differ in their views of importance quite a bit. While neighborhood quality factors rank highly for middle- and high-income buyers, these factors generally rank very low for low-income buyers. Instead, low-income buyers put a high importance on nearness to family and friends, school quality, and an area’s affordability. These buyers are likely looking for child care and employment support from family and social systems. Low-income buyers also rank an area’s crime rate with lower importance than other groups. This does not indicate a preference for unsafe areas but rather likely points to a lack of options in their price range.

Families Rate Schools Highly

Not surprisingly, couples (including married couples and domestic partnerships) and those with children place a higher importance on school quality and location than other comparable groups (nearness to a school is grouped with school quality rather than a transportation issue due to specific-school attendance and districting concerns). Singles and those with no children still rank school quality as an important factor. This is likely due to a future desire to have children or to the thought that a neighborhood with good schools will likely increase their future home resale value. Generation X values schools over other generations because they are more likely to have multiple school-aged children. Baby boomers often do not rank this as an important factor at all.

Life Changes Affect Decisions

While many of the factors for choosing a home location are centered on the built environment, many fall into the “life happens” category. These factors cannot necessarily be changed by policy or physical improvements but still play a crucial role in understanding why people choose to live where they do. Factors include:

- Changing jobs or retiring.
- Having a change in relationship status.
- Transitioning from renting to owning a home (or owning to renting).
- Graduating (or attending) college.
- Dealing with health problems.
- Being displaced by a disaster.
- Wanting to be close to family and friends.

Generally, these factors rarely registered as a primary reason for a location change (because they do not universally affect all buyers all the time). However, some were commonly ranked as important factors across the board with all buyers.

Most notably, career changes greatly affect buyers’ choices to move to a metropolitan area; the responses indicate this was particularly important to single, middle-income millennials with no
children. However, this factor also influences moves within a city, often being an important factor for neighborhood selection. Also, a change in relationship status and transitioning from renting to owning are frequently cited as important, though usually at the bottom of the importance list.

The desire to be near family and friends also consistently plays a role at both the metropolitan and neighborhood levels, often being more important than factors such as affordability, traffic concerns, and school quality. The draw of family and friends can be a powerful influence, especially for low-income singles and baby boomers—both of whom likely value the support more than other groups.

**Findings**

Not surprisingly, the property is the focal point of the location decision at every level. Buyers are likely to compromise on just about any factor if they find a suitable home. But after the property, the neighborhood—its quality of design, reputation, amenities, aesthetic value, and convenience—rules over other factors, including things such as school quality, affordability, and traffic concerns. While these other factors are important, they generally do not appear to be deciding factors.

Respondent comments indicated that while traffic concerns initially may have been a factor, they diminish in importance (or get bumped down the list) when other factors begin to be considered. It may be that traffic concerns and other broader factors such as crime rates, proximity to family, and school quality form a soft boundary by which people begin their search. However, as the search progresses, these boundaries are pushed more widely as homes in previously undesirable areas become more attractive when all other factors are considered.

Trends from the survey, however, did reveal that traffic and transportation concerns are generally more important at the neighborhood level, trumping affordability, school quality, and proximity to friends and family. While traffic does not appear to deter people from moving to a new urban area, bad traffic and long travel times do appear to deter buyers from certain neighborhoods if other, more important factors are accommodated. This suggests more-accessible neighborhoods by any transportation mode are more desirable to buyers. Policy makers may wish to use this information to adjust or target spending on transportation infrastructure or various mobility options.

**Corridor Analysis**

While the information collected and presented from the Texas REALTORS® Survey has merit and value in its own right, the primary application of this information is to identify recommendations for transportation issues that might not directly relate to transportation.

This idea stems from statistical modeling: only a part of a problem may be explained by specific factors, but there will always be a residual amount of explanation that may affect the outcome
yet have very little to do with the original problem. In this case, many transportation issues are caused because of where people choose to live, which is impacted by several factors. However, many transportation planning and policy solutions only directly tackle transportation. Additionally, many transportation investments made around the state are grossly underutilized; increasing their utilization will ensure that the state and surrounding metropolitan areas maximize the benefit of these large investments over their usable life and minimize the fluctuations in use that may occur over time.

Applying the results of the Texas REALTORS® Survey to specific corridors (in this case, the roadways analyzed in the Texas Department of Transportation’s (TxDOT’s) Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways list) may provide a suitable starting point for policy makers, planners, and the development community to better utilize existing transportation infrastructure and better plan for future transportation network expansion.

Researchers analyzed several underutilized corridors in the Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio metropolitan areas using the results of the survey to determine what the existing conditions are and how the corridor may be altered through non-transportation means to increase utilization and maximize the transportation potential of the investment. Of the corridors analyzed, this report highlights two corridors in each metropolitan area and gives recommendations for how changes may be applied to maximize the return on investment of transportation infrastructure. These corridors include:

- **Austin:**
  - SH 130/SH 45 from US 290 to SH 71.
  - North MoPac Expressway/SL 1 from SH 45 to W. Parmer Lane/FM 734.

- **Dallas-Fort Worth:**
  - US 175 from IH 45 to S. 2nd Avenue.
  - North Loop IH 820 from IH 35W to SH 199.

- **Houston:**
  - Sam Houston Tollway NE from Old Humble Road to US 90.
  - US 90 from IH 10/IH 610 East to Carpenters Bayou.

- **San Antonio:**
  - IH 10/US 90 from IH 410 East to Anderson Loop East/SL 1604.
  - IH 410 NE from IH 35 to Rigsby Avenue/US 87.

**Policy and Application of Findings**

This research has shown that there are numerous factors involved in the housing location decision and that transportation and traffic concerns are not the most important factor in this
process. This is not to understate transportation’s importance, especially toward the beginning of
the location decision. However, there needs to be a general recognition that people choose to live
where they do for many factors, any of which, if altered properly, could have dramatic impacts
on how Texas cities function. Different stakeholder groups may take advantage of the finding of
this research in several ways.

The primary outcome provides a paradigm shift for how transportation improvements could be
viewed. Instead of the traditional view of only addressing transportation issues using
transportation means, stakeholders may be able to impact one topical area (transportation) by
addressing a completely different area (e.g., crime, neighborhood quality, affordability, etc.).
This new paradigm shows that while direct policy forces will affect an area like transportation,
housing, safety, or education, these areas do not exist within a vacuum. In this case, other options
and factors in the housing location decision specifically affect transportation.

For example, improving the quality and types of housing in an area, the education quality, and a
neighborhood’s aesthetic may have a substantial impact on the types and timing of transportation
infrastructure needed. More concretely, if residents are being drawn out to a new suburb because
of neighborhood aesthetics and development quality, low crime rates, and/or great schools,
traditional transportation planning may recommend the construction of an improved highway
facility to meet that growing demand. However, a benefit to one of these other factors in an area
with existing underutilized transportation capacity may have a spill-over synergistic effect that
delays or eliminates the need for additional transportation improvements to the newer area.

For Policy Makers
To date, no states have taken this approach in addressing transportation issues through other non-
related factors.

While many of the practical policies that could be produced lie at the local level, state policy
makers do have several avenues of direct influence that could be used to apply the findings of
this research. Changes to education, affordable housing, parks, public safety, and non-
transportation infrastructure spending and funding, including public partnerships, may provide a
direct avenue to affect transportation utilization. Another method that could be explored is by the
state providing additional enabling authority to local governments, allowing additional land use
control and flexibility at both the municipality and county levels.

For Planners and Practitioners
While policy makers may set many high-level priorities and make large-scale funding decisions,
planners and practitioners can more proactively address the holistic nature of the housing
location decision. Planners could use the information provided by this research to adjust
comprehensive plans and regulation to incorporate elements that impact the housing location
choice to maximize development efficiency. This can be achieved through using tools that
promote high-quality housing design, landscaping and streetscaping in neighborhoods, a rich and
diverse set of land uses near major housing centers, aesthetic design that reduces the perception of crime, or opportunities that keep areas affordable for all demographic groups.

For Transportation Modelers
The results of the survey show that there are numerous factors that could be included in the transportation modeling process to show where people are likely to select a home. With improvements in data quality and availability, many of these factors can be integrated directly without use of a proxy variable or estimation.

Improvements in this process will also give policy makers and planning practitioners the ability to proactively encourage improvements in certain factors to attract residents to areas with underused infrastructure. This would improve the efficiency by which transportation funds are spent, reducing the need for reactionary transportation infrastructure development.

For the Development and Professional Community
Finally, the development and professional community could use the results of this research to work with the state and local or regional entities to identify areas of highest interest for redevelopment or capacity utilization. By working with each stakeholder and with the specific results of this research, the professional community may be able to better meet the needs of customers, further increasing Texas’ appeal as a place to live.
Introduction

How often have you wondered why people choose to live where they do? It is a simple yet very intricate question. How much weight do people put on factors such as traffic congestion and travel times to important places compared to other factors including affordability, school quality, crime, neighborhood amenities, or the house itself? Understanding how factors like these affect people’s home-buying experience provides a wealth of knowledge for providing better and more efficient services to the public. Cities and the state could be more responsive and proactive in providing helpful transportation options, neighborhood amenities, and services to the public. Tax dollars could be spent more efficiently. Builders and developers could better meet the needs of their customers.

About the Project

Researchers at TTI examined this decision process and how Texans make these decisions—specifically, how much of a role traffic plays in the home location decision. Insight into this question provides state policy makers evidence-based information on several issues:

- How do people make housing decisions?
- How important is transportation in these decisions?
- How do urban congestion problems affect development decisions in Texas?
- How much reliance can be placed on traditional capital or operational transportation improvements balanced with policy and planning decisions?
- Could traffic and transportation problems be more effectively addressed through non-transportation mean?

Answers and guidance to these questions will improve the type, scale, and timeliness of transportation improvements for specific corridors as needs and opportunities arise. A combination of congestion mitigation strategies will still be used in most cases, but the role of the various types of solutions will sit within a broader context.

To date, most studies only examine a few housing choice factors for one city or metropolitan area. Most focus on select neighborhoods or a specific group of people, making it difficult for decision makers to discern useful broad policy information.

TTI researchers partnered with the Texas Association of REALTORS® (TAR) to examine a broad spectrum of factors that have been shown to influence the housing location decision. The survey determined which factors are most important to Texans, and how these factors vary in Texas’ major metropolitan areas.
The Texas REALTORS® Survey

The first step in understanding this complex decision requires an assessment of what others have done to identify the relevant factors in people’s home-buying decision. Researchers found 14 different factors that influence the location decision and 10 that influence the housing-specific decision. More information about what those factors are can be found in the section “How We Asked the Housing Choice Questions.”

The second (and likely most important) step in answering this question is capturing how past decisions have been made by Texans when purchasing a home. TTI researchers, working with TAR, acknowledged that many times REALTORS® know their clients’ wants and needs almost better than the client does. Their job is to understand these factors about each client and find homes that work. Therefore, Texas REALTORS® may be an ideal group to give insight about the home-buying decision.

With this and previous research in mind, TTI researchers designed a survey for licensed TAR members (referred to as respondents in this report) that asked about their last transaction. At the heart of the survey, respondents were asked to rank 14 criteria that may have influenced their client to choose a particular metropolitan area and zip code. Each respondent then ranked 10 criteria that may have influenced their client to choose the specific house. This information, paired with demographic and other relevant data, provides a description and ranking of what Texans in each major metropolitan area and statewide find most important when choosing a home location.

To discover what Texans think about their particular metropolitan area, skip ahead to the appropriate metropolitan area review.
Survey Design and Methods

TTI researchers designed the survey to identify the motivations and factors that influence a person’s housing location decision in Texas. Researchers specializing in several topic areas, including transportation, housing, and survey design, collaborated in developing the survey based on information and data from previous research on the topic.

Survey Questions

The final product contained 25 to 45 questions in five sections and took about 10 minutes to complete. The five sections included questions about:

1. Client party size (how many people signed the contract).
3. Dual-client contracts (if more than one person signed the contract).
4. Property location and selection criteria.
5. The REALTOR®.

Deployment and Sample

TTI researchers worked with TAR to reach all licensed REALTORS® in Texas. TAR sent more than 95,000 recruitment emails to its members with approximately 28,500 (or roughly 30 percent) opening the email. While the results presented in this report can be interpreted as being representative of the survey population, attempts to generalize these results to the greater population of Texas REALTORS® should be done with caution.

TTI researchers deployed the survey from July 22, 2015, to September 28, 2015. In all, 1,325 surveys were completed (almost 2 percent of all Texas REALTORS® or about 5 percent of the REALTORS® that opened the email).

For more information about the survey’s design and deployment, see “Appendix A: Survey Methodology.” For information about the questions asked, see “Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire.”

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2 This effort examined only people who chose to move and did not address people who decided to not move to a new area.
Respondent Profile

TTI researchers analyzed specific demographic, geographic, and other information about the respondents, which was useful in understanding the sample population and making generalizations about the survey responses.

Contract Profile

More than 87 percent of the contracts reported in the survey were for a client or clients looking for a property to purchase. Another 12 percent of the contracts were for a client or clients looking to rent or lease a property. Of all contracts surveyed, 33 percent involved individuals, 57 percent involved two clients, and 10 percent involved three or more clients.3

Of all surveyed clients, more than 90 percent purchased, leased, or rented property with the intention of using the property as their full-time residence. According to open comments, the vast majority of the other uses were for vacation or student homes.4

Sales Price

The survey collected the following data about the sales price of homes:

- Sales prices ranged from $12,000 to $15,000,000.
- Respondents reported an average sales price of homes of approximately $325,500 and a median price of $225,000.
- 35 percent of the properties sold for between $100,000 and $199,999; 28 percent sold for between $200,000 and $299,999.
- 70 percent of reported purchases were under $299,999.
- 14 percent of contracts to purchase a home did not report a final sales price.

Figure 1 shows a complete distribution of home prices from the survey compared to actual sales prices for Texas during 2015 (/).
Rental Price

The survey collected the following data about the rental price of homes:

- Rental prices ranged from $600 to $7,500 per month.
- Respondents reported an average rent price of $1,700 and a median rent price of $1,500. According to U.S. Census estimates (2), the median rent for Texas is $870 and has a distribution similar to the survey’s.5
- Only 11 percent of the contracts reported were for rentals or leases.6 Of these contracts, the majority (40 percent) rented for between $1,000 and $1,499; 28 percent rented for between $1,500 and $1,999.

Figure 2 shows that the distribution of lease/rental price is remarkably similar to the distribution of home purchase value.

5 However, the portion of rents less than $1,000 is much higher, likely due to rentals that did not use a REALTOR®. This will pull the median lower than what the survey reports. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume similarity between the two.
6 Researchers believe that the majority of renters may not use a REALTOR®, so the representation of rental property to the total population may be skewed. However, this does not devalue the location decision importance criteria discussed later in this report.
Client Profile

The 1,325 surveys represented 1,935 people acquiring property, either through purchasing or leasing/renting.

Gender and Race

Clients were split nearly evenly between men and women (51 percent to 48 percent, respectively, with 1 percent refusal). The majority of clients were Caucasian (70 percent), with Hispanics being the next largest group at 15 percent.\(^7\)

Age

Most clients were between 25 and 34 or 35 and 44 years old (29 percent and 24 percent, respectively, as shown in Figure 3). However, a significant number reached beyond those age groups, showing a significant number of baby boomers purchasing homes. Figure 3 also compares the age of the survey buyers with householder information for Texas from the U.S. Census Bureau (3). The comparison of the two suggests a robust sampling that is representative of actual homeowners.

\(^7\) Race and ethnicity are reported by the respondent, rather than being self-reported.
**Household**

Just over 70 percent of the clients in the survey were married or partnered in some way, with 28 percent single, divorced, widowed, or separated. About two-thirds (63 percent) of the clients had children.

**Employment**

Most clients (74 percent) were employed full time. Only 6 percent were employed part time, and 18 percent were not employed either full or part time (likely in retirement).

Household income varied the most of all characteristics, both from the actual state and from each categorical bin. While the majority of respondents (29 percent) opted not to answer, the two largest combined annual household income categories were those over $150,000 and those between $50,000 and $75,000.8

Figure 4 provides a complete breakdown of combined annual household income with a comparison to actual incomes reported by the U.S. Census (4). The survey undersampled households with incomes less than $35,000 and oversampled households with incomes over $150,000. This is likely due to the low-income bracket being less likely to purchase a home.

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8 This bimodality of the income distribution loosely reflects those that are single and those that are married or partnered.
**Previous Home Ownership**

For those purchasing a home, most clients (58 percent) had previously owned a home, with 39 percent previously renting or leasing. TTI researchers did not inquire about the length of the client’s previous tenure.
Who Is Moving to and within Texas?

The survey reveals the details of over 1,750 moves both to and within Texas. Researchers asked respondents to identify from where and to where their clients were moving in order to better understand larger trends in home location choice.

The vast majority of those surveyed moved within their own metropolitan area (68 percent), while 32 percent moved from outside the metropolitan area (either from another city, state, or country). This information sheds light on four primary movements:

- International: a move from another country to Texas.
- Interstate: a move from another state to Texas.
- Interregional: a move from one metropolitan area in Texas to another metropolitan area in Texas.
- Intraregional: a move within the same metropolitan area.

Of the 32 percent that moved from outside the destination metropolitan area, most were interstate moves, representing 17 percent of all moves. The majority of these new Texans came from Pacific states (California, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Hawaii). However, moves from the Mountain West and South Atlantic states followed closely behind.9,10

Figure 5 shows how moves to Texas are distributed across the nation.

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9 This does not represent movements from a single state. *Movements from a region could be made almost entirely by one specific state.* For example, while moves from the South Atlantic places third in interstate moves, most of those moves could come from Florida, which would then make Florida the number-one state losing residents to Texas.

10 Geographical designations are based on U.S. Census Bureau regional divisions.
The most popular interstate move was from the Pacific region to the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area. Almost all new residents from another country (which only represented 2 percent of all moves) moved to the Houston metropolitan area. The state’s two largest population centers—the Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston areas—are the two primary gateways for those new to Texas.

Within Texas, the most popular interregional move reported by survey respondents was the move from the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area to the San Antonio metropolitan area. Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth tied for the most intraregional moves (moves within the same metropolitan area), each making up 19 percent of the total moves reported in the survey.\(^{11}\)

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\(^{11}\) According to the Texas State Demographer, the Houston metropolitan area and the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area make up about 23.5 percent and 25.5 percent, respectively, of the entire state’s population, so 19 percent of the intraregional moves for each metropolitan area would be expected.
Why People Choose to Move Where They Do

Determining why people choose to move where they do can be extremely difficult. And while the nuances of this complex decision may still be unclear, this survey offers a good look into broader trends and a clearer glimpse into the details than we have ever before received. Carefully asking the right questions based on previous research provides a foundation for establishing the broader trends and insights that allow researchers to answer this question.

How We Asked the Housing Choice Questions

Based on previous research, TTI researchers examined several factors that affect the home-buying decision, based on previous research in several fields. Researchers separated these variables into two categories:

- **Housing criteria**: factors that one looks for specifically in a home or neighborhood.
- **Influencers**: factors that influence the decision-making process, either internally or externally.

Figure 6 shows how the 24 factors measured in the survey were categorized based on previous research. Some of these factor characterizations are fluid and can reasonably lie in either or both categories. Researchers transformed these factors into variables that formed the basis of three questions:

- How important were concerns voiced by the client to move to this specific region (metropolitan area)?
- How important were concerns voiced by the client to move to this specific zip code (neighborhood)?
- How important were concerns voiced by the client to buy this specific property?
Figure 6. How Did You Choose Where to Live? A Conceptual Model of Housing Choice Variables.
For the first two questions, researchers provided the following options:

- School quality.
- Crime or perceived safety.
- Traffic congestion or commute distance.
- Convenient access to services and amenities (banks, grocery stores, entertainment, etc.).
- Property type (bedrooms, baths, amenities, etc.).
- Affordability (lower taxes, lower home price, etc.).
- The cool factor or hipness (trendiness of an area).
- Proximity to family and friends.
- Neighborhood aesthetics, amenities, or reputation.
- Job relocation, career change, or retirement.
- Transition from owner/renter to renter/owner.
- Change in relationship status or establishment of the person’s own household.
- Health reasons or natural disaster.
  - College (attending or leaving).

For the third question, concerning a specific property, options that were provided and then ranked included:

- Square footage.
- Number of bedrooms.
- Number of bathrooms.
- Price.
- Acreage and/or lot size.
- Year the structure was built/renovated.
- Presence of a yard.
- Type of house (single-family detached, townhouse, condominium, or multifamily).
- Cost of utilities.
- Presence of a particular upgrade the client could not live without.

The respondents then ranked the importance of each variable on a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 was not a concern at all and 7 was extremely important). The full text of each question and the
corresponding options can be found in “Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire.” In the report, the word significant or variations thereof represent survey score means that are statistically different from one demographic group to its comparison group.

Researchers ranked the responses, revealing how important each factor was in selecting a home location. Researchers also used the client demographic information (discussed previously) to create subsets that reflect different life stages of clients.

**Overarching Trends**

The survey revealed broader trends about choice factors and demographic groups that provide important context for the discussion of why people choose to live where they do—at both the state and individual metropolitan area levels.

**Decisions Are Driven by the Property**

Overwhelmingly, attributes about the property itself rose to the top of the list of important factors for choosing a home. When looking at why people chose a specific metropolitan area, this may not make much sense; however, at the neighborhood level, people appear to be more willing to sacrifice or make trade-offs with any other factor as long as they get the property they want. Some metropolitan (and even rural) areas may be known for their housing stock, which may also influence this decision.

**Price Is the Most Important Factor**

In the majority of cases, the price of the home is (not surprisingly) the most important factor. However, another cost-of-living factor, the cost of utilities, while important, usually ranks near the bottom of the importance list. The one exception to this lies with low-income buyers, who are generally far more sensitive to the overall cost of living. The type of home purchased (single-family detached, townhouse, condominium, multifamily, etc.) generally comes in a close second to purchase price and occasionally wins out over price. This could signal a strong preference for specific types of development, including mixed-use units or more traditional suburban homes.

**Neighborhood Importance Is Usually Second to Price**

While the property itself usually wins out as the most important factor, the neighborhood is always a close second (and in a few cases, bests the property for the top spot). Buyers expressed a high importance for quality, desiring amenities such as walking/bicycling paths, quality landscaping, or other aesthetics. This also included a desire to be in a reputable and appealing neighborhood. Convenient access to entertainment, services, food, and other activities combined with neighborhood aesthetics indicates a preference for communities that are well planned, carefully executed, and maintained. In Austin and Houston, the hipness of the neighborhood also plays an important role (though low in importance, it is still significant) in selecting a location.

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12 This could be because it is a much lower cost that may not be realized at the time of the purchase decision.
for nearly all groups. In these cities, encouraging trendy development and services or designs centered on nightlife may improve certain areas.

**Traffic Is Initially Not a High Priority**

Overwhelmingly, specific transportation concerns such as traffic congestion and commute times, while viewed as important factors, are almost always trumped by neighborhood quality, including a neighborhood’s reputation, amenities (quality of overall design, trails, parks, etc.), and convenience (being close to extracurricular activities, services, food, and entertainment). However, respondents commented that while traffic concerns may have at first played a more important role in the home and neighborhood location decision, other factors overtook traffic further in the process.

When new buyers are moving to a new urban area or from out of state, transportation concerns rank fairly low in importance. Moving to a city with a short commute time or low traffic congestion is not as important overall as being relocated there for a new job, the community’s crime rate, or the metropolitan area’s affordability. However, traffic concerns are rated much more important in larger urban areas such as Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth than smaller urban or rural areas.

**Traffic Becomes More Important at the Neighborhood Level**

While transportation concerns lack importance at the metropolitan area level, respondents indicated that it is a much more important concern when buyers are selecting a neighborhood. At this level, traffic nearly always bests a neighborhood’s affordability, school quality, nearness to family and friends, or the hipness of an area. This indicates a strong connection between a neighborhood’s connectivity with other areas of town and its attractiveness to new buyers.

While traffic and transportation concerns differ greatly between metropolitan areas and among demographic groups, respondents representing those who are single, have no children, or are millennials indicated their clients rank traffic the highest among their comparison groups.

Respondents indicated that traffic concerns were part of a trade-off opportunity for buyers. Buyers opted to split the difference between commutes (either between two different jobs or between a job and their children’s school). Many respondents also commented that buyers expressed a desire to live near transit or in a walkable/bikeable community.

**Low-Income Buyers Differ**

While the choices of middle- and high-income buyers generally match one another, low-income buyers differ in their views of importance quite a bit. While neighborhood quality factors rank highly for middle- and high-income buyers, these factors generally rank very low for low-income buyers. Instead, low-income buyers put a high importance on nearness to family and friends, school quality, and an area’s affordability. These buyers are likely looking for child care and employment support from family and social systems. Low-income buyers also rank an area’s crime rate with lower importance than other groups. This does not indicate a preference for unsafe areas but rather likely points to a lack of options in their price range.
Families Rate Schools Highly
Not surprisingly, couples (including married couples and domestic partnerships) and those with children place a higher importance on school quality and location than other comparable groups (proximity to a school is categorized differently from transportation concerns due to attendance and districting concerns). Singles and those with no children still rank school quality as an important factor. This is likely due to a future desire to have children or the thought that a neighborhood with good schools will likely increase their future home resale value. Generation X values schools over other generations (baby boomers often do not rank this as an important factor at all) because they are more likely to have multiple school-aged children.

Life Changes Affect Decisions
While many of the factors for choosing a home location are centered on the built environment, many factors fall into the “life happens” category. These factors cannot necessarily be changed by policy or physical improvements but still play a crucial role in understanding why people choose to live where they do. Such factors include changing jobs or retiring, having a change in relationship status, transitioning from renting to owning a home (or owning to renting), graduating (or attending) college, dealing with health problems, being displaced by a disaster, or wanting to be close to family and friends. Generally, these factors did not register as being at the top of the importance list, although they were consistently seen in the demographic groups.

Most notably, career changes greatly affect buyers’ choices to move to a metropolitan area; the responses indicate this is particularly important to single, middle-income millennials with no children. However, this factor also influences moves within a city, often being an important factor for neighborhood selection. Also, a change in relationship status and transitioning from renting to owning was frequently cited as important, though usually at the bottom of the importance list.

The desire to be near family and friends also consistently plays an important role at both the regional and neighborhood levels, often being more important than factors such as affordability, traffic concerns, and school quality. The draw of family and friends can be a powerful influence, especially for low-income singles and baby boomers—both of whom likely value the support more than other groups.
Moving in Texas

With over 27,000,000 people, Texas has continued to grow in both good times and bad, attracting people from all over the United States and the world. What are the most important factors that new and existing Texans use to choose where to live?

This section uses the last transaction from Texas REALTORS® to summarize the most important factors their clients considered when deciding where to live. Specifically, this section illustrates the aggregate Texas behavior and attitudes. This will be referred to as the base case in later sections that examine specific metropolitan or rural areas.

More information about the questions asked and their results can be found in previous sections of this report, “Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire,” and “Appendix C: Texas Data Tables.”

How to Read the Ranking Charts

The ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of the three ranking charts in this chapter and their corresponding tables in “Appendix C: Texas Data Tables.” The ranking charts show how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than 3 on a 7-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important.

The word significant or its variations represent survey score means that are statistically different from one demographic group to its comparison group.

Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?

Respondents were first asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the particular region or metropolitan area. This question was only asked if the respondents indicated their client moved from out of state or from another metropolitan area. All ranked factors in this section are presented in this context.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) by group can be seen in Figure 7, along with a regional comparison in Figure 8 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figures).
Texas: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?

How to Read This Chart
The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

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Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Property**: Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.
- **Schools**: The quality and proximity of the local school.
- **Crime**: The local crime rate or perception of safety.
- **Neighborhood**: The aesthetics, charm, reputation, or amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.
- **Affordability**: The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.
- **Relationship Change**: Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.
- **Health/Disability**: Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.
- **Income**: “Happiness”
- **Transportation**: Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.
- **Happiness**: The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.
- **Job Relocation**: Factors related to a new job, career change, or retirement.
- **Rent to Own**: Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.
- **Schools**: Schools.

Figure 7. Texas: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?
**REGIONAL COMPARISON: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Rank</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Dallas-Fort Worth</th>
<th>Austin</th>
<th>San Antonio</th>
<th>Corpus Christi</th>
<th>Rural-Other Areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Job Relocation</td>
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<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<td>Job Relocation</td>
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<td>Property</td>
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<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<td>Family/Friends</td>
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<td>H appealness</td>
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<td>H appealness</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Chart Key** — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Property**: Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.
- **Neighborhood**: The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.
- **Convenience**: Convenient access to services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.
- **Traffic**: Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.
- **Property**: The quality and proximity of the local school.
- **Crime**: The local crime rate or perception of safety.
- **Affordability**: The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.
- **Family/Friends**: The closeness of the property to family and friends.
- **H appealness**: The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.
- **Job Relocation**: Factors related to a new job, career change, or retirement.
- **Rent to Own**: Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.
- **Relationship Change**: Change in relationship status or reason to establish one’s own household.
- **Health/Disaster**: Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.
- **Leave College**: Leaving or attending college.

**Figure 8. Regional Comparison: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?**
**Texans Overall**

Across the state, respondents noted that ultimately the specific property their buyer chose is the most important factor when deciding where to live. This is followed closely by a job relocation. This means that the house itself is the primary focal point of the location. The survey indicates that people do not move to Texas or another Texas city for a specific house. For moving to the metropolitan area, relocating for a job or career change is the most important factor.

When choosing a metropolitan area, buyers place a significantly high importance on all nine relevant factors shown in the chart, though buyers seem to be most concerned with crime and neighborhood reputation and amenities over other elements such as schools or traffic. This is likely due to having little choice in the area due to a new job or other factors.

**Singles versus Couples**

Both singles and couples rank a job relocation and the property itself as the two most important factors in choosing a metropolitan area in Texas. Even though relocating for a job is the number-one reason for singles to choose a metropolitan area, couples give this attribute a higher mean importance score, likely indicating that there are things more broadly important in the decision-making process for singles than couples. Singles view being close to family and friends, transitioning from renting to owning, and changing relationship status more important when compared to couples. For couples, factors such as neighborhood reputation and convenience are more important than for singles.

**Children versus No Children**

Families with children appear to make housing decisions very similarly to those without children, sharing the top five factors. However, those with children place a significantly higher importance on the property itself (likely needing specific qualities in a home to meet their children’s needs) and on school quality. Parents want what is best for their children, including a quality education and safe metropolitan area.

**Income Considerations**

Some of the most dramatic differences in home location importance can be seen across income tiers. Most noticeably, crime ranks as a greater concern by two positions, and nearness to family and friends ranks six places more important for low-income households than middle- and high-income groups (even though it is not significantly different from other groups). Crime may be a bigger issue in low-income neighborhoods, and nearness to family may help address some of the problems. This could indicate a dependence on those family members and friends for child care or other forms of support. For low-income households, moving to the area is much more likely due to health issues, a disaster, college, or job relocation.

Neighborhood reputation and aesthetics, convenience, and the property itself also significantly matter less for low-income households while mattering significantly more for high-income households. This could indicate a sort of needs pyramid where low-income households place basic desires ahead of aesthetic ones.
For middle-income households in Texas, affordability of the metropolitan area trumps most other factors in the location decision, showing a potential sensitivity to price when basic needs are met. Aesthetics and comforts still rank lower than they do for high-income buyers.

**Generational Divides**

Generation X and millennial responses are fairly similar to one another because they share similar rankings and importance scores that are not significantly different from one another. Job relocation ranks as the most important factor for millennials, with affordability also jumping a couple of importance ranks.

Baby boomers value nearness to family and friends significantly higher than other generations, perhaps related to later-life care and being close to grandchildren. Traffic concerns fall significantly lower than for other generations, as does school quality (which is not important at all in their decision). Baby boomers are also significantly less likely to move to a metropolitan area due to a job change compared to other generations, reinforcing their likely move to be near friends and family.

**Additional Findings**

Buyers who are underemployed cite health concerns, natural disasters, and nearness to family and friends—the personal social safety net types of factors—as much more important than those who are steadily employed.

**Why Choose That Neighborhood?**

Respondents were next asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the particular neighborhood within a metropolitan area. This question was asked of all respondents regardless of where their clients moved. The ranked factors in this section reveal their importance for when clients are choosing a neighborhood instead of a metropolitan area.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) by group can be seen in Figure 9, along with a regional comparison in Figure 10 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figures).
How to Read This Chart
The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels) against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Convenience</th>
<th>Traffic</th>
<th>Hipness</th>
<th>Relationship Change</th>
<th>Health/Disaster</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Affordability</th>
<th>Family/Friends</th>
<th>Rent to Own</th>
<th>Job Relocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.</td>
<td>The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.</td>
<td>Convenient access to services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.</td>
<td>Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.</td>
<td>The quality and proximity of the local school.</td>
<td>The local crime rate or perception of safety.</td>
<td>The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.</td>
<td>The closeness of the property to family and friends.</td>
<td>The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.</td>
<td>Factors related to a new job, career change, or retirement.</td>
<td>Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.</td>
<td>Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.</td>
<td>Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Texas: Why Choose That Neighborhood?
**REGIONAL COMPARISON: Why Choose that Neighborhood?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERALL RANK</th>
<th>HOUSTON</th>
<th>DALLAS-FORT WORTH</th>
<th>AUSTIN</th>
<th>SAN ANTONIO</th>
<th>CORPUS CHRISTI</th>
<th>RURAL-OTHER AREAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Neighborhood</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Crime</td>
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<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
</tr>
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<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Schools</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
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<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
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<td>Traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Hipness</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Leave College</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to Read This Chart**

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Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

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**Chart Key** — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Property**: Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer's decision.
- **Neighborhood**: The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.
- **Convenience**: Convenient access to services or amenities including grocery stores, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.
- **Traffic**: Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.
- **Schools**: The quality and proximity of the local school.
- **Crime**: The local crime rate or perception of safety.
- **Affordability**: The home prices, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.
- **Family/Friends**: The closeness of the property to family and friends.
- **“Hipness”**: The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.
- **Job Relocation**: Factors related to a new job, career change, or retirement.
- **Rent to Own**: Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.
- **Relationship Change**: Change in relationship status or to establish one's own household.
- **Health/Disaster**: Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.
- **Leave College**: Leaving or attending college.

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**Figure 10. Regional Comparison: Why Choose That Neighborhood?**
Texans Overall

Across the board, the property characteristics are again by far the most important part of the housing location decision for all Texans, followed closely in all cases (except two: millennials and low-income households) by the neighborhood’s reputation and amenities. Convenience, crime, and traffic round out the most important factors that Texans in all groups use to choose a neighborhood. This likely indicates that while the house is most important, the livability of the neighborhood trumps other factors. Affordability and family rank in the next group most frequently. Traffic considerations are in the upper half across most demographic groups.

Relocating due to a job or career change drops significantly at the neighborhood scale. This is because people generally have to relocate cities when they get a new job but do not necessarily have to move if their new job is in the same city.

Singles versus Couples

As one might imagine, couples place a significantly greater importance on school quality than singles and make sacrifices in other areas to get it. In the case of singles, while school quality is still important in their location process (likely because of the notion of having future children or that better schools roughly equal better neighborhoods), the factor ranks near the bottom of their list. And while property is first for both singles and couples, it is significantly more important for couples.

For singles, locating near family and friends and making the transition from renting to owning are much more important than for couples, perhaps reflecting the importance of a support system for those living on their own, while partners play that role for each other. Singles give up more concern for affordability than do couples.

Children versus No Children

Families with children (not surprisingly) place a significantly high value on school quality when selecting a neighborhood—much more so than couples. These families, like couples, also place a slightly higher importance on crime in an area, expressing a higher sensitivity to this than most other groups.

Those without children, however, give significantly greater importance to the traffic, convenience, and affordability of the neighborhood. The hipness of the neighborhood is a significant factor for childless owners, while not making the list for those with children. This again shows a relative hierarchy of need: those without dependents can place their attention on things important to their quality of life rather than the needs of others.

Income Considerations

The differences between income tiers appear to dominate the movement in the chart. Affordability and nearness to family and friends fill out the top three spots with low-income households. They are more sensitive to the price of a neighborhood than other income tiers and therefore might have more limited choices. They also likely rely heavily on family and friends
for support and child care. These families are less sensitive to neighborhood reputation and crime in the area—perhaps due to their lack of options compared to high-income households rather than to their level of concern.

As income increases, concerns about affordability, family/friends factors, and transitioning from renting to owning decline. Neighborhood factors, convenience, and crime factors increase. Hipness becomes a significant factor only for high-income buyers/renters. Again, the wealthier are able to afford and demand more convenience and amenities than other tiers.

**Generational Divides**

When choosing a neighborhood, while each generation of Texans holds a unique set of values, the same set of four factors are at the top. All three generations value the property most of all, followed by neighborhood reputation and amenities, crime rate, and the convenience of services near them. Millennials, though, place a significantly higher importance on convenience than do older generations. Millennials also view traffic, affordability, the hipness of the area, and transitioning from renting to owning much more importantly than other generations. This could indicate a greater desire to be in the midst of the action rather than in a quieter location and an ability to ignore concerns about issues such as school quality or job relocation.

Conversely, baby boomers place a higher value on nearness to family and friends or moving, perhaps due to health reasons, and less on traffic and school quality than other generations. This could then indicate that reaching a level of comfort before or at retirement is more important than those factors would have been earlier in life.

Generation X values schools extremely highly but values nearness to family and friends lower than both other groups. This could indicate that this age group places a higher value on locating near amenities for their children than other family or social concerns.

**Additional Findings**

While not presented in the chart, those who choose to rent consider the hipness of the neighborhood and the convenience of all the surrounding services much more important than do buyers.

**Why Choose That Specific Home?**

Respondents were asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the specific house they chose. This question takes a closer look at those factors that place the property at or near the top of every demographic. What about that house causes Texans to value other factors much lower in their location decision?

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) by group can be seen in Figure 11, along with a regional comparison in Figure 12 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figures).
How to Read This Chart

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Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey.

- **Price**: Final price of the home.
- **Bathrooms**: The number of bathrooms.
- **Year Built**: The year the property was built or renovated.
- **Utilities**: The average cost of utilities.
- **Bedrooms**: The number of bedrooms.
- **Size**: The square footage of the home.
- **Lot Size**: The property lot size or acreage.
- **Must Haves**: The presence of a particular upgrade feature the buyer could not live without.
- **Utilities**: The average cost of utilities.
- **Lot Size**: The property lot size or acreage.
- **Yard**: The presence or absence of a yard.

Figure 11. Texas: Why Choose That House?
## REGIONAL COMPARISON: Why Choose that House?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERALL RANK</th>
<th>HOUSTON</th>
<th>DALLAS-FORT WORTH</th>
<th>AUSTIN</th>
<th>SAN ANTONIO</th>
<th>CORPUS CHRISTI</th>
<th>RURAL OTHER AREAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>House Type</td>
<td>House Type</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bedrooms</td>
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<td>Bedrooms</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Size</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Size</td>
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<td>Bathrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
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<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Price**: Final price of the home.
- **House Type**: Types such as single-family detached, condominiums, townhouses, multifamily, etc.
- **Bedrooms**: The number of bedrooms.
- **Bathrooms**: The number of bathrooms.
- **Size**: The square footage of the home.
- **Lot Size**: The property lot size or acreage.
- **Yard**: The presence or absence of a yard.
- **Utilities**: The average cost of utilities.
- **Must-Haves**: The presence of a particular upgrade feature the buyer could not live without.
- **Year Built**: The year the property was built or renovated.

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Figure 12. Regional Comparison: Why Choose That House?
Texans Overall

First, all the factors surveyed about why a person chose a particular property played a significant role in the process. None of the factors were unimportant among any demographic. This indicates that when searching for a new property, greater importance may be placed on property-specific factors than on some of the factors associated with location.

Both price and the type of house (single-family detached, townhome, condominium, multifamily, etc.) nearly tie for first place when buyers are choosing a home. Buyers appear to first look at their price range and then narrow the field down to the type of structure. After these decisions are made, bedrooms are the most frequently considered. Home size, yard size, and the number of bathrooms are in the next most frequently considered group of factors.

Singles versus Couples

The primary differences between singles and couples in purchasing a home lie in the role that price plays (including utilities) and the yard. The cost factors are valued more highly by singles than by couples, likely due to lower incomes. Couples, on the other hand, value homes with yards and larger lot size more importantly than singles.

Couples score all factors (except costs) higher overall than singles do, even if they are ranked the same. This means that all these factors are generally considered more carefully by couples than singles, and singles are likely more flexible in the criteria they use to find a home.

Children versus No Children

Households with children strikingly resemble the same patterns as those of couples (and similarly so with those with no children and singles). Overall, this is not surprising: the type of house is the most important factor, and those with children rank all factors more important with the exception of those concerning the cost of living.

The primary difference, then, between couples and families with children (since the singles and couples cohorts are nearly identical to those without and with children, respectively) lies in the size of the house versus the presence of a yard. Families with children value the amount of living space far above the presence of a yard (it being almost a luxury).

Income Considerations

Not surprisingly, the home price and cost of utilities become greater issues as a buyer’s income declines. Middle-income buyers place a significantly higher importance on home price and cost of utilities than do high-income buyers. Low-income buyers put a greater importance on both as well.

Low-income buyers put significantly less importance on the year the property was built, the type of house (whether it is a single-family home, townhouse, or condominium), and particular upgrades that they want. These buyers appear to look more for basics within their price range: whether the house serves their needs, how many bedrooms it has, and whether it has a yard.
**Generational Divides**

The generational views on choosing a home are similar, with price, house type, and the number of bedrooms being at the top of all lists. Millennials place a significantly higher importance on what they can afford than do older buyers, likely due to their relative newness to the market.

Millennials value the yard size more and number of baths less than the other generations. Baby boomers, however, place much less value on basics such as the number of bedrooms, the number of bathrooms, and the cost of utilities. Baby boomers, instead, are able to focus much more attention on upgrades and the overall size of the home than other generations.

**Additional Findings**

Not surprisingly, renters place a significantly higher importance on the cost of utilities over buyers. However, they place a lower importance on square footage and price.

**Other Reasons**

The survey gave respondents the opportunity to supply any other reasons that may have trumped everything else or factored greatly into their buyer’s decision to move where they did. Only 30 percent of respondents commented, but their comments are revealing.

The most common reason cited as a deal clincher for their client involved something specific to the house—usually having to do with a particular upgrade (e.g., granite countertops, a larger garage, a pool, or the view) or the condition of the home (whether it was new construction with custom upgrades, newly renovated, or prime for remodeling) (Figure 13). Even though must-have home upgrades usually rank near the bottom in the overall rank of importance, this factor appears to be the one that sold the buyer.

**Figure 13. Open Responses Given for Texas.**
Transportation concerns contributed another fifth of those other reasons. Respondents said that many of their clients wanted to be close to work, family, friends, or nearby amenities and entertainment options. In the previous neighborhood section, these responses represent a balanced mixture of convenience, family and friends, and traffic. In many cases, buyers initially wanted to balance a work commute with other factors, such as nearness to family, a spouse’s work commute, or the distance between work and their children’s school. However, the results suggest that while this was initially important to the client, other factors pushed transportation concerns lower on the list—factors such as price, the neighborhood, convenience, and ultimately the property itself. Many of these factors also appear in the list of deal-clinching factors.

Access to public transit or walkable and bikeable communities also appears significantly in these comments. This was especially true for buyers in many of the larger urban areas where access to public transit or walkable and bikeable communities is becoming more popular for developers and cities in order to attract different demographics.
The Austin Metropolitan Area
The Austin metropolitan area has been rapidly growing over the last decade, frequently noted as one of the (if not the) fastest growing large metropolitan areas in the United States. An infusion of technology, culture, and young people from around the state and the nation has contributed to the metropolitan area’s rapid growth. When residents move to or within the city, what are the most important factors they use to determine where they live?

This section summarizes the survey results from Austin REALTORS® about their last transaction and the most important factors their clients considered when deciding where to live. More information about the questions asked and their results can be found in previous sections of this report, “Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire,” and “Appendix D: Austin Data Tables.”

**Demographic Profile**

Understanding who lives in Austin is important for ascertaining a deeper knowledge about how and why people choose to live where they do. As of 2015, the Texas State Demographer estimates an approximate 2,000,000 people live in the Austin metropolitan area. Of this cohort, each generation is split roughly evenly with the exception of baby boomers, whose population is at least 4 percent less than other groups. Figure 14 provides a demographic snapshot of the Austin metropolitan area included in this survey (5, 6, 7, 8).

While a significant percentage of the area’s households make less than $35,000 per year, this percentage is lowest compared to other urban areas studied, likely due to a high cost of living. Income is otherwise spread relatively evenly, with the median household income around $65,500.

![Figure 14. Austin Metropolitan Area Demographic Profile.](image-url)
While race was not a factor calculated in this survey, knowing the racial composition of the Austin area is still important. Austin remains majority Anglo with a secondary and growing Hispanic population, both comprising 85 percent of the total population. Slightly less than half of the population is married and less than half have children. The proportion of those with children is significantly higher compared to other urban areas and the state in general.

**Housing Profile**

The Austin metropolitan area includes Travis and Williamson Counties as well as the surrounding counties of Hays, Caldwell, and Bastrop. Of the respondents surveyed, 84 percent of their last transactions were for home purchases. The remaining 14 percent either leased or rented.

From the survey, 58 percent of all home sales in the Austin area were less than $300,000, with another 22 percent between $300,000 and $400,000, making Austin the most expensive housing market in the survey (Figure 15). The distribution of surveyed sales prices compared to actual sales prices in Austin in 2015 reveals a close correlation between the two, giving validity to the local responses. Rental properties under $1,500 per month represent more than half of the rental/lease transactions, with over 95 percent under $2,000 per month.

![Figure 15. Survey Distribution of Austin Home Sales Prices Compared to Actual Sales.](image)

**How to Read the Ranking Charts**

The ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of the three ranking charts in this chapter and their corresponding tables in “Appendix D: Austin Data Tables.” The ranking charts show how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

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13 While information on race was collected in the survey, it was purposefully left out of the results in order to prevent discrimination in housing policy that might occur based on the results of this research.
Factors that were not important (scores less than 3 on a 7-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important.

The word significant or its variations represent survey score means that are statistically different from one demographic group to its comparison group.

**Austin versus Texas**

*Choosing the Austin Area*

Like most other metropolitan areas, Austinites rank the property and attributes about the neighborhood (reputation, amenities, and aesthetics) highly compared to other factors. But while Austinites mirror much of the rest of Texas in selecting the area, there are some subtle differences. Austinites rank relocating because of a job or career change much lower than any other metropolitan area except Corpus Christi. Instead, they value the area’s low crime rate and hipness more than their fellow Texans.

*Choosing a Neighborhood*

However, when selecting a specific neighborhood, crime plays a much lower part in the decision. Instead, traffic becomes much more relevant. Traffic congestion and commute times seem to be more strongly connected to neighborhood attributes and convenience. The hip factor of the area again plays an important role (Houston is the only other metropolitan area in Texas where this is important).

*Selecting the Right House*

Like every other area in Texas, the home itself is the most important factor in the housing location decision. And like many of the larger metropolitan areas, price remains the most important factor. In fact, Austin mirrors the rest of Texas except for less importance placed on the size of the lot (as in Houston). Residents in both locations are likely more accustomed to higher-density living than residents in other areas.

**Why Move to Austin?**

Respondents were first asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the Austin metropolitan area. This question was only asked if the respondents indicated their client moved from out of state or from another metropolitan area. All the ranked factors in this section are under this context.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 16 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
AUSTIN: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Affordability</th>
<th>Overall Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave College</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to Read This Chart**

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of the chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I.

The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

N.A. — There were not enough responses in this demographic to reach the statistically appropriate sample size for analysis.

**Chart Key** — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>The quality and proximity of the local school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>The local crime rate or perception of safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>The closeness of the property to family and friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
<td>Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave College</td>
<td>Leaving or attending college.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16. Austin: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?
Austinites Overall

Austin respondents noted that the specific property their buyer chose is by far the most important factor when deciding where to live. While the house itself is the primary focal point of the location decision, it is not necessarily why people move to a new state or city. For moving to the Austin area, relocating due to Austin’s low crime rate, unique reputation, or a new job or career change is the most important.

Generally, the affordability of the metropolitan area does not play that important of a role for those moving from another area. This could indicate that while real estate prices are rising in Austin, the area is still fairly affordable when compared to other tech-centered locations in the United States.

Singles versus Couples

Singles differ the most from any other demographic moving to Austin, primarily being much more sensitive to the affordability of the area, ranking this as the most important factor for moving to Austin. Singles care much less about the property itself, the neighborhood, or any convenience factors, but instead view being closer to family or friends as a deciding factor.

Couples, however, give extremely high importance to moving to the metropolitan area based on the types of property available. This may also be reflective of the area’s relative affordability.

Children versus No Children

While there are no significantly different ratings of importance between those with and without children, families with children tend to rank the area’s traffic and school quality much higher than those without children. These families are also the least likely to move to the metropolitan area because of a job change.

However, a new job or family and friends are more important for those without children. Additionally, Austin’s reputation as a cool city may make a greater difference to these buyers.

Income Considerations

The sample size for low-income households moving to the Austin area from another state or metropolitan area was too low to create a reasonable estimate of importance rankings, so they are not included in this examination. The middle- and high-income buyers do not have significantly different ratings, although middle-income buyers cite more reasons to move to the area (health, disaster, and relationship changes) than other demographics. Both groups do give a higher importance to the convenience Austin offers, and high-income buyers place extreme importance on the house itself.

Generational Divides

Differences between generations are slight but fairly pronounced. Baby boomers are more concerned about crime and nearness to family and friends than those younger than they are. Additionally, they are more likely to move to the area for health concerns.
Millennials, while generally similar to Generation X in most factors, rank the quality of the city, its reputation, and amenities much higher than others. These buyers care more about Austin’s reputation, traffic, and hipness and less about schools than their older neighbors. Baby boomers, as might be expected, do not even consider schools or the hipness of the city when relocating.

**Additional Findings**

Buyers who are underemployed moving to Austin are much more likely to cite being close to family and friends or moving due to health or a disaster than any other group.

**Why Choose That Neighborhood?**

Respondents were next asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the particular neighborhood within Austin. This question was asked of all respondents regardless of where their clients moved. The ranked factors in this section reveal the importance for when buyers are choosing a neighborhood instead of a metropolitan area.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 17 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
**Figure 17. Austin: Why Choose That Neighborhood?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Rank</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Relationship Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Health/Disaster</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Leave College</td>
<td>Leave College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Kids</th>
<th>With Kids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>Hipness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Leave College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sharing Change</td>
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<td>Relationship Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Leave College</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Hipness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>Leave College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
<td>Leave College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hipness</td>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Relocation</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>Leave College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
<td>Leave College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to Read This Chart**
The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds to the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

**Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:**

- **Property:** Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.
- **Neighborhood:** The aesthetics of downtown, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.
- **Convenience:** Convenient access to services or amenities including grocery, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.
- **Traffic:** Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.
- **“Hipness”:** The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.
- **Schools:** The quality and proximity of the local school.
- **Crime:** The local crime rate or perception of safety.
- **Affordability:** The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.
- **Family/Friends:** The closeness of the property to family and friends.
- **Rent to Own:** Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.
- **Relationship Change:** Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.
- **Health/Disaster:** Health concerns or relocation after a disaster.
- **Leaving or Attending College:** Leaving or attending college.
**Austinites Overall**

Property is, as with the metropolitan area choice, the most important factor in the housing location decision and remains so across every case when buyers are selecting a neighborhood. This is distantly followed by the neighborhood’s reputation, amenities, and convenience. The distance in ranking (even though these are the top three) reveals that in Austin, when a buyer finds the right house, it does not matter as much what neighborhood it is in (or many other factors).

Traffic congestion, crime in the area, and the general affordability of the neighborhood follow distantly after the top three. While these are important factors and likely play an important role initially, they drop in importance when other more tangible factors present themselves. The neighborhood’s hipness also more noticeably comes into play at this scale.

Relocating due to a job or career change drops significantly at this scale. This is likely due to the notion that people generally have to relocate cities when they get a new job but do not necessarily have to move if their new job is in the same city but farther away.

**Singles versus Couples**

Understandably, couples weigh schools much higher in their location decision than singles. This includes those who do not yet have children, likely showing an eventual desire for children. Couples are also more sensitive to the neighborhood’s crime rate or having to relocate due to a job change.

Singles, on the other hand, consider nearness to family and friends more important than their coupled counterparts. These buyers are also much more interested in making the transition from renting to owning a home.

**Children versus No Children**

The appreciation for quality schools dramatically increases for those with children, rising to one of the highest levels in any Texas metropolitan area and displacing convenience, crime, traffic, and affordability.

As a stark contrast, those without children place a much higher importance on factors such as affordability, traffic, and the hipness of the neighborhood.

**Income Considerations**

While middle- and high-income households are relatively similar to each other and to the overall case in Austin, low-income households reveal a dramatically different pattern for concerns about finding a home. These families rely heavily on being located close to family and friends—likely as a support system—and the quality of the local schools. Low-income households also place a very low importance on the crime of the area, ranking it near the bottom of the list. This may likely be due to a lack of choice. Low-income households weigh being in a cool neighborhood higher than middle- or high-income households.
Generational Divides

While baby boomers and Generation X are fairly similar, millennials differ dramatically. Traffic congestion and travel time are extremely important to millennials, jumping to the number-two spot just under the home itself. Affordability and the hipness of the neighborhood also make significant increases in importance for millennials over other generations, echoing those with no children.

Baby boomers, on the other hand, score most attributes as lower importance than other generations, putting basics such as the property and convenience of the neighborhood lower in importance than the other generations (even though they are ranked the same in the chart). Baby boomers also care much less about traffic and much more about nearness to family and friends than other cohorts.

While Generation X represents a middle ground between baby boomers and millennials, Generation X does noticeably place a high importance on school quality. This is likely due to a greater number of them having school-age children.

Additional Findings

Renters are more likely to select a neighborhood based on relocating for a job, changing a relationship status (e.g., getting married), or leaving college.

Why Choose That Specific Home?

Respondents were finally asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the specific house they chose. This question takes a closer look at those factors that place the property at or near the top of every demographic. What about that house makes Austinites weigh all other factors much lower in their location decision?

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 18 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
AUSTIN: Why Choose that House?

How to Read This Chart
The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Price**: Final price of the home.
- **House Type**: Types such as single-family detached, condominiums, townhouses, multifamily, etc.
- **Bedrooms**: The number of bedrooms.
- **Bathrooms**: The number of bathrooms.
- **Size**: The square footage of the home.
- **Lot Size**: The property lot size or acreage.
- **Yard**: The presence or absence of a yard.
- **Year Built**: The year the property was built or renovated.
- **Utilities**: The average cost of utilities.
- **Must-Haves**: The presence of a particular feature the buyer could not live without.

Figure 18. Austin: Why Choose That House?
Austinites Overall
While Austinites rate price as the most important factor overall, not every demographic sees it that way, with many looking more at the type of house (or townhome, condominium, duplex, etc.) they wish to purchase. Over the past few years, the housing stock in Austin has diversified, giving residents many more choices than before.

Austinites value choice in their options: both the size of the home and whether the property has a yard rank highly overall and among many types of buyers.

Singles versus Couples
While singles value price, couples value the type of property—a lot. For couples, the type of home qualifies as so important that it is possibly the deciding factor in many cases. Couples also place a higher importance score on the number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, and square footage even though couples rank them lower than single buyers. This likely indicates a stronger preference and a lower likelihood to settle on a property they do not like.

Instead, singles appear to value elements such as the cost of utilities and must-have upgrades while placing much less value on the lot size or whether the property has a yard. This likely reveals either a preference or affinity toward townhouse or condominium living for singles.

Children versus No Children
Families with children also place an extremely high importance on the type of property they are purchasing in addition to the number of bedrooms and bathrooms. This likely reveals a very practical purchasing decision to ensure the home meets their family’s basic needs.

Those without children closely resemble the same preferences as singles with a couple of exceptions: Buyers without children place a much higher importance on the presence of a yard and the lot size. When compared with families with children, the primary difference is more importance given to square footage.

Income Considerations
When considering income stratification, there are no statistically significant differences between the groups, though ranking differences are present. Low-income households look for factors that meet their needs for the price, ranking the number of bedrooms and bathrooms of utmost importance. The cost of utilities ranks closely to price because these buyers are more sensitive to changes in their monthly costs. For low-income buyers, must-have features are not at all important in their decision.

For high-income buyers, luxuries such as a yard, must-have features, and square footage rank higher than for their middle-income peers. While price is a factor, again the type of home is more important.
Generational Divides

While there are significant differences between generations, they are not unexpected. Baby boomers tend to resemble the preferences seen in high-income buyers, deviating only slightly from them in the Austin area. Baby boomers give much more importance to the presence of a yard and much less importance to bedrooms and bathrooms than other generations.

While millennials resemble Generation X in ranking, Generation X actually differs the most. They place a primary importance on home type and rank the number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, and lot size significantly higher than other generations.

Millennials are much more sensitive to price, making that the deciding factor for them. Millennials also value their space over the number of rooms, ranking square footage significantly higher than others.

Additional Findings

Buyers who look to purchase a home are also much choosier about the type of home, considering factors such as the presence of a yard, lot size, and year built. This would likely indicate that home buyers largely prefer detached American Dream homes than those renting.

Other Reasons

The survey gave respondents the opportunity to supply any other reasons that may have trumped everything else or factored greatly into their buyer’s decision to move where they did. Only 37 percent of respondents commented, but their comments are revealing.

Austin respondents cited something specific to the house as the final deciding factor for their client—usually having to do with a particular upgrade (e.g., granite countertops, a larger garage, a pool, or the view) or the condition of the home (whether it was new construction with custom upgrades, newly renovated, or prime for remodeling) (Figure 19). Even though must-have upgrades usually rank near the bottom in the overall rank of importance, according to respondent comments, this factor appears to be the one that sold the buyer.
Transportation concerns contribute another fifth of those other reasons. Respondents cited that many of their clients want to be close to work, family, friends, or nearby amenities and entertainment options. In the “Why Choose That Neighborhood?” section, these responses represent a balanced mixture of convenience, family and friends, and traffic. In many cases, buyers initially wanted to balance a work commute with other factors, such as nearness to family, a spouse’s work commute, or the distance between work and their children’s school. However, the results suggest that while this was initially important to the client, other factors pushed transportation concerns lower on the list—factors such as price, the neighborhood, convenience, and ultimately the property itself. The one exception to this can be found in millennials, who view traffic and travel times as extremely important to their location decision.

Access to public transit or walkable and bikeable communities appears frequently in these comments—more in Austin than other urban areas. This increased demand is likely due to developers and communities in the area competing for residents in an already competitive market.

Compared to Texas as a whole, Austin respondents cite financial and affordability issues more often as the deciding factor than school quality and crime (which does not even make the list). Affordability may likely continue to be a primary concern for buyers in the future.
The Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area
Everything seems to be bigger in Texas. There are few places that this could not be more true than the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area. As one of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States (fourth largest behind New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago), the area is home to a diverse agglomeration of people and businesses that attracts others from all over the United States and the world. When people move to and within this piece of urban Texas, what are the most important factors they use to determine where they live?

This section looks at the survey results from Texas REALTORS® about their last transaction to summarize the most important factors their clients considered when deciding where to live. More information about the questions asked and their results can be found in previous sections of this report, “Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire,” and “Appendix E: Dallas-Fort Worth Data Tables.”

**Demographic Profile**

Understanding who lives in the metroplex is important for ascertaining a deeper knowledge about how and why people choose to live where they do. As of 2015, the Texas State Demographer estimates over 7,000,000 people live in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, making it one of the largest metropolitan areas in the nation. While Generation X makes up a large portion of the population, the youngest cohort (under 18 years old) slightly edges them out in number. Millennials are close behind, with baby boomers losing ground at 10 percent. Figure 20 provides a demographic snapshot of the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area included in this survey (5, 6, 7, 8).

Almost one-third of the area’s households make less than $35,000 per year, which is still lower than most other urban areas studied and the state as a whole. Income in higher tiers, while not as high as the Austin metropolitan area, closely matches that of Houston. Middle-income households still make up a significant portion of the population, with the median household income around $60,000. This median is second only to Austin.
While race was not a factor calculated in this survey, knowing the racial composition of the Dallas-Fort Worth area is still important. The metroplex has no racial majority—a more common phenomenon in recent years and likely a continuing trend. Anglos and Hispanics make up a significant portion of the population at 76 percent. However, the black population in the metroplex is one of the largest in the state (second only to Houston) at 15 percent. The metroplex has the highest marriage/paired rate when compared to other metropolitan areas but is comparable to the rest of the state for households with children.

**Housing Profile**

The Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area includes Dallas and Tarrant Counties and the counties surrounding them, including the areas of Denton, Arlington, Plano, and Frisco. Of the respondents surveyed, 89 percent of their last transactions were for home purchases. The remaining 11 percent either leased or rented.

Sixty-nine percent of all home sales in the survey were less than $300,000; 16 percent were greater than $400,000 (Figure 21). The distribution of surveyed sales prices compared to actual sales prices in the Dallas-Fort Worth area in 2015 reveals a close correlation between the two, giving validity to the local responses. Rental properties under $1,500 per month represented almost half of the rental/lease transactions. However, nearly a third were between $1,500 and $2,000; the highest rental rate bracket comprised 11 percent of the transactions.

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14 While information on race was collected in the survey, it was purposefully left out of the results in order to prevent discrimination in housing policy that might occur based on the results of this research.
How to Read the Ranking Charts

The ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of the three ranking charts in this chapter and their corresponding tables in “Appendix E: Dallas-Fort Worth Data Tables.” The ranking charts show how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than 3 on a 7-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important.

The word *significant* or its variations represent survey score means that are statistically different from one demographic group to its comparison group.

Dallas-Fort Worth versus Texas

Choosing the Dallas-Fort Worth Area

What is the number-one factor causing a move to the metroplex? Jobs. While most Texans generally indicated that something about the property they chose trumped all other factors, in the metroplex, relocating due to a new job or career change takes the number-one spot. New residents also value the metroplex’s transportation, convenience, and schools more than in other Texans metropolitan areas.

Choosing a Neighborhood

However, when area buyers choose a neighborhood, they mirror the majority of Texans, placing the highest value on the property, neighborhood reputation, crime rate, and convenience. Like the other large metropolitan areas, traffic is more important than affordability, schools, family/friends, and job relocation factors. However, North Texans pay closer attention to a
neighborhood’s crime rate and schools than buyers in other metropolitan areas (with the exception of Houston for crime and Corpus Christi for schools).

Selecting the Right House
Like other areas in Texas, the home itself is the most important factor in the housing location decision. And like many of the larger metropolitan areas, price remains the most important factor. Metroplex buyers do not differ from other Texans in what they view as important factors for selecting a home, noting the home’s price as the number-one factor. North Texans also value the house type (single-family detached, townhouse, condominium, multifamily, etc.), the number of bedrooms, and the square footage over other factors.

Why Move to Dallas-Fort Worth?
Respondents were asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area. This question was only asked if the respondents indicated their client moved from out of state or from another metropolitan area.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 22 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
### How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

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**Chart Key** — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Job Relocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>The quality and proximity of the local school.</td>
<td>Factors related to a new job, career change, or retirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>The local crime rate or perception of safety.</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>The closeness of the property to family and friends.</td>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>“Happiness”</td>
<td>Leave College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Figure 22. Dallas-Fort Worth: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?**
North Texans Overall
North Texas respondents cited a job relocation or career change as the primary reason their clients chose to move to the metroplex. This was closely followed by some attribute about the property they chose. While it is unlikely the house is a primary reason for the move to the city, it does indicate that the house itself plays an important role in the location decision.

Elements describing the area, such as neighborhood reputation and convenience, the metropolitan area’s traffic, crime rate, and affordability, are also listed as important factors in moving to the area. While school quality and nearness to family and friends do appear on the list, these do not appear to be that important in the decision process.

Singles versus Couples
Single buyers appear to weigh the quality of the metroplex’s neighborhoods—their reputation, aesthetics, etc.—as the most significant factor when deciding to move to the metropolitan area. While this is likely not the primary reason to move to the metropolitan area (i.e., likely moved for a job), this factor may have helped the metroplex beat out other cities that could have been in the running. Singles are also much more sensitive to the affordability of the area. The metroplex attracts many from outside the state, so the metropolitan area may be particularly attractive as a less-expensive option.

Couples, on the other hand, are more likely to be influenced by the type of housing, the area’s overall crime rate, and school quality over other factors. Neighborhood factors and affordability are less important for couples than singles.

Children versus No Children
Families with children appear to be drawn to the metropolitan area more for the housing opportunities over buyers without children. For them, school quality is a factor, while it is not even considered for those without children. These families also tend to give more importance to the area’s crime rate than those without children.

Buyers with no children, on the other hand, give much more importance to the metropolitan area’s traffic problems and slightly greater influence to being located near family and friends.

Income Considerations
Middle- and low-income households are more likely to move to the metropolitan area due to a job change, while high-income buyers tend to rank many Metroplex attributes more important (including the neighborhood quality, crime, and convenience). Most of all, they place an extremely high importance on the house.

Low-income buyers are more sensitive to the area’s crime rate and traffic, giving these a higher importance ranking than the other income groups. They place a very low importance on the neighborhood quality (reputation, aesthetics, and amenities), likely because their job and property choices are more limited.
Middle-income buyers make purchase decisions with low emphasis on differences in crime levels but place a much higher importance on the affordability of the metropolitan area compared to the other income groups.

**Generational Divides**

The three generations have property and job relocation decisions at the top of their choice set for a move to the metroplex. Neighborhood factors are also rated highly across the groups. Millennials are much less concerned about convenience in their home decision and more concerned about traffic issues than the other generations.

Crime and affordability issues vary across the three generation rankings, with millennials and baby boomers caring more about affordability and Generation X caring more about crime. Generation X and millennials rank school issues as important, while baby boomers do not.

Millennials’ attraction to the metropolitan area because of a job, the area’s affordability, and traffic likely reflect their relative newness to the employment community.

**Additional Findings**

There are no significant differences between renters and owners or between employed and underemployed populations.

**Why Choose That Neighborhood?**

Respondents were next asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the particular neighborhood within the Dallas-Fort Worth area. This question was asked of all respondents regardless of where their clients moved. The ranked factors in this section reveal the importance for when buyers are choosing a neighborhood instead of a metropolitan area.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 23 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
Figure 23. Dallas-Fort Worth: Why Choose That Neighborhood?

How to Read This Chart
The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey.

- **Property**
  - The quality and proximity of the local school

- **Neighborhood**
  - The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.

- **Convenience**
  - Convenient access to services or amenities including grocery, entertainment, etc.

- **Traffic**
  - Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.

- **Hipness**
  - The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.

- **Rent**
  - Transferring from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.

- **Job Relocation**
  - Factors related to a new job, career change, or retirement.
North Texans Overall

Overall, the property (and its attributes) far surpasses the other factors in choosing a home location. This likely indicates a general willingness by North Texans to pick the house they want regardless of other factors surrounding them.

A second tier of factors all closely ranked together includes attributes about the neighborhood (its reputation, crime rate, and convenience). The disparity between property and neighborhood attributes could reveal a wide selection of similar neighborhoods for all types of buyers; many are similar, so the choice is more about the house and its convenience to them than the neighborhood itself. Traffic concerns rank ahead of affordability, schools, and nearness to family and friends in neighborhood choices among the lower significance factors.

Singles versus Couples

While the property itself and neighborhood reputation rank the same for both groups, couples place a significantly higher importance on these two than do singles. Couples also rank aspects such as school quality, crime, and traffic as more important.

Singles, on the other hand, tend to place a much higher importance on the affordability of a neighborhood and nearness to friends and family than do couples. Singles are also more likely to be experiencing a change in relationship status or establishing their own household.

Children versus No Children

Buyers with children make decisions similarly to couples in their search for a home location. Families with children, not surprisingly, place a much higher importance on the neighborhood schools than those without children.

Buyers without children rank convenience over other neighborhood quality factors and place a significantly higher importance on traffic concerns and affordability—ahead of nearness to family and friends. These buyers are also much more likely to evaluate how hip the neighborhood is.

Income Considerations

Property is the most important consideration across all income categories, with the affordability of the area mattering much more to middle-income buyers than to low- or high-income buyers. This includes things such as taxes, home price, utilities, and overall cost of living. They also place a higher importance on being convenient than do other groups.

Low-income buyers instead are extremely sensitive to the crime rate in the neighborhood, likely because affordable areas for this group have higher crime rates. This corresponds with their significantly low importance given to neighborhood aesthetics and traffic. Low-income households also find that nearness to family and friends and quality schools are paramount to a good location. This likely indicates the need to rely on these institutions for support and child care.
For high-income buyers, area affordability and nearness to family and friends are much lower considerations in the location decision. Instead, high-order luxuries such as neighborhood amenities, traffic, and the neighborhood’s hipness are all important factors.

**Generational Divides**

Though not necessarily reflected in the rankings, millennials differ quite a bit from other generations in the metroplex, rating many factors much more importantly than other generations. Millennials rate things such as affordability, the hipness of the neighborhood, and transitioning from renting to owning significantly higher than both other age groups. They also rate traffic and short commutes higher than baby boomers, and the crime rate and convenience of a neighborhood higher than Generation X.

Generation X gives substantially high importance to the quality of schools in an area and much lower consideration to living near friends and family. Baby boomers, on the other hand, place a much higher value on living near family and friends and the overall crime rate of the area.

For millennials, most of these factors are much more important to them than to the other two groups, potentially indicating a higher sensitivity to neighborhood differences than other generations.

**Additional Findings**

North Texas respondents reported that clients who are purchasing a home desire to be closer to family and friends significantly more than those who rent.

**Why Choose That Specific Home?**

Respondents were finally asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the specific house they chose. This question takes a closer look at those factors that place the property at or near the top of every demographic. What about that house made North Texans weigh all other factors much lower in their location decision?

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 24 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
### How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

### Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Final price of the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Type</td>
<td>Types such as single-family detached, condominiums, townhouses, multifamily, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedrooms</td>
<td>The number of bedrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>The number of bathrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>The year the property was built or renovated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>The average cost of utilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>The presence of a particular upgrade feature the buyer could not live without.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Figure 24. Dallas-Fort Worth: Why Choose That House?**
North Texans Overall

When looking at the property, the price of the home and type of home roughly tie for first place (price barely beating out type). This could indicate that both of these factors are independent of one another and yet are still primary decision factors. The number of bedrooms follows in importance, with attributes about the size, presence of a yard, and number of bathrooms staggering behind.

This ranking exactly follows the preferences of all Texans. Also, while there are few dramatic movements, there are still several significant differences in importance.

Singles versus Couples

While the differences in ranking between singles and couples are subtle, there is a stark difference in the top factor for choosing a home: singles focus on price, and couples focus on the type of house. Both of these respective factors could be considered the primary decision point for their groups.

Aside from the type of house, couples place a significantly higher importance on the presence of a yard and size of the lot. This, paired with their top consideration, indicates a heavy preference by couples toward single-family detached housing in the metroplex.

Children versus No Children

The similarities between families with children versus those without and singles versus couples is striking. While the type of house is less important to those with children, it still comes in as the most important factor. In this case, however, families with children look more at the number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, and overall square footage than do those without children. This likely reflects their need to accommodate their family over other luxuries.

Buyers without children, however, are able to place a higher importance on luxuries such as the presence (or absence) of a yard and the year the house was built or remodeled.

Income Considerations

For both low- and middle-income buyers, price is by far the most decisive factor in their property decision. In both cases, no other attribute comes close.

Low-income buyers are also more sensitive to whether or not their house meets their needs, giving a higher importance to the number of bedrooms and bathrooms over size factors or the year built. Must-have upgrades are not at all important in their decision.

High-income buyers are able to consider more luxuries, especially things such as must-have upgrades and the square footage of the house.

Generational Divides

While the generations may look different, there are not many differences between them. While baby boomers hold the type of property as the primary decision maker and Generation X uses
price as the top factor, millennials actually are sensitive to both (though not equally—price ranks extremely high for this group).

Similarly, millennials are also more sensitive to the cost of utilities over older generations. Millennials are willing to sacrifice must-have upgrades, the number of bathrooms, and the age of the property for things such as a yard and square footage. This could indicate that more millennials are trying to get into older starter homes (and make sacrifices to get there) than other generations. This could also indicate that millennials are also more willing to live in suburban areas (the American Dream) than popular opinion suggests.

**Additional Findings**

Those buyers looking to purchase rather than rent place a significantly higher importance on the type of house, presence of a yard, and lot size over those renting. This could also indicate a push toward realizing the American Dream.

**Other Reasons**

The survey gave respondents the opportunity to supply any other reasons that may have trumped everything else or factored greatly into their buyer’s decision to move where they did. Only 31 percent of respondents commented, but their comments are revealing.

North Texas respondents cited something specific to the house as the final deciding factor for their client—usually having to do with a particular upgrade (e.g., granite countertops, a larger garage, a pool, or the view) or the condition of the home (whether it was new construction with custom upgrades, newly renovated, or prime for remodeling) (Figure 25). Even though must-have upgrades usually rank near the bottom in the overall rank of importance, this factor appears to be the one that sold the buyer.

![Figure 25. Open Responses Given for Dallas-Fort Worth.](image-url)
Transportation concerns contribute almost another fifth of those other reasons. Respondents said many of their clients want to be close to work, family, friends, or nearby amenities and entertainment options. In the “Why Choose That Neighborhood?” section, these responses represent a balanced mixture of convenience, family and friends, and traffic. In many cases, buyers initially wanted to balance a work commute with other factors, such as nearness to family, a spouse’s work commute, or the distance between work and their children’s school. However, the results suggest that while this was initially important to the client, other factors pushed transportation concerns lower on the list—factors such as price, the neighborhood, its convenience, and ultimately the property itself. The one exception to this can be found in millennials, who view traffic and travel times as extremely important to their location decision. Access to public transit or walkable and bikeable communities appears frequently in these comments.

Compared to Texas as a whole, respondents noted that life circumstances play an above-average role in the housing location decision. These include things such as becoming a homeowner, having a death in the family, lacking other options, and becoming empty nesters.
The Houston Metropolitan Area
Set to become the nation’s third largest city in the coming years (surpassing Chicago), Houston has continued to attract new residents. Though dominated in the past by the oil and gas industry, economic diversification has allowed Houston to weather recent economic events and has not deterred people’s outlook on jobs or the future of the city. Low taxes, a diverse mix of housing options and styles, and continued job prospects have continued to attract new residents year after year. When people move to and within Texas’ largest city, what are the most important factors they use to determine where they live?

This section looks at the survey results from Houston’s REALTORS® about their last transaction to summarize the most important factors their clients consider when deciding where to live. More information about the questions asked and their results can be found in previous sections of this report, “Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire,” and “Appendix F: Houston Data Tables.”

Demographic Profile

Understanding who lives in Houston is important for ascertaining a deeper knowledge about how and why people choose to live where they do within the area. As of 2015, the Texas State Demographer estimates an approximate 6,600,000 people live in the Houston metropolitan area—an area still steadily growing. According to Rice University’s Kinder Institute (9), Houston will surpass Chicago as the third largest city in the U.S. by 2030. Houston’s generational distribution is nearly identical to that of the Dallas-Fort Worth area, with Generation X and the youngest generation making up the highest percentage of the population. However, millennials are more closely matched, and Houston caters to more baby boomers than Dallas or Austin. Figure 26 provides a demographic snapshot of the Houston metropolitan area included in this survey (5, 6, 7, 8).

Houston’s income distribution is also nearly identical to the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area. Almost one-third of the area’s households make less than $35,000 per year, which is still lower than most other urban areas studied and the state as a whole. Income in higher tiers, while not as high as the Austin metropolitan area, closely matches that of Dallas-Fort Worth. Middle-income households still make up a significant portion of the population, with the median household income around $60,000—also almost identical to Dallas-Fort Worth but short of Austin.
Where Houston most notably stands out is in the metropolitan area’s racial and ethnic diversity. Houston not only does not have a single racial majority, but Anglos are also not the largest proportion of the population. In Houston, Hispanics edge out Anglos by 2 percent at 38 percent. Also noteworthy is that Houston has significantly larger black and other racial populations than other urban areas in Texas and the country. According to a report from Rice’s Kinder Institute (10), the racial make-up of Houston’s three primary counties—Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery—has become more evenly distributed over the last 30 years. Fort Bend is now notably one of those most evenly diverse counties in the U.S. This same report also importantly notes that while Houston’s diversity is rare for the U.S., its growth and diversity reflect national trends. What Houston looks like now is likely how much of the nation will look in the coming decades. While race was not a factor calculated in this survey,15 knowing the racial composition of the Houston area is still important, especially to understanding potential trends in housing location choice in other U.S. urban areas.

People in the Houston metropolitan area are split down the middle at 50 percent each single and coupled. This generally reflects the state as a whole. Houston also matches closely with the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex in how many households have children—also comparable to the rest of the state.

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15 While information on race was collected in the survey, it was purposefully left out of the results in order to prevent discrimination in housing policy that might occur based on the results of this research.
Housing Profile

The Houston metropolitan area includes Harris County and the surrounding counties. Of those surveyed, respondents reported 85 percent of their last transactions were for clients purchasing a home. The remaining 15 percent either leased or rented.

Sixty percent of all home sales in the survey were less than $300,000; 25 percent were greater than $400,000 (Figure 27). The distribution of surveyed sales prices compared to actual sales prices in the Houston area in 2015 reveals a relatively close correlation between the two, slightly undersampling lower-priced homes. However, this difference does not significantly detract from the validity of the sample. Rental properties under $1,500 per month represented just over one-third of rental/lease transactions. However, nearly 65 percent were over $1,500, with 18 percent over $2,500 per month. This represented the highest rental rates for any metropolitan area.

How to Read the Ranking Charts

The ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of the three ranking charts in this chapter and their corresponding tables in “Appendix F: Houston Data Tables.” The ranking charts show how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than 3 on a 7-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important.

The word significant or its variations represent survey score means that are statistically different from one demographic group to its comparison group.
Houston versus Texas

Choosing the Houston Area

In Houston, regional home purchase/rent choices are not determined by property characteristics as much as in the rest of Texas; neighborhood charm and amenities are more determinative. Job relocation is the number-one reason new residents move to the city, reflecting the growing and diversifying economy. Neighborhood aspects bump property factors down to third place. Houston is the only Texas city where these priorities are found.

Choosing a Neighborhood

When choosing a neighborhood, Houstonians’ priorities match those of other Texans fairly well. At this scale, finding the right home and finding the right neighborhood are the two most important factors. However, Houstonians are more sensitive to crime (like Dallas-Fort Worth residents) than those in other metropolitan areas of Texas. Additionally, they prioritize nearness to friends and family over affordability (likely due to Houston’s geographic size). Houston and Austin are the only Texas cities to view the hipness of a neighborhood as an important factor.

Selecting the Right House

While many Texans value the size of the house, Houstonians value having (or not having) a yard as more important. They are also similar to Austinites in that they value lot size (big or small) and must-have upgrades significantly more than other Texans.

Why Move to Houston?

Respondents were asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the Houston metropolitan area. This question was only asked if the respondents indicated their client moved from out of state or from another metropolitan area.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 28 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
### How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I.

The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

### Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Property**
  - Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.

- **Neighborhood**
  - The aesthetics and charm, charm, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, historic homes, parks, or the like.

- **Convenience**
  - Convenience services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.

- **Traffic**
  - Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.

- **Relationship Change**
  - Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.

- **Health/Disaster**
  - Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.

- **Hipness**
  - The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.

- **Job Relocation**
  - Factors related to a new job, career change, or retirement.

- **Rent to Own**
  - Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.

- **Schools**
  - The quality and proximity of the local schools.

- **Crime**
  - The local crime rate or perception of safety.

- **Affordability**
  - The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.

- **Family/Friends**
  - The closeness of the property to family and friends.

- **Leave College**
  - Leaving or attending college.

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**Figure 28. Houston: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?**
Houstonians Overall

The most important factor cited by Houston respondents for attracting people to the city is jobs. This is not surprising since the city continues to grow, even after the downturn in oil prices in 2014. Houston’s neighborhoods are the next most important factor, likely indicating a diverse collection of desirable options. However, the property factors do not fall far behind the quality of the neighborhood. Houston has diverse types and styles of neighborhoods.

Singles versus Couples

Singles and couples view Houston’s neighborhoods as very important when looking for a home, ranking them ahead of the property itself. This is especially important for singles because this was ranked the number-one factor, with couples ranking job relocation first and neighborhood reputation second.

Singles and couples ranked their other reasons for moving to the city very similarly. However, singles do rate the transition from renting to owning significantly higher than couples. While school quality is important when considering the metropolitan area for both, singles pay much less attention to it. However, while couples do not consider the city’s hipness at all, it does play a role for singles.

Children versus No Children

Families with children ranked the factors important in choosing the Houston area identically to couples (with one exception, transitioning from renting to owning, but this is overall not an important factor).

As with those with children, buyers without children are heavily influenced to move to the metropolitan area because of a new job. And while others value the quality of the neighborhood, buyers without children are more focused on the area’s housing options and crime rate. These buyers are similar to singles in that they are more likely to be transitioning from renting to owning and view the area’s hipness as a deciding factor.

Income Considerations

Most strikingly, there are very few factors that are significantly important for low-income buyers when choosing to live in Houston. Low-income families are most concerned about nearness to family and friends. Neighborhood quality and reputation as well as Houston’s overall cost of living are next in importance. Concern about crime is the only other significant factor in low-income movers. This group is much less likely to move to the city due to a job change, in contrast to other income groups, but instead moves for health reasons or being displaced by a disaster.

Middle- and high-income buyers move to Houston for similar reasons: job relocation, neighborhood quality and reputation, and crime or convenience concerns. Middle-income buyers are much less sensitive to traffic congestion or commute times than high-income buyers in
choosing the city (though traffic becomes a more important issue when choosing a neighborhood).

**Generational Divides**
Job relocation and career changes dominate the top spots across all generations, followed closely by neighborhood and property factors. Traffic concerns are most important to Generation X and baby boomers, though they fall short of other neighborhood qualities.

Millennials value Houston’s affordability significantly more than baby boomers and Generation X, ranking it third (winning out over neighborhood reputation and aesthetics, which usually score very highly in Houston). Other generations rank affordability at the bottom of their list, indicating that Houston’s relatively affordable housing market is a strong attractor for millennials.

In each case, school quality ranks below traffic (and is not even a factor for baby boomers). Baby boomers, instead, are more likely to be attracted to the metropolitan area to be near friends and family and for the convenience the city offers. Millennials are also the only generation to view the city’s hipness as an important factor for moving there.

**Additional Findings**
People who are looking to buy rather than rent are significantly more sensitive to Houston’s overall cost of living and affordability and are more likely than renters to move to the metropolitan area in order to be close to family and friends.

**Why Choose That Neighborhood?**
Respondents were next asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the particular neighborhood within the Houston area. This question was asked of all respondents regardless of where their clients moved. The ranked factors in this section reveal the importance for when buyers are choosing a neighborhood instead of a metropolitan area.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 29 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
## Houston: Why Choose That Neighborhood?

### Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Property**
  - Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.

- **Schools**
  - The quality and proximity of the local schools.

- **Crime**
  - The local crime rate or perception of safety.

- **Affordability**
  - The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.

- **Convenience**
  - Convenient access to services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.

- **Family/Friends**
  - The closeness of the property to family and friends.

- **Traffic**
  - Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.

- **“Happiness”**
  - The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.

- **Rent to Own**
  - Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.

- **Relationship Change**
  - Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.

- **Health/Disaster**
  - Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.

- **Job Relocation**
  - Factors related to a new job, career change, or retirement.

### How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.
Houstonians Overall

While new residents to Houston are heavily attracted by the metropolitan area’s job market and diverse set of neighborhoods, when buyers actually choose a neighborhood, the property itself wins out. However, other neighborhood factors such as reputation, amenities, area crime, convenience, and traffic all play extremely important roles in selecting a neighborhood. Afterwards, other factors may play a role in deciding in which neighborhood to locate but not a very big one. Traffic concerns are notable here because they rank ahead of other, normally more important factors such as proximity to family and friends, affordability, and schools.

Like Austin, Houston is the only other metropolitan area where residents consider the hipness of an area in selecting their neighborhood. Houston also has a high share of buyers transitioning from renting to owning—a trait found only in Austin and rural parts of the state.

The top five factors affecting the neighborhood location choice are similar across all demographic groups. This stability shows that these factors (especially crime, convenience of services, and transportation) are important to all groups of people.

Singles versus Couples

Singles in Houston rank traffic concerns (congestion and commute times) over any other neighborhood factor (third after the property itself and the neighborhood’s reputation and amenities). This likely points toward transportation issues heavily impacting their daily lives. Singles also note a higher sensitivity to an area’s cost of living, a change in relationship status, or transitioning from renting to owning. Singles also value how hip their neighborhood is, though not above other traditional factors.

Couples, not surprisingly, more highly value the quality of the local schools than singles, indicating they may already have children or soon want them and are planning for the future.

Children versus No Children

Buyers both with and without children make location decisions very similarly, both ranking and scoring the top five primary factors almost identically. However, families with children value locations near quality schools in Houston significantly more than those buyers without children, who instead look at a neighborhood’s affordability.

For buyers without children, school quality still factors as a consideration but not very highly. This could indicate an eye to future children or an association of quality schools with a better neighborhood environment. These buyers also place the highest importance of any group on the hipness of the neighborhood.

Income Considerations

Low-income buyers have a much different set of priorities than any other group in Houston. Affordability and nearness to family and friends are paramount in finding a neighborhood that works. Being close to family and friends ranks much higher for low-income groups than for middle- and high-income buyers, likely as a support system. Property factors are important
(ranking third), but that is the lowest they ranked among all demographic groups. Convenience and transportation play the next most important role, ranking the same as the other income tiers, but are rated far more important. Low-income buyers are also more sensitive to life circumstances over other income tiers, citing relationship changes, transitioning from renting to owning, and health or disaster displacement as important location factors.

Middle- and high-income buyers place more importance on attributes of the property itself, neighborhood reputation and aesthetics, and the crime rate of the area, followed similarly by convenience and traffic concerns. Middle-income buyers also place significantly more importance on affordability than do high-income buyers.

High-income buyers appear to have the luxury to be choosier when selecting a neighborhood location: they place the neighborhood’s reputation, aesthetics, and amenities highest as well as consider the hipness of the neighborhood, similar to low-income buyers. High-income buyers are also significantly less likely to be transitioning from renting to owning.

**Generational Divides**

Nowhere are these factors more different than between generations. Neighborhood reputation and aesthetics increase in importance and crime decreases in importance as buyers age. Attributes of the property vie for the top spot across generations. Traffic concerns, which have generally been important in Houston, rank even higher for millennials and Generation X, above factors such as affordability, school quality, and nearness to family and friends.

Baby boomers are much more likely to weigh the reputation, amenities, and convenience higher than younger generations. They care significantly less about traffic concerns than millennials do and generally do not consider school quality factors at all.

Millennials and Generation X, on the other hand, rate finding the right house much higher (top of the ranking), giving less importance to a neighborhood’s reputation and crime levels. Millennials generally have a larger choice set, considering many more factors than other generations in their location decision, including the hipness of a neighborhood, whether or not they should own versus rent, and other relationship or life changes.

Generation X instead pays far more attention to the quality of the local schools (likely because they have children in school) and rate nearness to family and friends a significantly lower priority.

**Additional Findings**

For those buying a home, affordability and nearness to family and friends are much more important than for those renting in the Houston area, perhaps indicating that the longer-term nature of buying a home is accompanied by interest in nearness to family and friends; shorter-term renters may be more willing to compromise on that aspect.
**Why Choose That Specific Home?**

Respondents were finally asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the specific house they chose. This question takes a closer look at those factors that place the property at or near the top of every demographic. What about that house made Houstonians weigh all other factors much lower in their location decision?

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 30 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
## HOUSTON: Why Choose that House?

### How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

### Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Final price of the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Type</td>
<td>Types such as single-family detached, condominiums, townhouses, multifamily, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedrooms</td>
<td>The number of bedrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>The number of bathrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>The presence or absence of a yard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>The property lot size or acreage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>The year the property was built or renovated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>The average cost of utilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>The presence of a particular upgrade feature the buyer could not live without.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Figure 30. Houston: Why Choose That House?**
Houstonians weigh the price and type of house (single-family detached, townhouse, condominium, multifamily, etc.) equally important as the top consideration, similar to other metropolitan areas. They look for the right type of home at the right price. However, after considering factors such as the number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, square footage, and presence (or absence) of a yard, most other factors drop off in importance. While all factors are important, things such as must-have upgrades, lot size, and the year the property was built do not play a large role in the decision-making process.

Singles versus Couples

Singles and couples look for homes in very similar ways, looking first at price, the type of home, and the number of bedrooms. For singles, however, choosing a specific house is more about the cost of ownership than anything else. Singles rank price as the top consideration when choosing a house and rank the cost of utilities higher than couples.

For couples, having a large lot with a yard is much more important (signaling a preference among couples for suburban-style homes). Couples also place a significantly higher importance on any must-have upgrades that may be on their checklist.

Children versus No Children

The selection process for those with children is nearly identical to couples: the overall ranking is the same, and the importance scores are very similar. Like couples, families with children value the number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, a yard, and upgrades. This displays a pattern of looking for homes that meet basic needs over luxury items.

For those buyers without children, the type of property is more important, likely indicating a preference for multiple types of housing. Again, while the rankings between the two groups are similar, those with children place a higher importance on all other factors except the cost of utilities. These lower scores also reveal a relative flexibility in housing choice, likely giving those with no children a more diverse set of options.

Income Considerations

Low- and middle-income buyers rank price much higher than high-income buyers. In fact, for both groups, this is the defining attribute when choosing a house. For low-income buyers, the type of house also plays a nearly equal importance as price—far higher than other income tiers. Low-income buyers are also much more apt to purchase a property with a yard (ranking yard and lot size higher than others). This bumps the importance of the number of bedrooms lower on the scale, dropping even below the number of bathrooms.

Middle-income buyers, while also giving importance to the presence of a yard, are also sensitive to the cost of living, ranking the cost of utilities significantly higher than high-income buyers (though low-income buyers rate this much higher).
High-income buyers focus more on luxury elements of the home, including things such as the square footage, must-have upgrades, and house type over cost-of-living factors such as price and cost of utilities.

As income rises, the importance of a yard and the number of bathrooms decreases, while the year the home was built and the importance of other must-have upgrades increase.

**Generational Divides**

All three generations agree on their top priorities—price, house type, and the number of bedrooms. Generation X and millennials look more for homes with larger lot sizes and yards. They will likely fill in the housing stock that baby boomers left for more maintainable housing as they begin raising a family. Millennials, while mirroring Generation X, are more sensitive to cost-of-living concerns.

Baby boomers care more about square footage and must-have upgrades and less about yard and lot size than Generation X or millennials. This likely points to a desire to downsize into a smaller but nicer home that is easier to maintain as they near retirement.

**Additional Findings**

Houston respondents noted that for clients buying a home, luxuries such as must-have upgrades, overall square footage, and the year built are more important than for those renting.

**Other Reasons**

The survey gave respondents the opportunity to supply any other reasons that may trump everything else or factor greatly into their buyer’s decision to move where they did. Only 27 percent of respondents commented, but their comments are revealing.

Houston respondents cited something specific to the house as the final deciding factor for their client—usually having to do with a particular upgrade (e.g., granite countertops, a larger garage, a pool, or the view) or the condition of the home (whether it was new construction with custom upgrades, newly renovated, or prime for remodeling) (Figure 31). Even though must-have upgrades usually rank near the bottom in the overall rank of importance, this factor appears to be the one that sold the buyer. Houston has the largest share of house-specific reasons, tying with rural areas of Texas (where buyers presumably have greater control over home customization).
Transportation concerns contribute another fifth of those other reasons. Respondents said many of their clients want to be close to work, family, friends, or nearby amenities and entertainment options. If these factors were mapped to elements in the earlier neighborhood section, these responses would represent a mixture of convenience, family and friends, and traffic. In many cases, buyers initially wanted to balance a work commute with other factors, such as nearness to family, a spouse’s work commute, or the distance between work and their children’s school. However, the results suggest that while this was initially important to the client, other factors pushed transportation concerns lower on the list—factors such as price, the neighborhood, its convenience, and ultimately the property itself. Traffic and transportation issues have continually been a point of concern for Houstonians. This survey reveals that transportation is most important to singles, low-income households, and millennials.

Access to public transit or walkable and bikeable communities appears frequently in the other factor comments—second only to Austin among urban areas. This increased demand is likely due to developers and communities in the area competing for residents by using these amenities as a selling point.

Neighborhood-specific comments were mentioned more than in any other area in Texas. This again might point toward a vibrant and diverse mix of neighborhood types that appeal to a broad spectrum of buyers.
The San Antonio Metropolitan Area
While the seventh largest city in the United States, San Antonio is arguably one of the most affordable. The metropolitan area serves a broad community of families, military personnel, and tourists and acts as a hub for telecommunications and logistics between the United States and Mexico. With a continued military commitment and growing diverse industries, the metropolitan area has continued to grow, even during the shale oil decline. As this community grows, why do people choose this metropolitan area? And once in the area, what are the most important factors they use to determine where they live?

This section looks at the survey results from Texas REALTORS® about their last transaction to summarize the most important factors their clients considered when deciding where to live. More information about the questions asked and their results can be found in previous sections of this report, “Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire,” or “Appendix G: San Antonio Data Tables.”

Demographic Profile

Understanding who lives in San Antonio is important for ascertaining a deeper knowledge about how and why people choose to live where they do. As of 2015, the Texas State Demographer estimates approximately 2,400,000 people live in the San Antonio metropolitan area—slightly larger than Austin. In San Antonio, each generation cohort is split roughly evenly. This differs from some of the larger metropolitan areas that have seen a decline in baby boomers and a significant increase in the youngest generation. Here, millennials also hold their own, whereas in other areas, they make up a slightly smaller portion of the population. Figure 32 provides a demographic snapshot of the San Antonio metropolitan area included in this survey (5, 6, 7, 8).

San Antonio’s distribution of income differs significantly from other large metropolitan areas in Texas, more closely resembling Corpus Christi and the state as a whole. A significant percentage of the area’s households make less than $35,000 per year. Additionally, San Antonio is home to more households in middle-income tiers than any other area studied in this survey or the state as a whole. There are significantly fewer high-income households, second only to the Corpus Christi area. The median income in San Antonio is significantly lower than other areas as well at approximately $53,000—almost identical to the state’s median income.
While race was not a factor calculated in this survey,\textsuperscript{16} knowing the racial composition of the San Antonio area is still important. San Antonio differs dramatically from larger metropolitan areas in that Anglos are not only not the majority, but they are a minority to a Hispanic majority. Hispanics in San Antonio make up over 56 percent of the population. Also unique is that the proportion of black and other racial groups in San Antonio is significantly lower than other metropolitan areas. Combined, these two groups only make up 10 percent of the total population. Only 47 percent of the population is married or paired, which again closely matches Corpus Christi but differs greatly from other metropolitan areas and the state in general. However, the number of households with children more closely aligns with the state and is lower than in larger metropolitan areas.

**Housing Profile**

The San Antonio metropolitan area includes Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe, and Kendall Counties. Of those surveyed, respondents reported 91 percent of their last transactions were for clients purchasing a home. The remaining 9 percent either leased or rented.

Seventy-five percent of all home sales in the survey were less than $300,000; only 6 percent were greater than $500,000, making San Antonio one of the least expensive major metropolitan areas in Texas (Figure 33). The distribution of surveyed sales prices compared to actual sales prices in the San Antonio area in 2015 reveals a close correlation between the two, giving

\textsuperscript{16} While information on race was collected in the survey, it was purposefully left out of the results in order to prevent discrimination in housing policy that might occur based on the results of this research.
validity to the local responses. Rental properties under $1,500 per month represented just over one-half of rental/lease transactions, with the majority between $1,000 and $2,000 per month.

Figure 33. Survey Distribution of San Antonio Home Sales Prices Compared to Actual Sales.

How to Read the Ranking Charts

The ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of the three ranking charts in this chapter and their corresponding tables in “Appendix G: San Antonio Data Tables.” The ranking charts show how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than 3 on a 7-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important.

The word significant or its variations represent survey score means that are statistically different from one demographic group to its comparison group.

San Antonio versus Texas

Choosing the San Antonio Area

While San Antonians follow other Texans in placing a high value on the property itself, the most common attractor to the metropolitan area is jobs. Through a career change, a new military posting, or retirement, jobs bring people to the city. Unlike other areas of Texas, when comparing attributes about the city with other urban areas, the city’s reputation and aesthetics take a back seat to the relatively low crime rate and convenience the community offers.

Choosing a Neighborhood

San Antonians follow the rest of Texans in how they choose a neighborhood, with one exception: the importance of convenience. As with choosing the metropolitan area as a whole, residents
place a significantly higher value on the convenience a neighborhood offers over other factors, including neighborhood aesthetics and crime—something not seen in other metropolitan areas in Texas.

**Selecting the Right House**

San Antonio is one of two metropolitan areas surveyed that places a higher importance on the type of house (single-family detached, townhouse, condominium, multifamily, etc.) over price—the other being Corpus Christi. However, as opposed to Corpus Christi, the type of house and price score nearly equally to each other, indicating a possible resistance to sacrificing either of the two.

**Why Move to San Antonio?**

Respondents were first asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the San Antonio metropolitan area. This question was only asked if the respondents indicated their client moved from out of state or from another metropolitan area. All the ranked factors in this section are under this context.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 34 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
### SAN ANTONIO: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?

#### Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Property</strong></td>
<td>The quality and proximity of the local school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crime</strong></td>
<td>The local crime rate or perception of safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affordability</strong></td>
<td>The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family/Friends</strong></td>
<td>The desirability of the property to family and friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traffic</strong></td>
<td>The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hipness</strong></td>
<td>The aesthetics and charms, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

N.A. — There were not enough responses in this demographic to reach the statistically-appropriate sample size for analysis.

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Figure 34. San Antonio: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?
San Antonians Overall
San Antonians give equal weight to both the property they purchased and circumstances related to a job relocation or career change when considering the metropolitan area. The importance given to the property does not indicate that new residents moved because of a specific house but rather shows the house being a pivotal factor in their location decision.

New residents give higher importance to the convenience that San Antonio neighborhoods and the city as a whole offer (being close to entertainment options, groceries, banks, etc.) over the metropolitan area’s reputation and general aesthetics. More concern is given to the area’s crime rate than other regional factors.

Singles versus Couples
Couples place significantly higher value on the property itself in the metropolitan area, likely indicating attributes about the house (or its affordability) are a primary attractor to the area. (Due to the high military presence, this could also indicate a lack of choice due to housing restrictions.) Couples also place a significantly higher rating on being relocated by a job (also likely influenced by the military) than singles, even though singles rank it higher in importance.

Singles, however, place a significantly lower importance on the metropolitan area’s overall traffic and commute times and the city’s neighborhood reputation and overall aesthetics compared to couples. Instead, they place a much higher importance on nearness to family and friends and the crime rate of the area in attracting them to the metropolitan area. Singles are also much more likely to move to the San Antonio metropolitan area to become homeowners after renting than are couples, pairing well with their views about the area’s affordability (which also ranks higher for singles).

Children versus No Children
Families with children, like couples, also place the property at the top of the importance ranking. Families with children place a much higher value on the reputation and aesthetics of the city’s neighborhood offerings than those without children. Families also rank school quality higher in importance than their counterparts.

Those without children are more likely to be transferred to the metropolitan area for their job. These buyers rate the area’s affordability over traffic concerns, nearness to family and friends, and school quality (in that order).

Income Considerations
The sample size for low-income households moving to the San Antonio area from another state or metropolitan area was too low to create a reasonable estimate of importance rankings.

Middle-income buyers rank the city’s crime rate higher and note that the affordability of the metropolitan area is significantly more important than for high-income buyers. San Antonio’s relatively broad housing selection at affordable prices confirms this. And while middle-income
buyers still look to the convenience of the area’s offerings over the neighborhood’s reputation, both are relatively low on their ranking of importance.

High-income buyers, though, are the only group that emphasizes the quality of neighborhoods in the metropolitan area—in fact, this ranks more important for attracting buyers to the metropolitan area than any other quality. San Antonio’s historic and beautiful neighborhoods are the likely culprit. These buyers also rank school quality higher than middle-income buyers. This is also the only group to consider how hip the metropolitan area is as a deciding factor. For these buyers, San Antonio offers more than jobs; it offers high living.

Generational Divides

Differences in generational attitudes toward moving to San Antonio follow predictable trends. As buyers age, affordability and the city’s convenience become less important, while the city’s crime rate and neighborhood aesthetics, reputation, and amenities (e.g., hike and bike trails and parks) become more important.

Baby boomers differ the most, ranking nearness to friends and family significantly more important and relocating due to a job significantly less important than other generations. Metropolitan area traffic and commute times are hardly a concern.

Generation X, however, pays more attention to regional traffic concerns than the other generations. For them, jobs are what attract them to the city, with area and neighborhood conveniences much lower in importance.

Millennials predominantly move to the metropolitan area for a new job but also consider the metropolitan area attractive due to its affordability, convenience, and traffic concerns. For them, crime is significantly less of an issue, as is the city’s reputation.

Additional Findings

Those looking to purchase a property rank the metropolitan area’s overall affordability as a significantly less important factor than those renting, likely confirming the area’s broad appeal to home buyers.

Why Choose That Neighborhood?

Respondents were next asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the particular neighborhood within the San Antonio area. This question was asked of all respondents regardless of where their clients moved. The ranked factors in this section reveal the importance for when buyers are choosing a neighborhood instead of a metropolitan area.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 35 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
SAN ANTONIO: Why Choose that Neighborhood?

How to Read This Chart
The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

N.A. — There were not enough responses in this demographic to reach the statistically appropriate sample size for analysis.

Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey.

Property
Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.

Neighborhood
The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.

Convenience
Convenient access to services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.

Traffic
Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.

Schools
The quality and proximity of the local school.

Crime
The local crime rate or perception of safety.

Affordability
The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.

Family/Friends
The closeness of the property to family and friends.

Health/Disaster
Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.

Rent to Own
Transferring from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.

Hipness
The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.

Leaving College
Leaving or attending college.

Relationship Change
Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.

How to Read This Chart
The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

N.A. — There were not enough responses in this demographic to reach the statistically appropriate sample size for analysis.

Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey.

Property
Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.

Neighborhood
The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.

Convenience
Convenient access to services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.

Traffic
Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.

Schools
The quality and proximity of the local school.

Crime
The local crime rate or perception of safety.

Affordability
The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.

Family/Friends
The closeness of the property to family and friends.

Health/Disaster
Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.

Rent to Own
Transferring from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.

Hipness
The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.

Leaving College
Leaving or attending college.

Relationship Change
Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.

How to Read This Chart
The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

N.A. — There were not enough responses in this demographic to reach the statistically appropriate sample size for analysis.

Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey.

Property
Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.

Neighborhood
The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.

Convenience
Convenient access to services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.

Traffic
Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.

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Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.

Rent to Own
Transferring from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.

Hipness
The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.

Leaving College
Leaving or attending college.

Relationship Change
Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.
San Antonians Overall
Like most other Texans, when selecting a neighborhood, San Antonians prioritize the neighborhood for the house they like the most; some attribute about the house wins out over all else. However, when selecting a neighborhood, convenient access to entertainment, services, and food beats out the neighborhood’s reputation, aesthetics, and amenities—a practical departure from the rest of the state. Other neighborhood characteristics such as the area’s crime rate, traffic concerns, and affordability follow closely behind.

Singles versus Couples
Singles take convenience a step further than any other group in San Antonio, ranking this as the number-one factor for moving to the neighborhood they did. This contrasts with their view of traffic congestion and travel time, which rank much lower than for most other groups. Singles also note that living near friends and family is of significant importance, ranking just behind neighborhood convenience and attributes of the property.

Couples, however, place a significantly higher importance on the quality of the area schools, traffic, and the neighborhood’s reputation than singles. They are also significantly less likely to be transitioning from renting to owning than singles.

Children versus No Children
While there are no statistically significant differences between buyers with children and those without and they share similar attributes for the top five ranks, how they rank priorities in the neighborhood decision-making process does differ a bit. Most noticeably, buyers with children give the highest ranking to school quality, unlike any other group.

Buyers without children tend to place the neighborhood’s reputation and aesthetics over convenience, a trait shared only by high-income buyers in San Antonio.

Income Considerations
Low-income buyers find considerably fewer attributes important when looking for a neighborhood than other income groups. For them, the affordability of the area rises to the top of the importance list. Convenience drops considerably, giving way to traffic concerns (likely travel time to work). Transitioning from renting to owning is of considerable importance, while factors such as how reputable a neighborhood is drop completely off the list.

Middle-income buyers also place a high value on traffic concerns but are concerned less with the affordability of the neighborhood overall. They also place less importance on a neighborhood’s reputation and aesthetics but instead place a much higher importance on nearness to family and friends than other tiers.

High-income buyers are better able to place a higher importance on the luxury attributes of the neighborhood, such as its reputation and hipness. Traffic concerns rank considerably lower for high-income buyers than the other two income tiers, likely indicating an increased ability to purchase in a neighborhood that offers shorter commutes.
**Generational Divides**

While Generation X and millennials are quite similar to each other, baby boomers differ quite a bit. Baby boomers consider very few factors important overall and rank crime in the area considerably more important than other generations. Baby boomers instead want to be located near friends and family. Baby boomers also care significantly less about traffic and transportation concerns than other generations.

Millennials and Generation X rank factors such as traffic, school quality, and job relocations significantly more important than baby boomers. Generation X ranks how hip a neighborhood is higher than other generations, although it is not an important factor in the decision-making process.

Millennials view neighborhood amenities less important than crime or convenience and instead place significantly higher importance on affordability and transitioning from renting to home ownership.

**Additional Findings**

Those who are looking to buy place a much higher importance on the neighborhood’s reputation, aesthetics, and amenities than do renters.

**Why Choose That Specific Home?**

Respondents were finally asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the specific house they chose. This question takes a closer look at those factors that place the property at or near the top of every demographic. What about that house made San Antonians weigh all other factors much lower in their location decision?

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 36 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

**Chart Key** — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Price**: Final price of the home.
- **House Type**: Types such as single-family detached, condominiums, townhouse, multifamily, etc.
- **Bathrooms**: The number of bathrooms.
- **Bedsrooms**: The number of bedrooms.
- **Lot Size**: The property lot size or acreage.
- **Utilities**: The average cost of utilities.
- **Year Built**: The year the property was built or renovated.
- **Yard**: The presence or absence of a yard.
- **Must-Haves**: The presence of a particular upgrade feature the buyer could not live without.

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**Figure 36. San Antonio: Why Choose That House?**
San Antonians Overall
When choosing a specific house, San Antonians give nearly equal weight to the type of house (single-family detached, townhome, condominium, multifamily, etc.) and the price of the home. This indicates that both factors equally impact the overall decision over all others. After those ranges are set, the size of the actual house (number of bedrooms, square footage, and number of bathrooms) trumps the size of the lot and other internal factors. This could indicate more concern for whether or not the home itself will meet the buyer’s living needs than for amenities.

Singles versus Couples
While house type and price are nearly equal for most San Antonians, price is king for singles, and significantly so. Other cost-of-living concerns, such as the cost of utilities, also rank significantly higher for singles.

Couples pay more attention to the number of bathrooms and the size of the lot over their single counterparts, likely in preparation for children.

Children versus No Children
Buyers with and without children share the top three factors—price, home type, and the number of bedrooms—when choosing a home. However, families with children give more importance to the type of house than the price. For families with children, the cost of utilities is significantly less important than for those without children. These families also place a higher importance on the year their home was built, likely looking for newer homes in the area.

Buyers with no children rank price slightly higher (similar to singles) and give a significantly (and curiously) higher importance to the presence of a yard (this could be explained by a desire to not have a yard as a preference).

Income Considerations
Low-income buyers again have a limited list of factors they find important in the decision process. For them, cost of living is the most important (with cost ranking first and the cost of utilities ranking third). The type of house is significantly unimportant, though lot size matters quite a bit.

High-income buyers, however, approach the process differently from middle-income buyers. They place a significantly higher importance and rank on luxuries such as the year the property was built, the type of house, and those must-have upgrades they could not live without. Middle-income buyers, however, put higher importance on the lot size and whether or not there is a yard.

Generational Divides
Generational preferences for finding a home are very similar, with only marginal differences between each generation. Most noticeably, the biggest difference appears between the baby boomers and the other generations. Baby boomers place significantly lower importance on the price of a home than do others. Like baby boomers around Texas, they place a higher importance than other generations on must-have upgrades and the type of house.
Millennials, on the other hand, place a lower importance on the home’s size and a greater importance on the number of bathrooms (likely indicating a need for a house that meets their basic needs).

Additional Findings
Those looking to buy a property place a significantly higher importance on the year the structure was built or renovated than those who rent or lease.

Other Reasons
The survey gave respondents the opportunity to supply any other reasons that may have trumped everything else or factored greatly into their buyer’s decision to move where they did. Only 30 percent of respondents commented, but their comments are revealing.

San Antonio respondents cited something specific to the house as the final deciding factor for their client—usually having to do with a particular upgrade (e.g., granite countertops, a larger garage, a pool, or the view) or the condition of the home (whether it was new construction with custom upgrades, newly renovated, or prime for remodeling) (Figure 37). Even though must-have upgrades usually rank near the bottom in the overall rank of importance, this factor appears to be the clincher for the buyer. San Antonio has the smallest share of home-specific reasons than any other metropolitan area. Transportation and other concerns consume a much higher share.

![Figure 37. Open Responses Given for San Antonio.](image)

Transportation concerns contribute almost one-fourth of those other reasons—higher than any other area measured in the survey. Respondents said many of their clients wanted to be close to work, family, friends, or nearby amenities and entertainment options. This likely explains San Antonians’ preference for the convenience of the city as a whole and the neighborhood they
chose since elements of these transportation concerns are found in a mixture of convenience, family and friends, and traffic. In many cases noted by respondents, buyers initially wanted to balance a work commute with other factors, such as nearness to family, a spouse’s work commute, or the distance between work and their children’s school. However, the results suggest that while this was initially important to the client, other factors pushed transportation concerns lower on the list—factors such as price, the neighborhood, convenience, crime rate, and ultimately the property itself. This survey reveals that traffic congestion and commute times in San Antonio are most important to low- and middle-income buyers.
The Corpus Christi Metropolitan Area
Home to the United States’ fifth largest port and a stable tourism industry, Corpus Christi (Texas’ eighth largest city and nicknamed the Texas Riviera) has developed a reputation of industry and a high quality of life. As this community grows, why do people choose this metropolitan area? What makes them stay? And once in the area, what are the most important factors they use to determine where they live?

This section looks at the survey results from Texas REALTORS® about their last transaction to summarize the most important factors their clients considered when deciding where to live. More information about the questions asked and their results can be found in previous sections of this report, “Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire,” and “Appendix H: Corpus Christi Data Tables.”

Demographic Profile

Understanding who lives in Corpus Christi is important for ascertaining a deeper knowledge about how and why people choose to live where they do. As of 2015, the Texas State Demographer estimates approximately 1,100,000 people live in the greater Corpus Christi metropolitan area—the smallest major metropolitan area analyzed independently in this research.

Generational splits in Corpus Christi differ significantly from other metropolitan areas in Texas. Here, baby boomers and older residents make up a significantly higher proportion of the population than any other group. While the youngest generation is of significant size as well, the distribution indicates an aging community. Millennials and Generation X match each other almost identically. Figure 38 provides a demographic snapshot of the Corpus Christi metropolitan area included in this survey (5, 6, 7, 8).

Corpus Christi’s distribution of income differs significantly from other large metropolitan areas in Texas, more closely resembling San Antonio as a whole. Corpus Christi has the highest proportion of households making less than $35,000 per year. Additionally, the area has a significantly higher number of households in middle-income tiers than other areas, second only to San Antonio. Corpus Christi also has the fewest number of high-income households, deviating significantly from state averages. This income distribution is likely due to a relatively high number of retirees on pensions and a significant number of minorities. The median income in Corpus Christi is the lowest of all other areas and the state at approximately $50,000.
While race was not a factor calculated in this survey, knowing the racial composition of the Corpus Christi area is still important. Corpus Christi, like San Antonio, differs dramatically from larger metropolitan areas in that Anglos are not only not the majority, but they are a significant minority to a Hispanic majority. Hispanics in Corpus Christi make up over 61 percent of the population. Also, like San Antonio, the proportion of black and other racial groups in Corpus Christi is lower than any other metropolitan areas. Combined, these two groups only make up 6 percent of the total population.

Only 47 percent of the population is married or paired, which again is nearly identical to San Antonio but differs greatly from other metropolitan areas and the state in general. However, the number of households with children more closely aligns with the state and is lower than in larger metropolitan areas.

Housing Profile

The Corpus Christi metropolitan area includes Nueces, Aransas, and San Patricio Counties. Of the respondents, 97 percent of their last transactions were for clients purchasing a home (the largest proportion of any Texas metropolitan area). The remaining 3 percent either leased or rented.

Eighty-one percent of all home sales in the survey were less than $300,000; none of the homes sold in the survey were above $500,000 or below $100,000. This makes Corpus Christi one of the least expensive real estate markets in the survey, though this could also be influenced by a

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17 While information on race was collected in the survey, it was purposefully left out of the results in order to prevent discrimination in housing policy that might occur based on the results of this research.
smaller sample size (Figure 39). The distribution of surveyed sales prices compared to actual sales prices in the Corpus Christi area in 2015 reveals a relatively close correlation between the two, slightly oversampling the two largest price categories and undersampling homes less than $100,000. However, this difference does not significantly detract from the validity of the sample. The one rental property that respondents noted in the survey was between $2,000 and $2,500 per month.

![Figure 39. Survey Distribution of Corpus Christi Home Sales Prices Compared to Actual Sales.](image)

How to Read the Ranking Charts

The ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of the three ranking charts in this chapter and their corresponding tables in “Appendix H: Corpus Christi Data Tables.” The ranking charts show how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than 3 on a 7-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important.

The word *significant* or its variations represent survey score means that are statistically different from one demographic group to its comparison group.

Corpus Christi versus Texas

Choosing the Corpus Christi Area

While most metropolitan areas closely mimic one another, Corpus Christi stands out. Corpus Christians rank elements about the neighborhood (its reputation, aesthetics, convenience to services, and crime rate) as a more important reason to move to the area and rate job relocation much lower than every other area. New residents note they moved to the metropolitan area to be close to family and friends as a more important factor than any other metropolitan area.
Choosing a Neighborhood

Being close to family not only plays a role in drawing residents to Corpus Christi, it also makes a big difference when they choose a neighborhood, far exceeding the Texas average. Compared to the rest of Texas, school plays a much greater role in Corpus Christi, swapping places with traffic concerns (which rank lowest among those factors noted as important).

Selecting the Right House

Unlike nearly every other area in Texas, Corpus Christians’ most important factor for choosing a home is the home type itself rather than price, perhaps reflecting the relatively low prices for the homes. This is echoed by their focus on elements of the house itself (number of bathrooms, square footage, etc.) over other attributes, which differs slightly from other areas. They also place a higher importance on those must-have upgrades than the rest of Texas.

Why Move to Corpus Christi?

Respondents were first asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the Corpus Christi metropolitan area. This question was only asked if the respondents indicated their client moved from out of state or from another metropolitan area. All the ranked factors in this section are under this context.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 40 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
### How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels) against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

N. A. — There were not enough responses in this demographic to reach the statistically appropriate sample size for analysis.

### Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Property:** Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.
- **Neighborhood:** The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.
- **Convenience:** Convenient access to services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.
- **Traffic:** Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.
- **Schools:** The quality and proximity of the local school.
- **Crime:** The local crime rate or perception of safety.
- **Affordability:** The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.
- **Family/Friends:** The closeness of the property to family and friends.
- **“Hipness”** — The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.
- **Job Relocation:** Factors related to a new job, career change, or retirement.
- **Rent to Own:** Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.
- **Relationship Change:** Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.
- **Health/Disaster:** Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.

**Figure 40. Corpus Christi: Why Move to the Metropolitan Area?**
Corpus Christians Overall

In most metropolitan areas, a new job or career change is the main factor that attracts people to the area. But that is not so in Corpus Christi. For new residents to the area, Corpus Christi’s neighborhoods, their reputation, aesthetics, and amenities are important to their decision. This factor and the number-one factor, the property itself, far outshine any other factor used when buyers are choosing to move to the area. After the significant gap between the second and third factors, the convenience of the area and regional crime rates are ranked third and fourth, and being relocated for a new job ranks fifth. This likely reflects the area’s leisurely and picturesque setting along the coast.

Singles versus Couples

Singles overwhelmingly move to the Corpus Christi area to be close to family and friends (significantly more so than couples). Singles also rank traffic as a much higher deciding factor than couples. In addition to job relocation or changes, relationship changes also rank as an important factor.

Couples, however, note that the neighborhood quality and property draw them the most to the metropolitan area. For couples, traditional factors such as the area’s affordability and school quality play an important factor in their decision to move to the metropolitan area. This is not the case for singles; these are not important at all. The hipness of the Corpus Christi area also draws couples, possibly as a factor in retirement.

Children versus No Children

Buyers with and without children share the top two factors for choosing the Corpus Christi area: the properties the city offers and the neighborhood aesthetics and city reputation. But while there are no statistically significant differences between buyers with and without children, each groups’ ranking does differ quite a bit. Buyers with children are much more likely to move to the area due to a new job or career change (this is not an important factor at all for those without children).

For those without children, both nearness to family and friends and the hipness of the area rank highly (while the hipness factor is unimportant to those with children). Notably in this group, a job change, schools, and traffic concerns are not important factors attracting them to the metropolitan area.

Income Considerations

The sample size for low-income households moving to the Corpus Christi area from another state or metropolitan area was too low to create a reasonable estimate of importance rankings. Also, there are no statistically significant differences in importance between the remaining middle- and high-income groups, though again, there are some ranking differences.
Middle-income buyers rank school quality as a crucial factor in their decision to move to the metropolitan area. This pushes the usual top four factors—property, neighborhood, crime, and convenience—a notch down.

High-income buyers place much more importance on the neighborhood quality and amenities, also noting importance for factors such as nearness to family and friends and the area’s hipness (these are not important at all to middle-income buyers). For both groups, traffic concerns (congestion and commute times) and the area’s affordability are not important factors.

**Generational Divides**

Millennials place an extremely high importance on a few factors when choosing the Corpus Christi area, most notably Corpus Christi’s aesthetics and reputation, relocating for a new job, and the quality of the area’s school system. Millennials also consider the area’s hipness as an important factor when choosing the metropolitan area.

The addition of several other factors pushes the importance of things such as traffic, the area’s convenience, and affordability lower on the rankings (not that these are necessarily less important, just that they are more likely to be bumped).

While baby boomers and Generation X are similar in most ways, baby boomers tend to be more concerned about being closer to family and friends and the metropolitan area’s overall cost of living than Generation X.

**Additional Findings**

Buyers who are employed full time rank the metropolitan area’s school quality significantly more important than those who are underemployed.

**Why Choose That Neighborhood?**

Respondents were next asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the particular neighborhood within the Corpus Christi area. This question was asked of all respondents regardless of where their clients moved. The ranked factors in this section reveal the importance for when buyers are choosing a neighborhood instead of a metropolitan area.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 41 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
**How to Read This Chart**

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income level), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

N.A. — There were not enough responses in this demographic to reach the statistically appropriate sample size for analysis.

**Chart Key** — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Property**: Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer's decision.
- **Neighborhood**: The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.
- **Convenience**: Convenient access to services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.
- **Traffic**: Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.
- **Schools**: The quality and proximity of the local school.
- **Crime**: The local crime rate or perception of safety.
- **Affordability**: The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.
- **Family/Friends**: The closeness of the property to family and friends.
- **Hpiness**: This cost factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.
- **Health/Disaster**: Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.
- **Rent to Own**: Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.
- **Leave College**: Leaving or attending college.
- **Relationship Change**: Change in relationship status or to establish one's own household.

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**Figure 41. Corpus Christi: Why Choose That Neighborhood?**
Corpus Christians Overall
The reasons for buyers to move to the Corpus Christi metropolitan area closely resemble the reasons that buyers select a specific neighborhood, placing the property itself, neighborhood reputation, amenities, and convenience at the top of the list. At this level, though, nearness to family and friends and school quality become much more important. Traffic concerns and commute time are relatively unimportant at this level.

Singles versus Couples
Couples choosing a neighborhood rate school quality as a crucial factor, presumably because they are more likely to have children at that age. While school quality is important for singles, it ranks at the bottom of the list. Couples also view affordability relatively higher than singles.

Singles in Corpus Christi are more likely to choose a neighborhood based on a change in their relationship status or job relocation, giving higher importance to traffic and commute time concerns than couples. This likely indicates that couples trade commute time concerns for other things, such as schools and affordability.

Children versus No Children
Buyers with children mimic the views of couples, though they place slightly more importance on the convenience of the neighborhood (closeness to shops, groceries, etc.) than those without children (or couples in general). These families also give more importance to schools and cost-of-living concerns than those without children.

Like singles, those without children place a much higher importance on the crime rate of a neighborhood and traffic concerns than those with children. These buyers look at the hipness of the neighborhood and are likely to choose a neighborhood based on their transition from renting to owning or change in relationship status.

Income Considerations
The sample size for low-income households choosing a neighborhood in the Corpus Christi area was too low to create a reasonable estimate of importance rankings.

While both middle- and high-income buyers place the highest importance on the house itself and the neighborhood’s aesthetic value and amenities, middle-income buyers then look at the affordability of the neighborhood and school quality over other factors. Additionally, these buyers are significantly more likely to be transitioning from renting to owning.

High-income buyers, though, put a very high importance on nearness to family and friends over other groups. They consider factors such as the neighborhood’s crime rate and traffic and commute concerns over things such as affordability, the neighborhood’s hipness, and school quality.
Generational Divides

After property and neighborhood issues near the top of all generations, there are differences in how Corpus Christians select their neighborhood. Traffic issues become more important and school quality importance declines as generations age. For example, baby boomers place significantly lower importance on school quality and rank affordability and selecting the area based on a job change (or retirement) higher than younger generations.

Generation X ranks nearness to family and the neighborhood’s safety as much more important than other groups. Affordability, convenience, and traffic concerns are lower on the priority list when choosing a neighborhood.

Millennials value school quality extremely highly, even over neighborhood amenities and convenience. They are significantly more likely to be transitioning from renting to owning and value affordability and nearness to family and friends. This likely points to millennials just beginning to transition into a new life stage.

Why Choose That Specific Home?

Respondents were finally asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the specific house they chose. This question takes a closer look at those factors that place the property at or near the top of every demographic. What about that house made Corpus Christians weigh all other factors much lower in their location decision?

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 42 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
CORPUS CHRISTI: Why Choose that House?

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<td>Yard</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Must-Haves</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

N.A. — There were not enough responses in this demographic to reach the statistically appropriate sample size for analysis.

Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Price**: Final price of the home.
- **Bathrooms**: The number of bathrooms.
- **Size**: The square footage of the home.
- **Lot Size**: The property lot size or acreage.
- **Yard**: The presence or absence of a yard.
- **Utilities**: The average cost of utilities.
- **Must-Haves**: The presence of a particular upgrade feature the buyer could not live without.
- **Year Built**: The year the property was built or renovated.

Figure 42. Corpus Christi: Why Choose That House?
**Corpus Christians Overall**

Across the board, the type of house (single-family detached, townhome, condominium, multifamily, etc.) is the most important factor in choosing a home for Corpus Christians—even over price. Price is more closely matched with the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, which follow close behind. Residents in Corpus Christi ranked basic characteristics about the house over elements outside of the home (yard and lot size).

**Singles versus Couples**

While there are no statistically significant differences between single buyers and couples, there are a couple differences in how important they rank each factor. Couples place an extremely high importance on the type of home, price, and number of bedrooms above all else.

Singles rank the size of the lot higher and the presence of a yard lower than couples, potentially indicating their preference for smaller lots or homes without a yard. Additionally, they do not put as much importance on the number of bedrooms as couples.

**Children versus No Children**

Buyers with and without children look for houses in much the same way, ranking the type of house, price, and number of bedrooms and bathrooms as most important (with those with children placing an especially high importance on the first three). Buyers with children place a significant amount of importance on the presence of a yard over those who do not have children. Those with children also rank must-have upgrades in the house (e.g., a pool, granite counters, or other built-ins) slightly higher than those without children. These, taken together, show a desire to find a home that more closely fits the needs of their family over luxuries such as space and newness.

Buyers without children generally look for a newer home and put less importance on the size of the lot than those with children.

**Income Considerations**

The sample size for low-income households choosing a neighborhood in the Corpus Christi area was too low to create a reasonable estimate of importance rankings. And while there are no statistically significant differences between the remaining two income groups, they rank factors for selecting a house a bit differently.

Both groups rank the house type first and extremely important. Most noticeably, middle-income buyers are much more concerned about the cost of living than high-income buyers, ranking the price of the home as extremely important and the cost of utilities higher than others. For these buyers, must-have upgrades replace lot size in importance, indicating that middle-income buyers would sacrifice a larger lot for amenities that are not normally standard on a home.

**Generational Divides**

Likely the largest survey differences lie among generational lines when choosing a home. Baby boomers most noticeably care very little about the cost of living, significantly rating price near
the bottom of importance when choosing a home—near the cost of utilities. Instead, baby boomers want the right square footage and those must-have upgrades as they enter their later years.

Generation X follows a similar pattern, though much more muted than the baby boomers, by also placing a high importance on square footage (though not over price). Generation X also ranks the number of bedrooms much less important than both other generations.

Millennials highly value price (significantly), the type of house, and the number of bedrooms (in that order) over baby boomers (and to a lesser extent, Generation X). For them, price matters, as does the newness of the home.

Additional Findings
Fully employed buyers view the price and size of their home (number of bedrooms and square footage) significantly more important than those who are underemployed.

Other Reasons
The survey gave respondents the opportunity to supply any other reasons that may have trumped everything else or factored greatly into their buyer’s decision to move where they did. Only 30 percent of respondents commented, but their comments are revealing.

Corpus Christi respondents cited something specific to the house as the final deciding factor for their client—usually having to do with a particular upgrade (e.g., granite countertops, a larger garage, a pool, or the view) or the condition of the home (whether it was new construction with custom upgrades, newly renovated, or prime for remodeling) (Figure 43). Even though must-have upgrades usually rank near the bottom in the overall rank of importance, this factor appears to be the one that sold the buyer.

Respondents also cited financial concerns as playing a major role in the selection of the property. While this usually concerns the actual sticker price of the home, other reasons include buyers feeling they are getting a good value on the property or having the right financing/down payment options available to them. The “other” category holds a small percentage of reasons. In this case, these include homes that would be lived in as a second home (seasonal) and used as an investment for rental at other times of the year.
Transportation concerns contribute almost one-fifth of those other reasons. Respondents said many of their clients wanted to be close to family, friends, work, or nearby amenities and entertainment options. While traffic concerns play a very small role in the location choice decision for Corpus Christians, other transportation elements can be found in a mixture of convenience and family and friends. In many cases noted by respondents, buyers initially wanted to balance a work commute with other factors, such as nearness to family, a spouse’s work commute, or the distance between work and their children’s school. However, the results suggest that while this was initially important to the client, other factors pushed transportation concerns lower on the list—factors such as price, the neighborhood, convenience, crime rate, and ultimately the property itself. This should be examined with the consideration that traffic and commute times in Corpus Christi are generally good when compared with many of the larger metropolitan areas in Texas.
As one of the nation’s largest and most diverse states, Texas has a lot to offer in terms of rural and small-town communities. From the western plains to the eastern pine forests and down the coast to the mouth of the Rio Grande, Texas’ smaller communities attract many new residents for numerous reasons. Increased trade with Mexico and the recent oil boom have given vigorous life to southern Texas and areas along the coast. Generally speaking, what is good for Texas’ larger cities has spilled over to other parts of the state. While the broad trend is for people to leave rural communities and head for the city, many still move to or stay in smaller communities. As rural and small communities grow, what are those factors that influence people’s decision to move there, and what are the most important factors they use to determine where they live?

This section looks at the survey results from Texas REALTORS® about their last transaction to summarize the most important factors their clients considered when deciding where to live. Specifically, this section examines the behavior and attitudes of those who moved to rural or other smaller urban areas in Texas. This includes the city of El Paso, due to an insufficient survey response rate. Figure 44 illustrates the percentage of responses that make up the rural and small community portion of the survey.
More information about the questions asked and their results can be found in previous sections of this report, “Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire,” and “Appendix I: Rural and Other Urban Areas Data Tables.”

**Demographic Profile**

Understanding who lives in rural Texas and other small urban areas is difficult but crucial for ascertaining a deeper knowledge about how and why people choose to live where they do in this area. As of 2015, the Texas State Demographer estimates approximately 8,900,000 people live in the rural parts of Texas and other small urban areas. This is significant since it represents a much
larger portion of the state’s population than any other individual metropolitan area discussed so far in this research.

Generational splits in rural and smaller urban areas differ significantly from other large metropolitan areas but match those of Corpus Christi and national trends rather closely. Baby boomers are again a significant proportion of the population but are outnumbered by millennials and the youngest generation. While this is indicative of an aging population, younger generations should offset this trend in the coming decades. Figure 45 provides a demographic snapshot of rural Texas and the other smaller urban areas included in this survey (5, 6, 7, 8).

This area’s income distribution differs significantly from other large metropolitan areas in Texas. Rural and small-town Texas has the highest proportion of households making less than $35,000 per year at 41 percent of the population. Additionally, these areas have a relatively high number of households in middle-income tiers, matching that of the state. These areas also have the fewest number of high-income households, deviating from state averages and less than that of Corpus Christi or San Antonio. A median income for this area could not be calculated.

![Figure 45. Rural and Other Urban Area Demographic Profile.](image)

While race was not a factor calculated in this survey, knowing the racial composition of the area is still important. Rural Texas is split almost evenly between Anglos and a growing Hispanic population, both comprising 89 percent of the total population. Slightly less than half of the population is married and slightly more than a third of households have children, closely matching the state average.

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19 While information on race was collected in the survey, it was purposefully left out of the results in order to prevent discrimination in housing policy that might occur based on the results of this research.
The rural/smaller area profile relies heavily on rural residents all over the state but also includes smaller urban areas not previously discussed (Figure 44). Of those surveyed, respondents reported 93 percent of their last transactions were for clients purchasing a home. The remaining 7 percent either leased or rented (this represents one of the largest proportions to purchase a home).

Eighty-six percent of all home sales in the survey were less than $300,000; only 3 percent were for homes over $500,000, and none were over $1,000,000 (this includes ranch land homesteads as well). While distributions of actual sales prices are available for other urban areas, such a comparison was not available. However, the average actual price for this rural/smaller area could be calculated and similarly matches the survey’s distribution (Figure 46). Rental properties under $1,500 per month represented just under two-thirds of rental/lease transactions. This represented the lowest home price and rental rate of any area.

**How to Read the Ranking Charts**

The ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of the three ranking charts in this chapter and their corresponding tables in “Appendix I: Rural and Other Urban Areas Data Tables.” The ranking charts show how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than 3 on a 7-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important.

The word significant or its variations represent survey score means that are statistically different from one demographic group to its comparison group.
Rural/Smaller Areas versus Texas

Choosing a Rural or Smaller Urban Area

People choosing to live in rural or smaller urban Texas communities are largely attracted to their region for the same reasons as other Texans—property characteristics, relocating for a job, and neighborhood reputation and area aesthetics. The one distinguishing factor that separates rural residents from those living in larger cities is affordability. The affordability of their area ranked significantly higher for rural residents than any metropolitan area.

Choosing a Neighborhood

Preferences and purchasing criteria in rural areas closely match that of the largest cities, including Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth. Rural residents place a higher importance on the property, neighborhood reputation and aesthetics, crime rates, and nearness to friends, just like residents choosing a neighborhood in the largest areas. However, the importance given to traffic and travel times in choosing a neighborhood is significantly lower than in all but one area (Corpus Christi).

Selecting the Right House

Rural residents follow the state trend when selecting a specific property, giving primary importance to price, the type of house, and the number of bedrooms. However, rural residents depart from the rest of Texas by placing more importance on the number of bathrooms versus the size of the house. Home size is more closely grouped with lot size.

Why Move to Rural Texas or Smaller Urban Areas?

Respondents were first asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to rural or other smaller urban areas. This question was only asked if the respondents indicated their client moved from out of state or from another metropolitan area. All the ranked factors in this section are under this context.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 47 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

Chart Key — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Job Relocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Rent to Own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Relationship Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>Health/Disaster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 47. Rural: Why Move to the Area?
**Rural Texans Overall**

Like with metropolitan areas, the primary element rated as attracting people to a rural or small urban area is the property itself. However, in most metropolitan areas, it does not make sense that someone would move to a city for a specific property (and thus researchers assumed this to be evidence of the importance of the house in the overall decision-making process). However, at the rural level, this ranking does make sense. Moving to a specific rural property from a metropolitan area could reasonably be the primary factor.

Job relocation and elements describing the area’s neighborhoods fall closely behind. However, rural residents place a significantly higher importance on the area’s affordability (rural and smaller towns are traditionally inexpensive). Traffic or travel time concerns and the convenience of the area rank noticeably lower in importance.

**Singles versus Couples**

While single and coupled buyers rank factors closely to one another (both citing the appeal of property types and relocating for a job as the top two choices), singles place a higher importance on the crime rate for the area and school quality of the area. The high rank of schools by singles could reflect a higher number of single parents or retirees without children in rural and small urban areas.

Singles are also significantly more likely than couples to move to a rural area or smaller town due to a change in their relationship status or simply out of a desire to transition from renting to owning. This makes sense when paired with the general affordability of rural areas.

**Children versus No Children**

While there are no statistical differences in importance factors for those with children and those without, those without children rank these factors very differently. Buyers without children rank the area’s neighborhood quality and aesthetics as the primary deciding factor for moving to a rural or smaller urban area, bumping the impact of a job relocation much lower on the list. This could likely be a reflection of retirees or high-income buyers moving to the area. Traffic concerns, while still ranking at the bottom of the list, are higher for those without children than for those with children.

**Income Considerations**

No statistical differences could be seen between income groups, though their rankings of importance differ a lot and reveal a few trends. As income increases, the importance placed on affordability (not surprisingly) decreases, while the importance given to the area’s aesthetics and reputation and nearness to family and friends increases.

Low-income buyers find the property itself very important in the decision to move to the area, followed closely by the area’s affordability. The quality of the area’s neighborhoods drops to the lowest importance ranking, and traffic concerns are not important at all (the only area from the
survey where this occurred). Also notable is that low-income buyers are likely to move to the area due to leaving college and establishing a household for the first time.

High-income buyers are noticeably more likely to move to the area for the property itself rather than more practical concerns, ranking job relocation, traffic, and school quality much lower than the property, area neighborhood quality, and the area’s convenience.

Middle-income buyers rank moving to the area due to job relocation as most important, with a higher concern for school quality than their high- and low-income peers. Like low-income buyers, middle-income buyers also rate the area’s neighborhood quality and convenience much lower.

**Generational Divides**

Generational differences are most noticeably pronounced in choosing to move to a rural area. The properties available attract all three generations, and as buyers age, the importance of the area’s aesthetics and reputation, the area’s affordability, and nearness to family and friends increases.

Baby boomers do not give any importance to school quality and are much more likely to move to the area for health reasons. They rank affordability and nearness to friends and family more highly than younger buyers.

Millennials, on the other hand, are significantly less concerned about nearness to family and friends (not important at all) and rank the convenience of the area low. However, they rank traffic and travel time concerns and school quality higher than any other group.

Generation X most noticeably ranks the area’s convenience higher than millennials or baby boomers but gives crime concerns much lower importance than other generations.

**Additional Findings**

Fully employed buyers rank school quality significantly higher than underemployed buyers in choosing to live in a rural area. Underemployed workers are significantly more likely to move due to health issues or a natural disaster.

**Why Choose That Neighborhood?**

Respondents were next asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the particular neighborhood within a smaller urban area or rural area (if it had one). This question was asked of all respondents regardless of where their clients moved. The ranked factors in this section reveal the importance for when buyers are choosing a neighborhood instead of a metropolitan area.

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 48 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
### How to Read This Chart

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important [scores less than three on a seven-point scale] in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

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#### Figure 48. Rural: Why Choose That Neighborhood?

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**Chart Key** — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Convenience</th>
<th>Traffic</th>
<th>&quot;Happiness&quot;</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Affordability</th>
<th>Family/Friends</th>
<th>Health/Disaster</th>
<th>Rent to Own</th>
<th>Job Relocation</th>
<th>Relationship Change</th>
<th>Leave College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anything about the purchased property that may have contributed to the buyer’s decision.</td>
<td>The aesthetics and charm, reputation, or any amenities such as walking trails, street lights, water features, or parks.</td>
<td>Convenient access to services or amenities including groceries, extracurricular activities, banks, entertainment, etc.</td>
<td>Any regard to transportation including traffic congestion and commute distance or time.</td>
<td>The cool factor or how desirable the neighborhood is perceived to be by buyers.</td>
<td>The quality and proximity of the local school.</td>
<td>The local crime rate or perception of safety.</td>
<td>The home price, local taxes, utilities, and general cost of living.</td>
<td>The closeness of the property to family and friends.</td>
<td>Health concerns or relocation by a disaster.</td>
<td>Transitioning from renting to owning but also transitioning from owning to renting.</td>
<td>Change in relationship status or to establish one’s own household.</td>
<td>Leaving or attending college.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Rural Texans Overall**

For most urban areas surveyed, choosing a specific neighborhood garners the most interest. However, in rural areas, formal neighborhoods are less prominent (or may not exist) and may not play highly in the location decision. But for those areas that do have neighborhoods and other small urban areas, choosing the right neighborhood can be critical. Overall, rural Texans are drawn to a specific neighborhood due to the property. However, the neighborhood aesthetics and reputation, crime rate, convenience of the area, and affordability follow closely in importance. After these factors, buyers do not consider much else as that important in choosing a neighborhood.

**Singles versus Couples**

Both singles and couples value the property itself. While couples value the neighborhood aesthetics, singles significantly value convenience, ranking it second and crime third. Singles also rank transitioning from renting to owning or a change in relationship significantly more important in the neighborhood selection process over couples.

However, couples tend to value school quality higher than singles, ranking this much higher. Couples also tend to give slightly more importance to affordability.

**Children versus No Children**

Both buyers with and without children share the three most important factors in selecting a neighborhood: the property itself, the neighborhood’s reputation and aesthetics, and the local crime rate. Buyers with children mirror couples in rankings exactly, placing a higher importance on neighborhood reputation, aesthetics, and amenities than other considerations. Not surprisingly, they also give a significantly higher importance to school quality than those without children.

Buyers without children instead place a higher importance on things such as the convenience of the neighborhood and traffic or travel time concerns than those with children. They also place a higher importance on transitioning from renting to owning.

**Income Considerations**

Low-income buyers rank the property itself first and then place a higher importance on affordability and nearness to friends and family than any other group. The latter likely stems from a need for a strong support system for their family. These buyers also pay close attention to school quality while viewing crime and neighborhood aesthetics and amenities with very low importance. They view transitioning from renting to owning as a priority.

Middle-income buyers instead view crime as an extremely important factor in deciding in which neighborhood to live, ranking it second below the property itself. These buyers are also slightly more sensitive to traffic concerns than other income groups.

High-income buyers give significantly higher importance to the neighborhood aesthetics, reputation, and amenities than any other group, placing those higher than the property itself (the
only demographic to do so in this region). These buyers also give more importance to the convenience of the neighborhood than other income groups.

**Generational Divides**

When comparing generational differences, a few key factors distinguish one group from another. For example, Generation X places a significantly higher importance on school quality than baby boomers (who do not view it as important at all) and rank it higher than millennials.

Millennials, on the other hand, place significantly more importance on transitioning from renting to owning and establishing a household and rank traffic concerns lower than baby boomers. While nearness to family and friends is of near equal importance to these two generations, baby boomers rank this as more important than millennials.

**Additional Findings**

For those looking to purchase in a rural or small-town area, the hipness of the area matters very little when choosing a neighborhood. Apparently, cows are not that cool.

**Why Choose That Specific Home?**

Respondents were finally asked to rank factors that influenced their client’s decision to move to the specific house they chose. This question takes a closer look at those factors that place the property at or near the top of every demographic. What about that house made rural and small-town Texans weigh all other factors much lower in their location decision?

The results of the ranking of importance (factors tested that contained a mean higher than 3 on a 7-point scale) can be seen in Figure 49 (please refer to the “How to Read the Ranking Charts” section to interpret the figure).
**RURAL: Why Choose that House?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERALL RANK</th>
<th>SINGLE</th>
<th>PARTNERED</th>
<th>NO KIDS</th>
<th>WITH KIDS</th>
<th>LOW INCOME</th>
<th>MIDDLE INCOME</th>
<th>HIGH INCOME</th>
<th>MILLENNIALS</th>
<th>GEN-X</th>
<th>BABY BOOMERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>PRICE</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
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<td>House Type</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Bathrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
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<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Lot Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
<td>Year Built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
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<td>Utilities</td>
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**How to Read This Chart**

The overall ranking of factors for all survey respondents appears on the left side of this chart and corresponds with the tables in Appendix C through I. The chart shows how, for any particular factor, the importance changes for each demographic group from left to right across the table. When reading the ranking chart, compare demographics within a category (e.g., income levels), against the overall ranking, or between categories.

Factors that were not important (scores less than three on a seven-point scale) in the decision-making process for any demographic group are faded in color near the bottom. While some factors may not be statistically important, the order in which they are ranked is still important. Those factors that are most important in the decision are indicated in bold at the top.

**Chart Key** — The following represents how each factor is defined in the survey:

- **Price**: Final price of the home.
- **House Type**: Types such as single-family detached, condominiums, townhouse, multifamily, etc.
- **Bedrooms**: The number of bedrooms.
- **Bathrooms**: The number of bathrooms.
- **Utilities**: The average cost of utilities.
- **Year Built**: The year the property was built or renovated.
- **Lot Size**: The property lot size or acreage.
- **Yard**: The presence or absence of a yard.

*Figure 49. Rural: Why Choose That House?*
**Rural Texans Overall**

The two most important factors for rural and small-town buyers in choosing a home are price and the type of property. As seen previously, affordability ranks highly with these buyers, so it should not be surprising price is most important. House type (detached house, apartment, mobile home, ranch, etc.) also matters because there are several types to choose from in this area.

These buyers also highly rank the basic qualities of the house (number of bedrooms and bathrooms) over size, both in terms of square footage and acreage. Rural buyers also do not rank must-have upgrades to the home as important as other factors (though they are more important than for many other cities).

**Singles versus Couples**

While there are few differences between single buyers and couples (both sharing the three most important factors), couples place a significantly lower importance on the cost of utilities than singles. Singles, however, put a much higher importance on whether or not their home has a yard than couples.

**Children versus No Children**

While there are no significant differences between those with children and those without children, buyers with children rank the type of house higher than price, differing from buyers without children. This likely indicates a fundamental concern for choosing the right property for their family, trading this off with price.

Buyers with children also rank the presence of a yard higher than those without children. Conversely, buyers without children are more interested in their home’s square footage than dealing with a yard.

**Income Considerations**

First, for all three income brackets, the top three factors are relatively the same. While middle- and high-income buyers are relatively similar, both middle- and low-income buyers place a significantly higher importance on cost-of-living concerns, including both price and the cost of utilities. Low-income buyers even rate price as the overriding factor above all else that determines which home they choose.

Low-income buyers also rank the presence of a yard much higher than other income groups, nearly tying with the number of bedrooms. This contrasts a significant disinterest in the number of bathrooms, showing a willingness to compromise on that for lower utilities, a larger home, and a yard.

**Generational Divides**

Unlike in the metropolitan areas, there are no significant differences between generations in factors for selecting a specific home. However, there are some subtle differences. For example, baby boomers rank the type of house slightly higher than price. Millennials and Generation X seem to be more price conscious, ranking cost-of-living factors higher than baby boomers.
Additional Findings

Those looking to buy a home are significantly more interested in the acreage or lot size than those looking to rent or lease.

Other Reasons

The survey gave respondents the opportunity to supply any other reasons that may have trumped everything else or factored greatly into their buyer’s decision to move where they did. Only 30 percent of respondents commented, but their comments are revealing.

Rural and small-town respondents cited something specific to the house as the final deciding factor for their client—usually having to do with a particular upgrade (e.g., granite countertops, a larger garage, a pool, or the view) or the condition of the home (whether it was new construction with custom upgrades, newly renovated, or prime for remodeling) (Figure 50). Even though must-have upgrades usually rank near the bottom in the overall rank of importance, this factor appears to be the one that sold the buyer. The rural/small-town area has the largest share of home-specific reasons of any other area. This is likely due to rural properties having very specific elements that buyers are looking for when purchasing a home (e.g., a barn, shop, or garage building—all cited several times by respondents).

![Figure 50. Open Responses Given for Rural and Other Smaller Urban Areas.](image)

Transportation concerns contribute less than one-fifth of those other reasons—among the lowest measured in the survey. Though respondents said many of their clients wanted to be close to either work, family, friends, or nearby amenities and entertainment options, transportation concerns as a whole score low in importance across groups. In many cases noted by respondents, buyers initially wanted to balance a work commute with other factors, such as nearness to family, a spouse’s work commute, or the distance between work and their children’s school.
However, the results suggest that while this was initially important to the client, other factors pushed transportation concerns lower on the list—factors such as price, the neighborhood, convenience, crime rate, and ultimately the property itself. While traffic and travel times are important to buyers in rural and small towns, they do not appear to be a primary concern for most.
REALTOR® Profile

The survey collected some information about the survey respondents, specifically what their specialty is, where they work, and how long they have been a licensed REALTOR®.

Specialty

Forty percent of all respondents acknowledged that they specialized in some sort of area, such as:

- Client focused, which includes the type of client (e.g., first-time homebuyers or builders), client demographics (e.g., Hispanic clients or underserved populations), or client characteristics (e.g., military, teachers, single parents with children, or retirees).

- Property focused, which includes home value ranges, property types (e.g., farm and ranch, or townhouses), and property characteristics (e.g., affordable housing, luxury, or distressed properties).

- Specialized real estate services, which includes relocations, leasing, foreclosures, rental and property management, or broker services, to name a few.

Figure 51 shows the distribution of these specialties.

![Figure 51. REALTOR® Specializations.](image)

Work Location

A couple of respondents also noted that they specialized in a specific geographical area. However, most REALTORS® in the state will likely only practice where they are physically located. Based on other information from the survey, researchers created a distribution by metropolitan area where respondents typically work compared to the estimated distribution of population in 2015 (Figure 52) (11).
Figure 52. Where Survey Respondents Work Compared to Texas Population.

The four largest metropolitan areas account for approximately 73 percent of all survey respondents. The remaining respondents worked predominantly in rural or smaller urban areas, in no specific area, or across multiple regions in the state. This matches well with the distribution of the Texas population, noting that the Austin and San Antonio areas may have been undersampled compared to rural and other smaller urban areas. However, this oversampling in the rural region likely ensured a more accurate picture of buyer preference for the region.

Tenure as a REALTOR®

Half of all the survey respondents have been licensed for more than 10 years, with nearly a third being licensed for more than 16 years (Figure 53). The average tenure for holding a real estate license in Texas by survey respondents is 12 years. This diverse mix of tenure, specialization, and location by survey respondents indicates a healthy mix of responses.

Figure 53. Length of Time Respondents Have Been Licensed in Texas.
Underutilized Corridor Analysis

While the information collected and presented from the Texas REALTORS® Survey has merit and value in its own right, the primary application of this information, for this report’s purposes, is to identify recommendations for transportation issues that might not directly relate to transportation.

This idea stems from statistical modeling: only a part of a problem may be explained by specific factors, but there will always be a residual amount of explanation that may affect the outcome but have very little to do with the original problem. In this case, many transportation issues are caused because of where people choose to live, which is impacted by several factors. However, many transportation planning and policy solutions only directly tackle transportation. Additionally, many transportation investments made around the state are grossly underutilized; increasing their utilization will ensure that the state and surrounding metropolitan areas maximize the benefit of these large investments over their usable life and minimize the fluctuations in use that may occur over time.

Applying the results of the Texas REALTORS® Survey to specific corridors (in this case, the roadways analyzed in TxDOT’s Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways list) may provide a suitable starting point for policy makers, planners, and the development community to better utilize existing transportation infrastructure and better plan for future transportation network expansion.

Corridor Analysis Design and Methods

To perform an assessment of underutilized corridors in the four major metropolitan areas in Texas, researchers first had to discern which corridors would be suitable for study. Researchers used information from TxDOT’s Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways (12) list to identify the most underutilized roadways in the Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio metropolitan areas.

Researchers looked specifically for corridor segments that fell very low on the list, were generally freeway or major arterial in nature, and held a minimum of two lanes in each direction. Researchers also looked specifically for corridors with low Texas Congestion Index (TCI)20 and Planning Time Index (PTI)21 values and roadways with no or little identifiable slowdowns in speed or spikes in delay throughout the day (13). Where there was delay, was it in a particular

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20 Texas Congestion Index—The TCI is a unitless measure that indicates the amount of extra time for any trip. A TCI value of 1.40 indicates a 20-minute trip in the off-peak will take 28 minutes in the peak. Rider 56 specified the TCI as the performance measure for congestion.

21 Planning Time Index (95th)—The PTI is a travel time reliability measure that represents the total travel time that should be planned for a trip. Computed as the 95th percentile travel time divided by the free-flow travel time, it represents the amount of time that should be planned for a trip to be late for only one day a month. A PTI of 3.00 means that for a 20-minute trip in light traffic, 60 minutes should be planned. The PTI value represents the “worst trip of the month.” This measure resonates with individual commuters and truck drivers delivering goods—they need to allow more time for urgent trips.
direction or on a smaller sub-segment? These qualifiers and local knowledge of the corridors produced a shortened list of suitable corridors for an exploratory analysis of the corridors under the context of the survey results.

Once researchers identified a few corridors for each metropolitan area, they then had to identify what data variables would most appropriately match the survey results and yet provide the highest quality and depth of information to the analysis. Using the information from Figure 6 researchers chose to look at four primary characteristics:

- **Demographic characteristics.**
  - Population density.
  - Age distribution.
  - Marital status.
  - Presence of children under the age of 18.
  - Living alone or with others.
  - Household income.
  - Average commute time (as compared to the metropolitan area as a whole).
- **Real estate characteristics.**
  - Average median home value.
  - Average appreciation over 1 year.
  - Average annual appreciation over 5 years.
  - Property tax rates.
- **Crime characteristics.**
  - Violent crime as a percentage of crimes that occurred in the corridor buffer.
  - Violent crime density per square mile.
- **School quality characteristics.**
  - Percent of schools in the buffer that met a set or alternative standard.
  - Percent of schools that did not meet the standard.
  - Percent of schools that achieved the seven campus distinctions for achievement in math, postsecondary readiness, reading, science, social studies, top 25 percent closing performance gaps, and top 25 percent student progress.

Additionally, researchers used visual assessment of areal imagery to assess characteristics of the built environment, including flood plains, environmentally sensitive areas, land use and quality, open space, and roadway interactions.

Researchers used geographic information system (GIS) applications to create a 1.5 catchment area buffer around the corridor to represent the neighborhoods that could potentially impact and increase use of the studied roadway segment. Researchers used a spatial analysis model and areal interpolation to calculate the proportion of specific variables that occurred within the buffer, rather than assign the total population of a tract or larger analysis zone to the buffer.
The outputs from this model were then assessed using Tableau data visualization software to quickly identify trends, outliers, and other information from each corridor. Researchers then assessed and combined these results with the local results from the Texas REALTORS® Survey to infer potential solutions for maximizing the attractive qualities of the corridor for new or redevelopment and infill. More information about the method can be found in Appendix J: Corridor Analysis Methodology.

The following assessment provides two unique examples from the output of the corridor assessment and a discussion of how the results of the Texas REALTORS® Survey might be used in practical ways by planners, policy makers, and developers to maximize the efficiency of existing transportation infrastructure.

*Note that these discussions should not be construed as fact, but rather suggestions based on the results of the analysis and survey. The housing location decision is incredibly complex, and to distill it down to even the expansive list of variables from this report would be shortsighted. Other factors, including race and ethnicity, life milestones, or the location of family and friends, which have purposefully not been discussed in this report, greatly impact a person’s location decision. Use of the following assessment should be done with caution.*

**Austin Corridors**

**SH 130/SH 45 from US 290 to SH 71**

This section of SH 130 (Figure 54) lies several miles to the east of Austin connecting SH 71 near the airport to the new Manor Toll Road (US 290). The majority of this corridor’s catchment area remains rural and undeveloped, though there are several new suburban-style developments within the area in addition to traditional rural subdivisions characterized by large lots. The entire corridor lies in the Del Valle ISD and falls in either the Austin, Manor, or Garfield city limits or in unincorporated Travis County.

**Corridor Analysis**

The corridor ranks near the bottom for roadways analyzed in the most recent 2016 Texas 100 Most Congested Corridors list, coming in with a rank of 1,748. The corridor’s TCI is 1.00 with a PTI of 1.01, meaning there is virtually no delay experienced on the corridor and no additional time is needed when planning for a trip. This indicates that the corridor, a four-lane divided highway, has ample capacity. The majority of households in this corridor have commutes longer than 30 minutes, much longer than any other corridor analyzed in the Austin area and generally
longer than the total peak-period travel time for all residents in the Austin area for all transportation modes (35 minutes).

When the corridor was analyzed, a demographic analysis showed that nearly half (49 percent) the residents in this area were married and had children under the age of 18 (51 percent). Eighty-five percent of the households in the corridor were people who do not live alone, indicating a high number of single parents in addition to traditionally paired couples with kids. Incomes for the area are relatively high, with more than 60 percent at $45,000 or higher, with the majority in the middle-income tier.

Real estate appreciation was among the lowest analyzed, with an average median home value of $131,323 and an annual appreciation rate of 9.2 percent for one year and 5.6 percent over five years (low for the area). Real estate taxes for the area fall in the relative middle ground at 19.197 mills.

Violent crime for the area is far higher than other corridors analyzed, with 16 percent of the crimes in the assessed census tracts occurring within the corridor analysis zone. However, the density of violent crime is low compared to other corridors. School quality in the area also scores lowest among analyzed corridors: only 68 percent of the schools in the area met the set standard, with 24 percent needing improvement.

**Applied Corridor Options**

To be attractive, this corridor must address the needs of both single and partnered households predominantly in the millennial generation, most with children, and predominantly in the low- to middle-income tiers. As discussed earlier, these groups rank neighborhood amenities, convenience, and traffic concerns very highly over other groups. Additionally, those with kids and in lower-income tiers highly value school quality and how safe the area is.

Based on the corridor assessment, any improvements to the corridor’s school quality could greatly increase the draw of development to the area and be the dominant force in altering area residents’ housing location choice to the corridor. Additional improvements to the corridor’s crime rate would also provide some benefit, though likely less than other areas.

Since this area is still largely rural, providing neighborhood amenities and convenience factors may also greatly attract development along the corridor. These include benefits like walking trails, parks, developed water features, grocery and banking services, entertainment options, and other extracurricular activities for both young adults and children. While neighborhood aesthetic amenities draw new residents in their own regard, convenience amenities may also reduce the average travel time for short utility trips for residents of this area, creating a continuously improving environment for further growth.

The most efficient path for these types of improvement would be to encourage planned unit developments (PUDs) that include a mix of commercial and retail centers integrated with a variety of housing options. The collaborative nature of PUDs allows developers to more easily
integrate the neighborhood aesthetic options that create a specific character over traditional suburban developments. These also more easily integrate commercial and retail opportunities in clusters that are often associated with more hip neighborhoods.

Encouraging clustered and diverse use types integrating aesthetic amenities and convenience will maximize the developable value of land surrounding the corridor, thus maximizing the capacity use and toll revenue for SH 130 over time.

**North MoPac Expressway/SL 1 from SH 45 to W. Parmer Lane/FM 734**

This section of MoPac (Figure 55) sits in the northwestern section of Austin, completing the north–south parallel corridor to IH 35 and terminating at SH 45. This tolled portion of MoPac provides access to the Wells Branch, McNeil, and Kings Village areas of Austin as well as the Domain Shopping Center, but also to several undeveloped tracts due to leap-frog development and a white lime processing facility. This is some of the only undeveloped land remaining within the desirable urban area’s northern core. While the area holds much undeveloped land, it is already one of the densest corridors assessed (2,820 people/square mile).

The northern portion of the corridor falls within the Round Rock ISD, the southern portion in the Austin ISD, and portions of the eastern corridor analysis zone in the Pflugerville ISD. The corridor falls in either the Austin or Round Rock city limits and in both Travis and Williamson Counties.

**Corridor Analysis**

This portion of MoPac also ranks near the bottom of the list in the most recent Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways at a rank of 1,325. The corridor, which carried approximately 62,000 vehicles per day, has a TCI of 1.06 and a PTI of 1.25. While trips may require some additional planning time, it usually relates only to the portion nearest W. Parmer Lane. SH 45 to the north also has a significant amount of excess capacity that could be better utilized as the area develops. This corridor only experiences minor slowdowns or delay in the morning southbound peak direction with little to no delay in the evening—a desirable trait for a corridor such as this. This is reflected by having some of the shortest commute times among analyzed corridors, with over 70 percent being less than 30 minutes (well below the average peak-period travel time for the area of 35 minutes).

Demographics for the corridor reveal a different picture from the SH 130 corridor: almost half of the population in this corridor is over the age of 35, the largest proportion of any assessed
corridor. Additionally, the area holds the largest population of those in the millennial generation than any other, meaning this corridor holds the lowest number of children than any other corridor. Most residents in this area are single (64 percent) with no kids (74 percent), though many do not live alone (64 percent), meaning that several households are likely people not related, such as roommates or domestic partnerships. Household incomes reflect some of these characteristics, as this corridor has some of the highest incomes of any assessed corridors, with over 60 percent of all households in the middle range and 24 percent above $100,000 per year.

Real estate appreciation rates for the corridor are moderately high, with properties appreciating 9.9 percent in one year and up to 6.3 percent annually over 10 years. The average median home price for the area is high for assessed corridors at $216,927. Real estate taxes for the area are the second highest of the assessed corridors at 19.986 mills. These indicate a rapidly appreciating market that may price out certain groups of people.

Violent crime for the area is the second lowest among assessed corridors with only 8 percent of the crimes in the assessed census tracts occurring within the corridor analysis zone (at a density of 11 per square mile). School quality in this area is among the highest in the metropolitan area with 93 percent of schools meeting quality standards or some alternate standard. Only 3 percent did not reach their goal.

**Applied Corridor Options**

This corridor is already heavy with single, non-married young and older professionals, spanning the millennial and Generation X cohorts with a relatively high household income. Residents already take advantage of short commute times and quality schools with convenient shopping, entertainment, and staple service locations nearby. Additionally, the area already enjoys a low crime rate and employment opportunities nearby.

Based on the corridor assessment and survey results, two primary strategies could be used to shift housing location patterns to better utilize the existing transportation infrastructure: either continue to build on factors attracting existing residents or develop amenities and services to attract residents not already in the area.

First, the corridor could continue to develop for the existing demographics in the area. To do this, planners and policy makers should note that many of these residents value the eventual shift from renting to home ownership: any policy that allows young professionals to save, pay off debt, and live affordably may attract more to the metropolitan area. Additionally, for residents in this area, the hipness of the neighborhood is especially important to their housing location choice over other factors. Creating cool, hip spaces that cater to the needs of young professionals may actually benefit the corridor more than any other area. Likewise, developing neighborhood aesthetics and amenities that add bonus features to the area may edge this area above others, even though it is not as affordable.

Second, the corridor could take advantage of other assets it possesses to attract a more diverse population of residents, including low-income households and households with children. To
attract a healthy mix of incomes, the corridor might consider providing various affordable housing options that would lower the barrier to entry into this part of Austin. Low-income families could greatly benefit from the high-quality schools in the area as well as the relatively short commute times into the city for job opportunities (as many in this demographic are pushed out and must commute longer distances, adding to financial and time constraints).

The corridor could also provide a diversified mix of housing types, such as townhomes, single-family detached homes, small lot developments, and multifamily attached housing in addition to the already-apartment-heavy developments common in this area since this is commonly the most important factor for Austinites in these demographics choosing a home. Larger home sizes (number of bedrooms, bathrooms, and overall square footage) may provide families the space they need to move into this area and take advantage of what the corridor already has to offer.

Encouraging infill, diverse, and flexible development types integrating bicycle and pedestrian options, landscaping, public parks, and other facilities may maximize this corridor’s potential and the surrounding land, increasing both use of already-made investments and property or sales tax for the area. Maximizing the capacity used along this corridor may also boost toll revenue for this segment over time. Note, however, that to maximize this corridor’s potential, SH 45 to the north must also experience a significant amount of development that would then push drivers to use MoPac over other corridors, such as IH 35, Parmer Lane, and US 183.

**Dallas-Fort Worth Corridors**

**US 175 from IH 45 to S. 2nd Avenue**

In Dallas, this section of US 175, also known as the SM Wright Freeway (Figure 56), branches off from IH 45 just south of downtown Dallas to serve as a spoke in the IH 635 loop around Dallas, headed toward the southeast toward Kaufman. This short six-lane freeway segment provides access to the southeast neighborhoods of Dallas, the Great Trinity Forest, and surrounding parks. This entire corridor lies within both the Dallas city limits and Dallas ISD.

The SM Wright Project, part of the Trinity River redevelopment and transportation efforts, will build a new perpendicular direct connection from US 175 to IH 45, eliminating what many in the area call “Dead Man’s Curve” from US 175. The parallel segment of US 175 will then directly connect with SH 310 and be rebuilt as an urban boulevard. This will provide new and renewed connectivity and access within this southeastern neighborhood, making it easier to travel within the area and to downtown.
**Corridor Analysis**

This segment of US 175 roughly runs parallel to IH 45 out of downtown Dallas, but then sharply turns to the east to provide access to other areas. When the SM Wright Project concludes, both corridors will likely operate more efficiently but also still be greatly underused. US 175, in the most recent list of the Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways, ranked at 587 and the parallel section of IH 45 ranked 948. US 175 had a TCI of 1.17 and a PTI of 1.48. While the freeway experiences some slowdowns, it is only in the morning peak; IH 45 also only experiences delays in the morning, but to a lesser degree. The nature and position of these corridors indicate that there is significant excess capacity available should the corridor redevelop. Residents living in this community experience relatively short commute times for the Dallas area, with 64 percent commuting less than 30 minutes each day. This area has the second highest number of residents commuting less than 10 minutes than any other assessed corridor, likely due to its proximity to downtown. For perspective, the entire Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area averages 41 minutes for peak-period travel across all modes and trips.

A demographic analysis of the corridor revealed that the corridor is dominated by either millennials (18 percent) or baby boomers (23 percent) with very few children (only 22 percent—lowest among any assessed corridor). This area has the highest instance of singles (78 percent) and nearly equal for those with no children (74 percent). Forty percent of the residents in this area live alone. Households in this corridor also fall predominantly into low-income tiers, with 64 percent earning less than $45,000 per year; 27 percent are in the middle-income tier.

Real estate in this corridor has started appreciating rapidly over the last several years—faster than any other assessed corridor in the metropolitan area. Properties appreciated 10.8 percent over one year and at an annual rate of 5.6 percent over five years. The corridor’s average median home value rests at $120,880. Property taxes for the corridor are among the lowest in the area at 16.295 mills.

Violent crimes committed in the corridor as a percentage of all crimes in the assessed census tracts are high (14 percent), with the occurrence (or density) of violent crimes registered at 23 per square mile. School quality in the area is relatively good, with 83 percent of schools meeting the stated or an alternative standard and 13 percent attaining all seven campus distinguishments. Only 16 percent failed to meet the standards.

**Applied Corridor Options**

This section of US 175 (and the parallel IH 45) is characterized by single, low-income millennials or baby boomers with no or few children. This could include retirees choosing to age in place or young adults starting a new career. Residents of this area enjoy a relatively short commute time compared to others in the metroplex, and while home values are relatively low, they are appreciating quickly, indicating the area may be experiencing the first stages of gentrification.
The proximity of this neighborhood makes it ideal for redevelopment and infill, providing direct access to Dallas’ art scene, downtown, and unique environmental assets. Attracting any new demographic to the area should be tempered with ensuring existing residents, especially those choosing to age in place, are not displaced by redevelopment of the area. However, the development potential for this area could greatly impact the utilization of US 175 and IH 45.

When combining the corridor assessment with survey results, reducing the area’s crime rate and perception of crime will be crucial to attracting new residents to the area. This factor is critically important, not only to existing residents but also to other cohorts, including those in higher-income tiers and those with children. Policies that not only reduce crime but that also clean up the appearance of graffiti and other blight psychologically associated with crime may prove to be a good investment.

Improving neighborhood amenities and aesthetics in their own regard may also have a significant impact on attracting new residents to the area. Because the corridor is already home to both young adults and older retirees, amenities should be geared toward those groups, including walking trails integrated with the Great Trinity Forest and surrounding parks, bicycle and pedestrian facilities integrated with local transit, improved streetscaping (including benches and shade), and other unique design elements that enhance a single person’s quality of life.

Concurrently, providing and improving upon convenience factors, including grocery services, banking facilities, entertainment options, and dining establishments, will greatly improve the attractiveness of the area. Creating a kitschy and unique atmosphere, much like older neighborhoods in Fort Worth or the South Congress/1st Street corridors in Austin, may provide a cultural element tied to convenience factors that will benefit the area.

Finally, providing a mix of housing options, including apartments, condominiums, townhomes, and multifamily housing units combined with the preservation of historic homes and streets could serve to be a long-term driver of attracting people to the area. As the area redevelops, affordable options and policies should be considered to mitigate the negative effects of gentrification.

**North Loop IH 820 from IH 35W to SH 199**

This segment of IH 820 in Fort Worth (Figure 57) forms the north/northwest section of the loop surrounding the metropolitan area. This segment serves as the primary connection for the north and west portions of the city, providing access to Meacham International Airport, Lake Worth and Eagle Mountain Lake, the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, and several suburban neighborhoods in the area. While the general aviation airport and freight firms dominate much

![Figure 57. IH 820 Corridor.](image-url)
of the southern side of the corridor, the northern side and periphery holds low-density suburban
development or open land. Newer development has begun to spring up along the north shore of
the Marine Creek Reservoir.

The corridor lies mostly within the city of Fort Worth but also encompasses portions of the cities
of Lake Worth, Sansom Park, and Saginaw. The corridor also lies within the Fort Worth ISD,
Lake Worth ISD, Castleberry ISD, and Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD.

**Corridor Analysis**

This six-lane section of IH 820 ranks 528 in the most recent list of the Texas 100 Most
Congested Roadways, which is fairly low for an interstate. The roadway has a TCI of 1.18 and a
PTI of 1.46, indicating that while delays do occur, non-recurring incident delay makes the
roadway less reliable than it likely could be. Slowdowns only lightly occur in the morning and
are likely aggravated by the ongoing construction on IH 35W to the east based on the directional
flow of traffic. Commuters in this corridor, however, still enjoy a relatively short commute time,
with 62 percent of residents commuting less than 30 minutes and a high number (10 percent)
with commutes less than 10 minutes. This is far below the urban area’s total peak-period travel
time of 41 minutes for all modes and trips. As a suburban connection loop, there is still ample
capacity that could be better utilized in both directions, especially as the city redevelops SH 199
as a secondary route into downtown.

A demographic analysis of the corridor revealed that the area has a fairly equal mix of all age
cohorts, with millennials making up the largest group at 17 percent. This excludes the relatively
normal proportion of children in the area, which comprise 30 percent of the population. Half of
these residents are married, with 46 percent of the population having children. Additionally, a
relatively small proportion of the population lives alone, indicating a high number of families in
the area. Households in the corridor are predominantly middle-income, with a large majority
(43 percent) earning more than $45,000 per year but less than $100,000; however, another
16 percent fall into the high-income tier.

Real estate in this area has seen modest appreciation, lower for the metropolitan area as a whole,
but solidly in the middle of the pack. Homes appreciated 7.8 percent over one year and
3.7 percent annually over a five-year period. The average median home value for this area
registers at $120,957, again at the middle of the pack for the metropolitan area. Property taxes
follow this pattern of being in the middle, coming in at 21.345 mills.

Violent crimes committed in the corridor as a percentage of all crimes in the assessed census
tracts are low (9 percent), with the occurrence of violent crimes at a similar low of 11 crimes per
square mile, indicating a relatively safe corridor. Schools in the area score among the best in the
metropolitan area, with 91 percent meeting the stated or some alternative goal and only 6 percent
failing to meet the goals.
Applied Corridor Options

This segment of IH 820 can be seen as a haven for middle-class families in the Fort Worth area. Composed primarily of younger couples, there is a diverse mix of couples, singles, and families that mostly lie in middle- and upper-income tiers. This could indicate that this area is a second-stage home-buying market—one step above a starter home for young adults.

When combining the previous corridor assessment with the results from the survey, it becomes apparent why this area is a haven for middle-income families: the affordability of both homes and the neighborhood and slow appreciation combined with quality schools, low crime rates, and relative convenience to surrounding services and entertainment options make this a unique find in Fort Worth. Note that the short commute times are likely not as important to current residents but offer an added bonus.

To continue to build upon the strengths of the area, new development and policies should be focused on improving the strengths of the corridor while also adding unique neighborhood features that make this corridor stand out from other areas of Fort Worth. Improving upon the area’s amenities and aesthetics may be one of the best methods for attracting more residents to the metropolitan area. Taking advantage of the area’s lakes and reservoirs by providing access, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and parks or other public spaces, especially integrated with neighborhood villages or small-town centers, could provide a unique experience while also improving upon the convenience of living in this area. Care should be taken not to drastically affect the affordability of the area with any new development: new services and development should be understated with charm and character.

Additionally, providing a more diverse set of housing options, such as clustered townhomes, condominiums, and multifamily units all of varying size and price, will open the area up to a more diverse market within a similar family-oriented demographic. Improved connections to downtown, including bicycle facilities and transit, may add to the corridor’s appeal.

Finally, any commercial development to the west of this corridor that could be used as an attractor away from IH 35W will likely increase the utilization of the existing infrastructure, allowing it to fully leverage the investment from the interstate.
Houston Corridors

Sam Houston Tollway NE from Old Humble Road to US 90

This section of the Sam Houston Tollway (Figure 58) creates the northeastern bend in Houston’s beltway and provides connection points to IH 69 and Bush Intercontinental Airport on the north with the eastern side of Houston; access to Atascocita, Summerwood, and Lake Houston; and access to US 90 on the east. Within the assessed corridor, much of the land inside the beltway is undeveloped and preserved due to Greens Bayou, protected wetlands, and large portions of land that are in the floodway. However, other areas both inside and outside the beltway are undeveloped. Newer suburban housing developments have begun to grow within the corridor as Houston residents look for less-expensive areas still close to town.

Most of the corridor lies in unincorporated Harris County, though a large portion is part of the city of Atascocita and some sections fall within the city of Houston. The northern bend of the corridor lies within the Humble ISD, while the eastern bend lies in the Sheldon ISD.

**Corridor Analysis**

This section of the Sam Houston Tollway is one of the most underutilized sections in the entire beltway, even though there are several population centers and attractors nearby. In the most recent Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways list, this section ranks extremely low at 1,589, especially compared to other adjacent sections to the north on the same roadway. The segment has a TCI of 1.0 and a PTI of 1.01, meaning there is next to zero delay, with no variation in speeds in either direction. Additionally, 49 percent of residents along this corridor experience commutes of less than 30 minutes, which is significantly lower than Houston’s overall total peak-period travel time of 43 minutes for all trips and modes.

A demographic analysis of the corridor revealed that a significant portion of the residents in the area are either in the millennial (18 percent) or in the Generation X (16 percent) cohort. Additionally, children represent a significant proportion of the population, making up 32 percent. A majority of residents (56 percent) are married, with exactly half having children. Eighty-two percent of the population does not live alone, indicating a significant number of families in the corridor. Incomes in the corridor are significantly higher than others assessed, with 63 percent in upper-middle or higher income tiers, 28 percent of those being in high-income tiers.
Real estate appreciation, in general, has increased to rates near that of Austin, and this corridor is no exception. For properties assessed in this corridor, real estate values appreciated 9.7 percent in one year and 5.1 percent annually over five years. The average median home value is significantly higher than in other corridors at $142,873. Property taxes in the area are the second highest out of any assessed corridor in the state at 23.685 mills. These factors indicate a growing and high-value real estate market.

While violent crimes committed in the corridor as a percentage of all crimes in the assessed census tracts are high (17 percent), the occurrence of violent crimes is relatively low at eight crimes per square mile, indicating a relatively safe corridor. Schools in the area score moderately well, with 83 percent meeting the stated or some alternative goal and 16 percent failing to meet the goals.

**Applied Corridor Options**

This corridor around the Sam Houston Tollway is home to a majority of upper-middle-income families with two-parent homes in the millennial and Generation X age cohorts. Those who are single in the area are less likely to have children and more likely to have a disposable income. Residents here enjoy extremely short commute times, on average, compared to other Houstonians.

Based on the corridor assessment and survey, any improvement to the corridor’s neighborhood amenities, such as developing walkable shopping districts, trails through environmentally sensitive areas, landscaping, and other elements that may improve the overall appearance and aesthetic appeal of the corridor may attract more residents to the area. Relying heavily on the appeal of Greens Bayou as an outdoor recreational spot may provide the corridor with a unique opportunity to attract additional development, just as nearby Kingwood developed its bayou. Additionally, any means of mitigating the effects of the nearby landfill and correctional facilities to the north will greatly improve the attractiveness of the metropolitan area.

Additionally, providing options of convenience, such as entertainment, dining, and shopping, might do well to continue to attract a similar demographic to the area. Since many areas in the corridor have already been developed, providing a diverse and mixed set of options or a unique town center or village center may be beneficial to improving the convenience of the area. Any type of development of this nature should be clustered in order to maximize the limited amount of developable space near environmentally sensitive areas.

Providing some type of diverse and affordable housing options may help diversify residents in the area and attract a mix of new residents in the existing and older age groups. Policies that keep existing homes from appreciating too quickly will also help the corridor develop in a smooth and unobtrusive manner for a sustained period. Finally, any improvements in the quality of the local schools within the area might have a small impact on attracting residents, but likely not by much.
Encouraging clustered and diverse use types integrating aesthetic amenities and convenience will maximize the developable value of land surrounding the corridor, thus maximizing the capacity use and toll revenue for this portion of the Sam Houston Tollway over time.

**US 90 from IH 10/IH 610 East to Carpenters Bayou**

The old Beaumont Highway and the replacement and parallel new US 90 Crosby Freeway (Figure 59), along with IH 10 to the south, create the only three easterly routes out of the Houston metropolitan area, connecting locations such as Barrett, Crosby, Sheldon, and eventually Liberty with the inner loop of Houston. While the old Beaumont Highway corridor has primarily been dominated by industrial uses, the Northshore neighborhood and surrounding areas to the south have developed into a suburban haven away from the ship channel to the south. For years, the east side of Houston has not been a desirable location to develop, but with high property values and development edging farther and farther from downtown, this area of Houston offers shorter commute times, cheap developable land, and opportunity not found elsewhere in Houston. The corridor still contains ample undeveloped land and crosses Greens Bayou.

It is important to note that this corridor is not yet completed as a freeway. The old Beaumont Highway is more of an arterial in nature (four-lane road with occasional center turn lane). The new US 90, when complete, will be a six-lane freeway with two-lane frontage roads on either side. While the frontage roads and new freeway are completed, the bridge over Greens Bayou and one ¾-mile section have yet to be built. However, due to the nature of the design, the frontage roads and freeway sections do act as a cohesive freeway. The Texas Department of Transportation will likely complete the project as demand increases on the roadway, but for now, the route is greatly underutilized.

Most of this corridor lies within the city of Houston or in unincorporated Harris County and falls within Houston ISD, North Forest ISD, Galena Park ISD, and Sheldon ISD, with US 90 being the boundary for nearly all of these districts.

**Corridor Analysis**

This new and underutilized section of US 90 ranks extremely low on the most recent Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways list, ranking at 1,419. In perspective, the Beaumont Highway ranks much higher at 904 (though still low overall). US 90 has a TCI of 1.03 and a PTI of 1.07,
indicating near zero delay and no speed reduction during the course of the day. Residents along this corridor enjoy short commutes compared to Houston as a whole, with 54 percent of residents commuting less than 30 minutes and 80 percent commuting less than 40 minutes. Houston’s total peak-period travel time is 43 minutes for all modes and trips.

A demographic assessment of the corridor revealed that the majority of residents in this area are older, members of Generation X or baby boomers (at 47 percent), with a low proportion of millennials. However, 31 percent of the population is children. Fifty-two percent of residents are married, and half of all residents have children. Most people, 82 percent, do not live alone. While the neighboring corridor assessed here has a much higher household wealth, this corridor’s majority reside in lower-income tiers (51 percent) and another sizable cohort in the middle-income tier (33 percent).

Real estate in this corridor has seen considerable appreciation in recent years, with a one-year annual rate of 9.9 percent and a 5.2 percent annual growth over five years. Again, Houston, in general, has seen appreciation rates near those of Austin, and this corridor is no exception. The average median home value is significantly lower than in other corridors at $109,704, with many properties being at or below this average. Property taxes in the area are lower than other assessed corridors in the area at 19.474 mills.

Violent crimes committed in the corridor as a percentage of all crimes in the assessed census tracts are the highest (20 percent) of any corridor assessed in this analysis, with a relatively high incidence density at 15 per square mile. Schools in the area score moderately well, with 80 percent meeting the stated or some alternative goal and 19 percent failing to meet the goals, slightly higher than other assessed Houston corridors.

**Applied Corridor Options**

The US 90 corridor hosts a majority of larger families with older parents (in Generation X or the baby boomer cohorts) with low- to middle-income levels. Those who are single in the area are less likely to have children and value their extremely short commute time compared to the rest of Houston.

Based on the preceding corridor assessment and survey, improvements to this corridor should be designed to encourage growth in the area while mitigating the impacts of property value increases on large families and low-income households. For Houstonians in these cohorts, neighborhood affordability and convenience rank extremely highly, so any local or state policy that ensures they will not be priced out of their area if and when new development arrives will be crucial.

Crime or the perception of crime is an important deterrent for many prospective buyers in the Houston area. Since this corridor has one of the highest crime rates of assessed corridors, any improvement would likely show a great affect. Perception of crime plays an important role in the housing location decision, so eliminating graffiti and unsightly views may do more for the corridor than actually improving the crime rate.
Additionally, residents in this area highly value being close to family and friends. Understanding this and combining the concept with improving neighborhood aesthetics may serve to attract others to the metropolitan area. Amenities such as parks, elder care facilities that are integrated with the neighborhood’s social fabric, and playgrounds would likely offer options not easily found elsewhere in Houston for these cohorts. This may be an attractive element to prospective buyers.

As new development occurs, ensuring that convenience factors integrated with higher-quality aesthetics are built may ensure the corridor creates a vibrant atmosphere for residents. Micro-cultures unique to the area could be an important attractor to new residents, helping to alleviate the industrial uses of the nearby ship channel and Beaumont Highway.

**San Antonio Corridors**

*IH 10/US 90 from IH 410 East to Anderson Loop East/SL 1604*

This eastern section of IH 10 in San Antonio (Figure 60) serves as a gateway to the city of San Antonio from the east. This corridor provides a key connection between the inner loop of San Antonio with destinations such as Randolph Air Force Base, the southern portions of Schertz, and eventual access to SH 130, an alternate route to Lockhart and Austin. While much of this corridor lies on the southern edge of suburban San Antonio development, some newer suburban housing developments have been built over the last several years. However, much of the corridor is still undeveloped, which is reflected by an extremely low population density of 1,119 people/square mile.

This corridor is split along the lines of the San Antonio ISD, Judson ISD, and East Central ISD, and while the interstate itself lies in San Antonio’s city limits, the assessed corridor is also part of Schertz and unincorporated Bexar County.

**Corridor Analysis**

This section of IH 10 ranks extremely low in the most recent Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways list, coming in at rank 1,395. The corridor, which carries fewer than 52,000 vehicles per day, has a TCI of 1.05 and a PTI of 1.16, meaning there is very little delay and variance in expected travel times, indicating underused capacity. There is a noticeable morning and evening peak period, which indicates this corridor serves residents commuting into the city.
of the residents within this corridor experience an extremely short commute of less than 20 minutes, with almost 75 percent experiencing a commute of less than 30 minutes. These commute times are significantly less than the metropolitan area’s total peak-period travel time of 40 minutes for all modes.

The demographics analysis for the corridor revealed that this area is nearly equal in singles verses couples (53 percent to 47 percent, respectively) as well as those with kids and those without (48 percent to 52 percent, respectively). Children and young adults, however, make up a significantly large portion of the population—children being 31 percent of the population and those under 35 at over 53 percent of the population. Only 21 percent live alone, indicating both a high proportion of traditional households as well as single-parent households. While large numbers of residents are in the middle-income tier (43 percent), lower-income households make up a significant portion, both combined accounting for 88 percent of households in the corridor.

Real estate appreciation for the area is relatively low compared to other analyzed corridors, with properties appreciating 8.3 percent over one year and 4.1 percent annually over five years—the second lowest of any corridor assessed in the San Antonio metropolitan area. However, average median home values were among the highest at $112,618, likely due to the relatively new nature of many neighborhoods in the corridor. Property taxes in this area were the highest out of any other assessed corridor, coming in at 20.02 mills, though these are likely not a significant burden on residents, and the area is not appreciating as fast as other corridors.

While the corridor ranks relatively high for violent crime, it had the lowest crime density of any corridor assessed. The area ranks third among corridors, with 12 percent of the crimes in the assessed census tracts occurring within the corridor analysis zone (at a density of six per square mile). School quality is mediocre among corridors in the area (though San Antonio, in general, had lower quality than other urban areas), with only 75 percent of schools meeting requirements and another 4 percent meeting an alternative requirement. Sixteen percent of the schools in the corridor failed to meet their goal. Additionally, this corridor’s schools ranked last in terms of campus distinctions, with only 6 percent meeting all seven distinctions.

**Applied Corridor Options**

This part of IH 10 is nearly equal in number of singles and couples and those with and without children, is predominantly middle to low income, and is generally of a millennial age cohort. While traffic and commute times are not generally a high priority for many, they are for low- and middle-income cohorts. Residents of this corridor already enjoy incredibly low commute times, indicating non-transportation factors that may serve to attract more to the area.

Based on the corridor assessment and the results of the survey for this urban area, residents in all the represented demographics prioritize neighborhood convenience factors above nearly all other factors, except for the property itself. Strategies, incentives, and policies that promote the development of services, entertainment, dining, groceries, banking, and other basic services will likely improve corridor utilization and attract residents more than any other factor. This area is
not conveniently close to most of these basic services, so providing them may prove to be a positive endeavor.

Additionally, providing a variety of housing types at varying price levels may encourage a continued amount of diversity in residents. Providing additional affordable options that are suitable for those transitioning from renting to owning may also continue to attract a diverse set of young adults and families to the corridor.

Since much of this corridor is still undeveloped, planners and policy makers still have many opportunities—a blank slate—to create unique and well-designed places that may attract a broader audience. Using the short commute times as an enticement, aesthetic features that give both the corridor and new neighborhoods a unique character may also attract new residents. Elements such as interesting and engaging architecture and landscaping, natural trails, parks, and family-friendly infrastructure may be well worth the initial investment over time.

**IH 410 NE from IH 35 to Rigsby Avenue/US 87**

This newly renovated section of northeastern Connally Loop (IH 410) (Figure 61) serves as a southern fork for diverting traffic off IH 35 into downtown San Antonio, instead directing them to the underutilized IH 10 into downtown. Additionally, this fork provides access to the Brooke Army Medical Center, the city of Kirby, and the entire south and eastern portions of San Antonio from the north. A mix of light manufacturing and large-lot, lower-income housing developments in gridded suburban form characterizes the corridor. However, south of IH 10, there is ample undeveloped land to the east of IH 410. The area, while denser than some corridors, is still relatively underdeveloped with 1,862 people/square mile. This corridor is split along the lines of the San Antonio ISD, Judson ISD, and East Central ISD and contained almost completely within the cities of San Antonio and Kirby.

**Corridor Analysis**

This section of IH 410 ranks much higher than many of the other corridors assessed in this analysis in the most recent Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways list, coming in at rank 332 (well out of the top 100, but much higher than other corridors). The corridor, which carries approximately 70,000 vehicles per day, has a TCI of 1.26 and a PTI of 1.52. However, while this corridor does experience some slowdowns in the morning and afternoon peaks, it is completely
unidirectional, meaning that almost all traffic is coming from origins in the north to avoid IH 35 and use IH 10 instead. There is virtually no traffic moving from southern destinations to the north, indicating a large amount of underutilized capacity along this corridor, especially south of IH 10. The residents who do live within the corridor enjoy relatively short commutes, with 48 percent of the population commuting less than 20 minutes and 73 percent commuting less than 30 minutes. These commute times are significantly less than the metropolitan area’s total peak-period travel time of 40 minutes for all modes.

The demographics analysis for the corridor revealed that this area is generally older, with 47 percent of the population over the age of 35 (many of whom are in Generation X) and children making up 29 percent of the population. Only 39 percent are married, with a similar 40 percent having children in the household. However, only 30 percent reported living alone, indicating a significant number or single parents or larger families. The majority of residents in this corridor are in lower-income tiers, with 59 percent of the households making less than $45,000. Additionally, those in the middle-income tier make up a smaller percentage than other corridors at 32 percent.

Real estate appreciation for the area is relatively low compared to other analyzed corridors, with properties appreciating only 8 percent over one year and 4 percent annually over five years—the lowest of any corridor assessed in the San Antonio metropolitan area. Average median home values were also among the lowest at $89,200. This lack of appreciation and low home value indicates a stagnant area with little to no growth. Property taxes in this area were relatively high when compared to other assessed corridors, coming in at 18.376 mills, though these are likely not a significant burden on residents and the area is not appreciating as fast as other corridors.

The area scores moderately well for violent crime, coming in around the middle of corridors assessed with an extremely low density at 14 crimes per square mile. School quality is mediocre among corridors in the area (though San Antonio, in general, had lower quality than other urban areas), with only 75 percent of schools meeting requirements and another 4 percent meeting an alternative requirement. Sixteen percent of the schools in the corridor failed to meet their goal. Additionally, this corridor’s schools ranked third in campus distinctions, with only 7 percent meeting all seven distinctions, which is still an extremely low percentage.

**Applied Corridor Options**

This section of IH 410 is characterized by low-income families with either one or two parents living at home who are predominantly in the Generation X cohort. While traffic and commute times are not generally a high priority for many, they are for low- and middle-income cohorts as well as those in Generation X. Residents of this corridor enjoy incredibly low commute times, likely serving a social good for the city of San Antonio. Affordable housing is in ample supply, and crime is relatively low.

These factors almost completely align themselves with what these cohorts reported earlier in the survey for why they chose the neighborhood they did: affordable housing, an affordable area of...
town, low traffic and commute times, and low crime. In this case, policy makers may consider taking advantage of the area’s existing strengths and further attract similar residents, or increase the number of middle-income families of similar demographics.

While neighborhood amenities and aesthetics are of less importance, having basic services in convenient locations is important to residents in this area. Encouraging the development of groceries and banking services and providing usable public spaces such as landscaped plazas, parks, and other community spaces may provide a first step to increasing the quality of life in the area while avoiding negative effects of gentrification.

Additionally, many in these cohorts expressed the need to transition from renting to owning as an important factor in selecting the neighborhood. Continuing to provide affordable starter housing in a rich and engaging neighborhood environment with yards and a diverse set of lot sizes will be important to encouraging growth in the area, which would maximize the use of transportation infrastructure already developed in the area.

**Policy and Application of Findings**

This research has shown that there are numerous factors involved in the housing location decision and that transportation and traffic concerns are not the most important factor in this process. This is not to understate transportation’s importance, especially toward the beginning of the decision. However, there needs to be a general recognition that people choose to live where they do for many factors, any of which, if altered properly, could have dramatic impacts on how Texas cities function. Therefore, the following sections provide possible actions that could be considered or studied to take advantage of the information from this research.

**For Policy Makers**

The primary outcome from this research provides a view of a broader paradigm that has not been recognized at the policy level by any state. This new paradigm shows that while direct policy forces will impact an area like transportation, housing, safety, or education, these areas do not exist within a vacuum. Each of these (and others) affects the other; specifically, here transportation is impacted by other options and factors in the housing location decision. Improvements in one area will likely have an impact on another that may not have been achievable through direct intervention. For example, improving the quality and types of housing in an area, the education quality, and a neighborhood’s aesthetic may have a substantial impact on the types and timing of transportation infrastructure needed. More concretely, if residents are being drawn out to a new suburb because of neighborhood aesthetics and development quality, low crime rates, and/or great schools, traditional transportation planning may recommend the construction of an improved highway facility to meet that growing demand. However, a benefit to one of these other factors in an area with existing underutilized transportation capacity may have a spill-over synergistic effect that delays or eliminates the need for additional transportation improvements to the newer area.
A paradigm shift could occur that transitions from a siloed approach to policy and spending to a broader, more holistic approach. This would require policy makers to examine other areas for potential impacts other than transportation when making broad transportation decisions or setting priorities. The results of this research can serve as a base for that consideration.

To date, no states have taken this direct approach in addressing transportation issues through other non-related factors.

While many of the practical policies that could be produced lie at the local level, state policy makers do have several avenues of direct influence that could be used to apply the findings of this research. First, in locations where education quality is a driving and lacking force, modifications to education funding, including directed one-time influxes, could be legislatively directed, much like they are for special transportation projects. Likewise, allowing partnerships and other funding means that may improve lacking areas, modeled after some transportation financing areas, may greatly benefit education quality. This approach to funding is not limited to education, however, but extends to other factors found in this research, including safety and public protection services, affordable housing, parks, and other infrastructure.

Another method that could be explored is by the state providing additional enabling authority to local governments, allowing additional land use control and flexibility at both the municipality and county levels. Currently, counties have little to no authority in planning and development. Allowing counties to coordinate with local municipalities may help create a more unified development environment.

**For Planners and Practitioners**

While policy makers may set many high-level priorities and make large-scale funding decisions, planners and practitioners can more proactively address the holistic nature of the housing location decision. Planners could use the information provided by this research to adjust comprehensive plans and regulation to incorporate elements that impact the housing location choice to maximize development efficiency. This can be achieved through using tools that promote high-quality housing design, landscaping and streetscaping in neighborhoods, a rich and diverse set of land uses near major housing centers, aesthetic design that reduces the perception of crime, or opportunities that keep areas affordable for all demographic groups.

All this could be done in addition to providing walkable and bikeable spaces, using and encouraging transportation demand management and travel options, and eliminating existing bottlenecks through traffic management and system modification strategies. These strategies should be carefully coordinated with other land use planning strategies and used in an appropriate context.
For Transportation Modelers

While this research opened with a short critique of transportation modeling, the results of the survey show that there are numerous factors that could be included in the transportation modeling process to show where people are likely to select a home. With improvements in data quality and availability, many of these factors can be integrated directly without use of a proxy variable or estimation.

Improvements in this process will also give policy makers and planning practitioners the ability to proactively encourage improvements in certain factors to attract residents to areas with underused infrastructure. This would improve the efficiency by which transportation funds are spent, reducing the need for reactionary transportation infrastructure development.

For the Development and Professional Community

Finally, the development and professional community could use the results of this research to work with the state and local or regional entities to identify areas of highest interest for redevelopment or capacity utilization. By working with each stakeholder and with the specific results of this research, the professional community may be able to better meet the needs of customers, further increasing Texas’ appeal as a place to live.
Conclusions

While the results of this survey have opened a broad window into the decision-making process of Texans, the findings have also posited many new questions that now require answering. While we can see the relative importance of several factors, the biggest remaining question is “Why?” Why are certain factors more important than others for different groups of people in different cities? One can likely make an accurate guess about some of the peculiarities (such as “Why do low-income buyers rate nearness to family and friends so important?”). However, there are other questions that prove to be much more difficult to assess.

Not surprisingly, the property is the focal point of the location decision at every level. It appears that buyers would likely compromise on just about any factor if they found the right home. But after the property, the neighborhood—its quality of design, reputation, amenities, aesthetic value, and convenience—rules over other factors, including school quality, affordability, and traffic concerns. While these other factors are important, they generally do not appear to be deciding factors.

Respondent comments have indicated that while traffic concerns initially may have been a factor in selecting the area of town in which to look, they diminish in importance (or get moved down the list) when other neighborhood and house-specific factors begin to be considered. It may be that traffic concerns and other broader factors such as crime rates, proximity to family, and school quality form a soft boundary by which people begin their search. However, as the search progresses, these boundaries are widened as multiple houses become available home options.

Once the buyer finds the right type of house at the right price, other more practical concerns come into play: Does it have what the buyer ultimately needs? Does it have the right number of bedrooms, square footage, or type and size of yard?

Trends from the survey, however, did reveal that traffic and transportation concerns are generally more important at the neighborhood level, trumping affordability, school quality, and proximity to friends and family. While traffic does not appear to deter people from moving to a new urban area, bad traffic and long travel times do appear to deter buyers from certain neighborhoods if other, more important factors are accommodated. This suggests more-accessible neighborhoods by any transportation mode are more desirable to buyers. Policy makers may wish to use this information to adjust or target spending on transportation infrastructure or various mobility options.

Stated from a different perspective, a buyer may initially begin his or her search for a new home by narrowing down neighborhoods using broad generalizations: What areas have low crime rates? What areas are desirable, aesthetically noteworthy, and of good rapport? What areas are reasonably close to work and/or school? At this stage in the process, transportation concerns exert the largest influence on the housing location decision. However, once a buyer has progressed through the home search and settled on two or three house options in different locations, the survey results suggest that he or she will make the final decision first based on
house-specific factors. If both houses offer equal benefits, he or she will next consider the neighborhood’s reputation, amenities, and aesthetics, followed by safety concerns or other neighborhood convenience factors. Transportation considerations will likely not be the final deciding factor or the most important factor in his or her decision.

Ultimately, the housing location decision represents a series of trade-offs and compromises. This complex decision is different for everyone, but with greater information, more can be done to offer buyers what they want and where they want it, making wise public investment choices in the process. And understanding even a small portion of this decision can help developers, policy makers, and REALTORS® offer buyers the quality options they are looking for. Researchers will be following up this survey effort with additional research examining roadway corridors in each urban area based on the demographic, economic, and other information paired with these survey results. A broader policy discussion will also be included to examine possible ways policy makers and others could use these results.
References


Appendix A: Survey Methodology

This appendix addresses the specific details of how the Texas REALTORS® Survey was designed, implemented, and processed to produce the results in this report. The methodology has been separated into four distinct sections:

1. The survey: describes the survey’s design, sample to be surveyed, and survey administration.
2. Data processing: describes how the collected survey data were cleaned, coded, and aggregated (when necessary).
3. Statistical testing: describes the statistical tests and assumptions made to reach the final results.
4. Limitations: describes the limitations of the survey.

The Survey

Design

The goal of the study was to identify the motivations and factors that influence a person’s housing location decision in Texas. Researchers collaboratively designed the survey instrument so that all members of the project team had an opportunity to provide input regarding content, wording, response options, and skip logic. Outside reviewers with expertise in fields such as survey design and data management, housing issues, and transportation issues also provided input.

Survey Question Modules

Upon obtaining final approval from all members of the project team, TTI programmed the survey to enable web administration. The final self-administered questionnaire contained 25 to 45 questions, partitioned into the following modules:

- **Background**: The instrument began by asking the respondents (licensed Texas REALTORS®) for consent after a brief introduction to the research. Respondents were then instructed to focus on the most recent real estate transaction they had finalized where they represented the buyer. The background questions collected general details of the transaction, including the type of contract (purchase or lease/rent) and contract amount.

- **Client party size**: This section identified the number of individuals that signed the contract. While this differentiation made analyzing the results more difficult for researchers, the differentiation made answering the survey easier for respondents, reducing the potential for error in the collection of data.

- **Single-client contracts**: This section collected information on clients that acted individually to make a purchase or lease agreement. This information included
demographics, previous home location, and whether the client previously owned or rented.

- **Dual-client contracts**: This section collected information on clients that acted in tandem to make a purchase or lease agreement. This information included demographics, previous home location, and whether the clients previously owned or rented.

- **Property location**: This section collected information not only on the property location but also on how specific the client was in his or her selection criteria, the factors that influenced the client wanting to move to the new property location, and, finally, the characteristics of the new property that influenced the client wanting to make the purchase or lease agreement.

- **The REALTOR®**: The final section collected information about the respondent, including geographic markets served, areas of specialization, and length of career as a REALTOR®.

Prior to beginning data collection, the English-only instrument was tested to ensure that the survey was working properly, the questions were understandable, and the questions provided the information needed. Since many of the questions contained sub-questions, the survey instrument enabled the research team to collect approximately 125 data points, upon which this report is based. No monetary incentives were offered to survey participants. However, the Texas Association of REALTORS® agreed to endorse the survey and assist with recruitment, in return for a copy of the final survey instrument.

**Property Location Questions**

The section of the survey asking about property location was developed by examining previous research into the housing location decision. Researchers found 14 different factors that influence the location decision and 10 that influence the housing-specific decision. Researchers integrated these factors into three questions in the survey that asked respondents to rank the importance of each factor in their client’s decision to move to the location they did:

1. “Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is assigned to a concern that was not at all important and 7 is assigned to a concern that was extremely important, please assign a value to the following concerns that may or may not have been voiced by your client in his or her decision to move to this **region**.”

2. “Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is assigned to a concern that was not at all important and 7 is assigned to a concern that was extremely important, please assign a value to the following concerns that may or may not have been voiced by your client in his or her decision to move to this **zip code**.”

3. “Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is a concern that was not at all important and 7 is a concern that was extremely important, please assign a value to the following concern regarding your client’s decision to acquire **this specific property**.”
The 14 (region and zip code) and 10 (specific house) different factors were ordered randomly for each respondent to eliminate any potential bias for one factor over another. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of each using a 7-point Likert scale. This scale level used in the responses has been shown to be the appropriate scale for surveys where ranking importance is used (1).

**Sample**

Researchers chose to sample REALTORS® rather than buyers for two primary reasons:

- Acquiring a list of potential respondents for REALTORS® is much simpler and less expensive than acquiring a list of buyers/renters from the previous year.
- REALTORS® may have a deeper insight into their client’s needs and desires because they are trained professionals who must identify these needs, even if their clients cannot identify them in themselves. Researchers also recognized these professionals likely have a more standardized and less biased interest and opinion in the transactional process.

The Texas Association of REALTORS® sent survey recruitment emails to more than 95,000 individuals that were members of that organization’s list serve and are licensed in Texas. Approximately 28,500 of these members (30 percent) opened the recruitment email. This sampling method did not use any type of random sampling. Rather, the survey relied on respondent self-selection. Therefore, while the results presented in this report can be interpreted as being representative of the survey sample, attempts to generalize these results to the greater population of REALTORS® in Texas should be done with caution.

A total of 1,325 surveys were completed. This represents about 1 percent of all REALTORS® registered as list serve members. This also represents about 5 percent of all REALTORS® that opened the recruitment email. Statistically, this sample size exceeds the approximately 379 samples needed to ensure a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of ±5 percent. When results were segmented, some geographic and demographic populations did not have a large enough sample size (approximately 20 responses) to test.

**Administration**

Researchers deployed the surveys from July 22, 2015, to September 28, 2015. The Texas Association of REALTORS® sent periodic reminders to their list serve to remind them to take the survey.

**Data Processing**

**Cleaning and Coding**

Upon completion of the survey, the raw data from the survey responses were downloaded, and efforts began to analyze data, specifically looking for errors, uncompleted responses, and other anomalies. Since this research was looking specifically at residential real estate purchases, the
analysis looked for and excluded responses that were for non-residential purchases or purchases in which the client would not reside.

Questions that were qualitative in nature were also coded, including:

- Any other reasons that the client factored into his or her decision to acquire the property.
- In what metropolitan area or region the respondent worked.
- What specific type of client or property type the respondent catered to most of the time.

To code this information, each individual response was examined and categorized according to broad groupings. In the first question, groupings corresponded to the factors found as significant predictors of housing location choice. In the third question, respondent specialties were grouped as client centered, property centered, geography centered, and other services offered. Grouping respondents by metropolitan area was much simpler—they were grouped using U.S. Census Bureau metropolitan statistical area (MSA) definitions. Once this was completed, the responses were again reviewed for any errors.

**Aggregation**

The research faced certain challenges between some responses and how to accurately yet succinctly test and report the survey results. In many cases, certain demographic information had to be aggregated, using certain assumptions, in order to make the data usable. Any time the option for “don’t know/refuse” was used, those responses for that particular analysis were excluded, reducing the sample size of certain categories.

**Metropolitan Area Aggregations**

While the exact address of the homes purchased was not asked for or provided by the respondent, the survey did require a zip code for the home. From these zip codes, the aggregation used geographic information systems to group the responses by MSA. Those properties falling outside of an MSA or within an MSA not specifically assessed were grouped into the rural/other urban areas category and then analyzed as a group.

The survey also collected zip code information about where the client lived previously. If the client lived outside Texas, the information was grouped into one of the nine census divisions or marked as international.

**Singles versus Couples**

The survey provided five options for marital status plus a refusal/don’t know option. For the purposes of this survey, single refers to responses marked as the client being single, widowed, divorced, or separated. Couples refers to responses marked as married or in a domestic partnership.
**Income Tiers**

Respondents were asked to estimate the client’s annual household income before taxes and other deductions. Since demographic information was collected about each client (only in multiple-party transactions), researchers chose to use the higher of the two incomes if the respondent reported the client as being a couple and examined them separately if a multiparty contract had two or more single individuals, using the assumption that respondents would likely only report the household income used for financing.

Researchers asked for income by the respondent using income tiers commonly used by the U.S. Census Bureau, which includes seven groupings. However, literature on reporting household income and research by the Pew Research Center commonly report income in three tiers: low income, middle income, and high income (2, 3). Because income tier depends greatly on the household size and geographic region in addition to income, researchers chose to match the survey’s income tiers with those from the Pew Research Center (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pew Research Income Strata</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper income</td>
<td>$72,521</td>
<td>$102,560</td>
<td>$125,609</td>
<td>$145,041</td>
<td>$162,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle income</td>
<td>$24,173</td>
<td>$34,186</td>
<td>$41,869</td>
<td>$48,347</td>
<td>$54,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted Survey Income Strata</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper income</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle income</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen from this table, income tiers closely match those from the survey, making the aggregation relatively simple. The threshold for being classified low income did not closely match for single-person households. While this may be a concern, the higher number allowed researchers to be more conservative in their classification of low income.

**Employment**

The survey provided three options to classify employment: employed full time, employed part time, and not employed full or part time. The classification of what is considered full-time employment is complicated in households with more than one worker.

Researchers assumed that if one person is employed full time, he or she will likely base financing of the house off that income. Therefore, if any multiparty contract had at least one full-time person, the entire transaction was considered full time. All other potential responses were then classified as underemployed rather than unemployed since some in that category may still have a job.
Generational Groups

Respondents were asked to estimate their client’s age. The survey provided six age tiers commonly used by the U.S. Census Bureau to report age. However, researchers chose to analyze these by generational categories, using the three generations most likely to be purchasing a house:

- Millennials: those aged 18 to 34 at the time of purchase.
- Generation X: those aged 35 to 54 at the time of purchase.
- Baby boomers: those aged 55 and higher at the time of purchase.

Statistical Testing

Upon completing the data cleaning, coding, and aggregation efforts, researchers began testing and analyzing the results. Using the SPSS statistical software package, researchers first processed valid responses in the data (eliminating the excluded data points mentioned earlier) and then calculated descriptive statistics for each metropolitan area and the state as a whole.

Researchers then calculated the mean importance for each of the 14 (region and zip code) and 10 (specific house) factors by demographic category by metropolitan area (using the raw values from the 7-point Likert scale mentioned previously). These means were then ranked in order from highest to lowest for each demographic category and metropolitan area. The results of these calculations can be seen in Appendices C through I. Factors that had a mean less than 3.0 were shown as unimportant in the location decision. These factors were generally ignored in further analysis; however, the rank order of all factors (both important and unimportant) still offers value in analyzing how factors are prioritized.

Once the mean analysis was completed, researchers chose to perform several statistical tests to compare the means of one demographic category against another (e.g., comparing the means of the 14 or 10 factors for a single buyer versus coupled buyers or against generations). While sample sizes in most cases were large enough for analysis, in several cases, the data were not normally distributed. Therefore, when comparing means for only two demographic groups, researchers chose to use a Mann-Whitney U test, which is a non-parametric test appropriate for this case.

When comparing the means for income tiers and between generations, researchers chose to use an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. While these tests generally require distributions to be normally distributed, they are still considered robust when the variability within the groups (df_error) is greater than or equal to 20. In this case, the relatively large sample sizes help meet this assumption.

Researchers also performed Levene’s test for homogeneity to ensure the ANOVA’s assumption of equal variances between groups was met. In nearly all cases, each factor passed this test; however, there were a few instances where this test failed. ANOVAs were still used in these
cases when the sample size was larger than 20 and when the ratio of maximum group variance to minimum group variance was less than 10:1. In this case, ANOVAs are robust to heteroscedasticity.

Researchers were not concerned with the assumption of independent errors because the experimental design of the survey allowed respondents to repeatedly take the survey throughout the open period as long as they were assessing a different client (which was assumed to be very unlikely). Additionally, researchers did not anticipate the buyers to be part of any significant preexisting group that could skew the results.

The results of the ANOVAs, while helpful, only revealed whether one of the three groups differed from one another on a particular factor but, unlike the Mann-Whitney U test, could not identify which group(s) was different. To identify these differences (which are the crux of the analysis in this report), researchers used a post-hoc test called the least significance difference (LSD) test. Significantly different pairs were first identified in the ANOVA as those with a p-value of less than or equal to 0.05. With those pairs that were significant, researchers used the LSD post-hoc test to then determine the direction and individual differences (meaning significantly higher or lower than others). These results can be seen in the color coding in the tables in Appendices C through I.

**Limitations**

Limitations for any survey will vary significantly based upon the questions asked, the nature of the population and the sample surveyed, the method of analysis, and the very conceptual framework the effort was built upon in the first place. Biases can be introduced into almost every stage, from developing the conceptual framework, building the survey, wording the questions and possible responses, coding qualitative data, and dealing with outliers, to name a few.

**Random Sampling, Sample Size, and Validity**

In survey research, ensuring the completed samples are truly random and representative of the population as a whole is likely the largest limitation. While the steps discussed earlier in the methodology can help ensure a random sample, it still exists as a major limitation, especially when considering the source of the contact information and survey mode. The contact information may be skewed toward a certain type of group (4).

Questions of internal validity (i.e., the establishment of a causal relationship between two variables) are difficult to settle in survey research due to the lack of experimental and control groups. Extra pressure is placed on the researcher to prove first that the respondents in the sample are representative of the population at large and second that the groups being considered in the survey are relatively equal. This is usually mitigated by increasing sample size. The analysis, however, must be able to rule out, with some certainty, potential confounding variables or attributes (5).
This research also did not take into account residential real estate transactions that were for rental or lease units or that did not use a REALTOR®—likely those that were internal to a family or that were for sale by owner. This means that a certain measure of sampling error was built into the research design from the beginning, reducing the external validity of the survey results (meaning they may not apply as well to the real world).

**Questions and Measurement Error**

Even though the questions in this survey instrument were well-vetted by experts in multiple fields and tested by a series of professionals and non-professionals alike, there is a low possibility that the questions in the survey—specifically concerning the location choice—may not have precisely measured what the research desired to measure. The structure of the question or the wording of the possible responses may have caused some confusion for respondents, especially with subtle differences between the metropolitan area and neighborhood location questions, since they had the same variables.

This would explain why the property itself ranked highly in the “why move to the region” question over something more reasonable like due to a job relocation or career change. Logically, it would not make sense for someone to move across the country due to a specific property. However, since many of those moving into Texas were from states with much higher real estate prices, that could be a valid response as home buyers seek to upgrade their standard of living and take advantage of equity gained in other markets.

**Lost Incomplete Responses**

There were 1,912 surveys begun by respondents, but only 1,325 were completed and considered valid for analysis. However, those incomplete survey responses could still provide valuable information and bolster sample size numbers needed to cull more detailed information about the home-buying decision.

However, these 587 partial responses were lost due to a malfunction with the survey distribution tool, LimeSurvey. Upon completion of the survey, as the results were being prepared for analysis by the software program, the program failed, causing an error that permanently deleted all partial responses. The only thing that is knowable after the deletion is the number of partially completed surveys from a summary page.

One aspect to note about a potential flaw in the survey is the number of partially completed surveys. While unknown, this large number could indicate:

1. A malfunction in the survey, causing respondents to restart the survey.
2. Confusion about one of the early questions, also causing respondents to restart the survey.
3. The survey was too long, causing respondents to lose interest altogether.
4. Some other reason not readily apparent.
Potential Bias Introduced by REALTORS®

Because this survey used REALTORS® as a proxy for actual home buyers, a certain level of bias could have been introduced into the survey results. This could have come in the form of some sort of professional bias, meaning that since respondents are professionals in this field, they ultimately know better than the home buyer. This could have promoted a bias toward factors that are personal to the REALTOR® or trending in the real estate industry at the time of the survey.

The very experience of a REALTOR® may also bias the results of the survey, either by clouding the memory of what the last client looked for (as many REALTORS® juggle multiple clients at one time) or by averaging out client needs over time in their minds. In this case, the busier and more experienced the professional (factors that indicate a professional who is good at his or her job), the higher the likelihood of bias in some form.

This also questions whether or not REALTORS® in the state are a suitable proxy at all for home buyers. While this is a notable concern, the very issues that may raise questions about their suitability, most notably knowing better than the home owner, may also be a strength to argue for their use. As stated earlier, REALTORS® are trained to see through the emotional decision and are legally and ethically bound to work in their clients’ best wishes. Therefore, while this could be a substantial risk and limitation to the research, overall this limitation should be mitigated to only a negligible concern as sample sizes increase.
References


Appendix B: Texas REALTORS® Survey Questionnaire

The Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) Policy Research Center is conducting research on the motivations and factors that influence a person’s housing location decision in Texas. As a REALTOR®, your unique insight into this decision-making process will enable researchers, planners, and policy makers to better understand how factors in Texas’ growing urban areas shape land development.

Your participation in this survey is vital, and your effort is greatly appreciated. Your answers on the survey will be confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. This survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. The risk involved in answering the survey questions is minimal, and there are no risks greater than those you would come across in everyday life.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints regarding this study, you may contact Phil Lasley at (979) 458-2308 or P-Lasley@tti.tamu.edu. This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects’ Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Do you agree to participate in this study?

Yes

No → THANK AND TERMINATE

Thinking about the last residential contract you finalized where you represented the buyer, please answer the following questions. If you represented both the buyer and seller, please base your responses to the following questions based on your experience representing the buyer only.

1. Was this a contract to purchase or a contract to lease/rent?
   a. Purchase
   b. Lease/rent
   c. Other, specify
   d. Don’t know/refuse

2. [IF PURCHASE] What was the approximate final sales price of the property?
   a. Enter numeric value
   b. Don’t know/refuse

3. [IF LEASE/RENTAL] What was the approximate monthly rent/lease fee of the property?
   a. Enter numeric value
   b. Don’t know/refuse
4. The next several questions are in regard to the client(s) you represented. How many individuals signed the contract?
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3+
   d. Don’t know/refuse
5. [IF SINGLE CLIENT] Was the client also the resident, or does the client intend to move into the property in the future?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Don’t know/refuse
6. [IF SINGLE CLIENT] How old was the client?
   a. 18–24
   b. 25–34
   c. 35–44
   d. 45–54
   e. 55–64
   f. 65+
7. [IF SINGLE CLIENT] Prior to acquiring the property, did your client reside within the region or outside the region? For purposes of this survey, the region consists of the core urban county (or counties) as well as any adjacent counties.
   a. My client previously resided within the region
   b. My client previously resided outside the region
   c. Don’t know/refuse
8. [IF WITHIN THE REGION] Prior to acquiring the property, in what zip code did your client reside?
   a. Enter five-digit numeric zip code
   b. Don’t know/refuse
9. [IF OUTSIDE THE REGION] Prior to acquiring the property, in what city or country did your client reside?
   a. Enter the open text response
   b. Don’t know/refuse
10. [IF SINGLE CLIENT] Which of the following best describes the client’s relationship status?
    a. Single
    b. Married or domestic partnership
    c. Widowed
    d. Divorced
    e. Separated
    f. Don’t know/refuse
11. [IF SINGLE CLIENT] Did the client have children?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Don’t know/refuse
12. [IF CLIENT HAD CHILDREN] How many children did the client have within the following age ranges? An approximation is fine.
   a. 0–4 (pre-K)
   b. 5–10 (elementary)
   c. 11–13 (middle)
   d. 14–17 (high)
   e. 18+ (college)
   f. Don’t know/refuse
13. [IF SINGLE CLIENT] Was the client employed full (40 or more hours per week) or part (less than 40 hours per week) time?
   a. Yes, client employed full time
   b. Yes, client employed part time
   c. No, the client was not employed full or part time
   d. Don’t know/refuse
14. [IF SINGLE CLIENT] Did the client previously own or rent/lease?
   a. Own
   b. Rent/lease
   c. Other, specify
   d. Don’t know/refuse
15. [IF SINGLE CLIENT] Which of the following income categories best describes the client’s annual household income (before taxes and other deductions)?
   a. Less than $35,000
   b. $35,000 to $49,999
   c. $50,000 to $74,999
   d. $75,000 to $99,999
   e. $100,000 to $124,999
   f. $125,000 to $149,999
   g. $150,000 +
   h. Don’t know/refuse
16. [IF TWO CLIENTS] At any point in time are either of the clients going to reside in the property?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Don’t know/refuse
17. [IF TWO CLIENTS] I want you to think about the two clients you represented. They may have been a couple, or they may not have. For the next few questions, I would like you to think of them as client 1 and client 2. Let’s think about client 1 first. How old was client 1?
   a. 18–24
   b. 25–34
   c. 35–44
   d. 45–54
   e. 55–64
   f. 65+
   g. Don’t know/refuse
18. [IF TWO CLIENTS] Prior to acquiring the property, did client 1 reside within the region or outside the region? For purposes of this survey, the region consists of the core urban county (or counties) as well as any adjacent counties.
   a. Client 1 previously resided within the region
   b. Client 1 previously resided outside the region
   c. Don’t know/refuse
19. [IF CLIENT 1 WITHIN THE REGION] Prior to acquiring the property, in what zip code did client 1 reside?
   a. Enter the five-digit numeric zip code
   b. Don’t know/refuse
20. [IF CLIENT 1 OUTSIDE THE REGION] Prior to acquiring the property, in what city or country did client 1 reside?
   a. Enter open text response
   b. Don’t know/refuse
21. [IF TWO CLIENTS] Was client 1 employed full (40 or more hours per week) or part (less than 40 hours per week) time?
   a. Yes, client 1 employed full time
   b. Yes, client 1 employed part time
   c. No, client 1 was not employed full or part time
   d. Don’t know/refuse
22. [IF TWO CLIENTS] Did client 1 previously own or rent/lease?
   a. Own
   b. Rent/lease
   c. Other, specify
   d. Don’t know/refuse
23. [IF TWO CLIENTS] Now, let’s think about client 2. How old was client 2?
   a. 18–24
   b. 25–34
   c. 35–44
   d. 45–54
   e. 55–64
   f. 65+
   g. Don’t know/refuse

24. [IF TWO CLIENTS] Prior to acquiring the property, did client 2 reside within the region or outside the region? For purposes of this survey, the region consists of the core urban county (or counties) as well as any adjacent counties.
   a. Client 2 previously resided within the region
   b. Client 2 previously resided outside the region
   c. Don’t know/refuse

25. [IF CLIENT 2 WITHIN THE REGION] Prior to acquiring the property, in what zip code did client 2 reside?
   a. Enter the five-digit numeric zip code
   b. Don’t know/refuse

26. [IF CLIENT 2 OUTSIDE THE REGION] Prior to acquiring the property, in what city or country did client 2 reside?
   a. Enter open text response
   b. Don’t know/refuse

27. [IF TWO CLIENTS] Was client 2 employed full (40 or more hours per week) or part (less than 40 hours per week) time?
   a. Yes, client 1 employed full time
   b. Yes, client 1 employed part time
   c. No, client 1 was not employed full or part time
   d. Don’t know/refuse

28. [IF TWO CLIENTS] Did client 2 previously own or rent/lease?
   a. Own
   b. Rent/lease
   c. Other, specify
   d. Don’t know/refuse

29. [IF TWO CLIENTS] Which of the following best describes the relationship between client 1 and client 2?
   a. Married or domestic partnership
   b. Related
   c. Not related/not married/non-domestic partnership
   d. Other, specify
   e. Don’t know/refuse
30. [IF TWO CLIENTS AND MARRIED OR DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP] Do the clients have children?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Don’t know/refuse

31. [IF TWO CLIENTS AND MARRIED OR DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP AND CHILDREN] How many children do the clients have within the following age ranges?
   a. 0–4 (pre-K)
   b. 5–10 (elementary)
   c. 11–13 (middle)
   d. 14–17 (high)
   e. 18+ (college)
   f. Don’t know/refuse

32. [IF TWO CLIENTS] Which of the following income categories best describes the client’s combined annual income (before taxes and other deductions)?
   a. Less than $35,000
   b. $35,000 to $49,999
   c. $50,000 to $74,999
   d. $75,000 to $99,999
   e. $100,000 to $124,999
   f. $125,000 to $149,999
   g. $150,000 +
   h. Don’t know/refuse

33. The next few questions are about the property location. What was the zip code of the property that was acquired?
   a. Record numeric response
   b. Don’t know/refuse

34. When you first began working with your clients, how location specific were they?
   a. My client(s) had specific zip codes in which they were interested
   b. My client(s) did not have specific zip codes in which they were interested, but they did have specific areas within the region
   c. My clients were not location specific at all
   d. Don’t know/refuse

35. Did your clients maintain this level of specificity throughout the process, or did this specificity change as the process went on?
   a. My client’s level of specificity did not change throughout the process
   b. My client’s level of specificity did change throughout the process
   c. Don’t know/refuse
36. [IF SINGLE-CLIENT PURCHASE AND LIVED OUTSIDE THE REGION PRIOR TO ACQUISITION or TWO-CLIENT PURCHASE AND EITHER LIVED OUTSIDE THE REGION PRIOR TO ACQUISITION] Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is assigned to a concern that was not at all important and 7 is assigned to a concern that was extremely important, please assign a value to the following concerns that may or may not have been voiced by your client in his or her decision to move to this region.
   a. School quality
   b. Crime or perceived safety
   c. Traffic congestion or commute distance
   d. Convenient access to services and amenities (banks, grocery stores, entertainment, etc.)
   e. Property type (bedrooms, baths, amenities, etc.)
   f. Affordability (lower taxes, lower home price, etc.)
   g. Cool factor or hipness
   h. Proximity to family and friends
   i. Neighborhood aesthetics, amenities, or reputation
   j. Job relocation, career change, or retirement
   k. Transition from owner to renter or renter to owner
   l. Change in relationship status or establish own household
   m. Health reasons or natural disaster
   n. Attend or leave college

37. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is assigned to a concern that was not at all important and 7 is assigned to a concern that was extremely important, please assign a value to the following concerns that may or may not have been voiced by your client in his or her decision to move to this zip code.
   a. School quality
   b. Crime or perceived safety
   c. Traffic congestion or commute distance
   d. Convenient access to services and amenities (banks, grocery stores, entertainment, etc.)
   e. Property type (bedrooms, baths, amenities, etc.)
   f. Affordability (lower taxes, lower home price, etc.)
   g. Cool factor or hipness
   h. Proximity to family and friends
   i. Neighborhood aesthetics, amenities, or reputation
   j. Job relocation, career change, or retirement
   k. Transition from owner/renter to renter/owner
   l. Change in relationship status or establish own household
   m. Health reasons or natural disaster
   n. Attend or leave college
38. Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is a concern that was not at all important and 7 is a concern that was extremely important, please assign a value to the following concern regarding your client’s decision to acquire this specific property.
   a. Square footage
   b. Number of bedrooms
   c. Number of bathrooms
   d. Price
   e. Acreage and/or lot size
   f. Year structure was built/renovated
   g. Presence of yard
   h. Type of house (single-family detached, townhouse, condominium, or multifamily)
   i. Cost of utilities
   j. Presence of a particular upgrade the client could not live without
39. Was there any other reason your client factored into his or her decision to acquire this property?
   a. Yes, specify
   b. No
   c. Don’t know/refuse
40. These last few questions are specifically about you and your career as a REALTOR®. In what metro or region do you typically work?
   a. Record open text response
   b. Don’t know/refuse
41. Do you specialize in a specific area within this metro or region?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Don’t know/refuse
42. [IF SPECIALTY AREA] What area is that?
   a. Record open text response
43. How many years have you been a licensed REALTOR® in Texas?
   a. Record numeric response
   b. Don’t know/refuse
44. Do you cater to a specific type of client or type of property?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Don’t know/refuse
45. [IF SPECIALTY AREA] What type of client or property is this?
   a. Record open text response

We understand that your time is valuable and appreciate your assistance in our research.
Your survey response and the corresponding research will be used to inform policy makers and practitioners on how Texans make housing decisions and what role adequate infrastructure and traffic congestion play in these decisions. Insight into this question will provide state policy makers evidence-based information on several issues:

- How do people make housing decisions?
- How important is transportation in these decisions?
- How do urban congestion problems affect development decisions in Texas?
- How much reliance can be placed on traditional capital or operational transportation improvements?
- How much of the solution might come from some sort of land use or transportation policy solution?

Understanding the factors that influence where a person lives will improve the type, scale, and timeliness of capital improvements and land use policies as Texas cities continue to grow.

If you would like to request a copy of the survey results or the final report, please contact Phil Lasley at (979) 458-2308 or P-Lasley@tti.tamu.edu.

Thank you!
### Appendix C: Texas Data Tables

#### Why Move to the Region: Texas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles</th>
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<th>No Kids</th>
<th>With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Property type (bedrooms, baths, amenities, etc.)</td>
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<td>5.10</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
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**Notes:** Scores are surveyed means of importance, where 7 is extremely important and 1 is not important at all.

- Green (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly higher than other means in its demographic category.
- Red (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly lower than other means in its demographic category.
- Green and Red indicate that those two scores are statistically significantly different from one another, but not necessarily from the third score, with red being the low score and green the high score.
- Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.
**Why Move to the Neighborhood: Texas**

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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
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<th>Middle Income</th>
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<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
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<th>Under-employed</th>
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Notes: Scores are surveyed means of importance, where 7 is extremely important and 1 is not important at all. Green (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly higher than other means in its demographic category. Red (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly lower than other means in its demographic category. Green and Red indicate that those two scores are statistically significantly different from one another, but not necessarily from the third score, with red being the low score and green the high score. Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.

---

**Why Choose the House: Texas**

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<th>With Kids</th>
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</table>

Notes: Scores are surveyed means of importance, where 7 is extremely important and 1 is not important at all. Green (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly higher than other means in its demographic category. Red (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly lower than other means in its demographic category. Green and Red indicate that those two scores are statistically significantly different from one another, but not necessarily from the third score, with red being the low score and green the high score. Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.
### Appendix D: Austin Data Tables

#### Why Move to the Region: Austin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
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<th>Singles</th>
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<th>No Kids</th>
<th>With Kids</th>
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<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
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<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
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<th>With Kids</th>
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<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
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<th>Rent</th>
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**Why Choose the House: Austin**

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<th>With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
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</table>

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### Appendix E: Dallas-Fort Worth Data Tables

#### Why Move to the Region: Dallas-Fort Worth

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<th>Factor</th>
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<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
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<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

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### Why Move to the Neighborhood: Dallas-Fort Worth

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<th>Factor</th>
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<th>Gen-X</th>
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<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
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Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.

### Why Choose the House: Dallas-Fort Worth

<table>
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<th>Factor</th>
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<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids</th>
<th>With Kids</th>
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<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
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<th>Rent</th>
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<td>Presence of a particular upgrade the client could not live without</td>
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</table>

Notes: Scores are surveyed means of importance, where 7 is extremely important and 1 is not important at all.
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Red (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly lower than other means in its demographic category.
Green and Red indicate that those two scores are statistically significantly different from one another, but not necessarily from the third score, with red being the low score and green the high score.
Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.
Appendix F: Houston Data Tables

### Why Move to the Region: Houston

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids</th>
<th>With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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<td>4.27</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

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## Why Move to the Neighborhood: Houston

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Singles</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids</th>
<th>With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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<td>5.52</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

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## Why Choose the House: Houston

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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
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<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids</th>
<th>With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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<td>5.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acreage and/or lot size</td>
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<td>4.43</td>
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<td>4.48</td>
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<td>4.82</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of a particular upgrade the client could not live without</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of utilities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.91</td>
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<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.92</td>
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<td>3.99</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Appendix G: San Antonio Data Tables

**Why Move to the Region: San Antonio**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids</th>
<th>With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property type (bedrooms, baths, amenities, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>6.16</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4.84</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>5.76</td>
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<td>5.43</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime or perceived safety</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>4.53</td>
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<td>4.91</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>4.88</td>
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<td>5.02</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient access to services (banks, grocery stores, entertainment, etc.)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>4.82</td>
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<td>5.13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.32</td>
<td>4.75</td>
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<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability (lower taxes, lower home price, etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>3.80</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.93</td>
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<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.94</td>
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<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.98</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cool factor or hipness</td>
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<td>2.11</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.53</td>
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<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.08</td>
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<td>1.82</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.75</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<td>1.68</td>
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<td>1.53</td>
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<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.55</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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### Why Move to the Neighborhood: San Antonio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income Middle Income High Income</th>
<th>Millennials Gen-X Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed Under-employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property type (bedrooms, baths, amenities, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>5.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient access to services (banks, grocery stores, entertainment, etc.)</td>
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<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>4.87</td>
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<td>5.08</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>4.84</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime or perceived safety</td>
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<td>4.48</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>5.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traffic congestion or commute distance</td>
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<td>3.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proximity to family and friends</td>
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<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>School quality</td>
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<td>2.66</td>
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<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job relocation, career change, or retirement</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>3.76</td>
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<td>2.80</td>
<td>4.22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition from owner/renter to renter/owner</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.67</td>
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<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool factor or hipness</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in relationship status or establishment of household</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>2.89</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.59</td>
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<td>2.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health reasons or natural disaster</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.61</td>
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<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.80</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend or leave college</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.81</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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### Why Choose the House: San Antonio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income Middle Income High Income</th>
<th>Millennials Gen-X Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed Under-employed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of house (single family detached, townhouse, condo, multifamily, etc.)</td>
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<td>5.69</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>5.69</td>
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<td>Price</td>
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<td>5.53</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.90</td>
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<td>6.06</td>
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<td>5.08</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>5.33</td>
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<td>5.60</td>
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<td>Square footage</td>
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<td>5.03</td>
<td>5.01</td>
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<td>5.05</td>
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<td>4.96</td>
<td>3.40</td>
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<td>5.24</td>
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<td>3.53</td>
<td>4.56</td>
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<td>3.80</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year structure was built/renovated</td>
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<td>3.76</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>3.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of utilities</td>
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<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of a particular upgrade the client could not live without</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.05</td>
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<td>3.83</td>
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<td>3.60</td>
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Notes: Scores are surveyed means of importance, where 7 is extremely important and 1 is not important at all. Green (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly higher than other means in its demographic category. Red (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly lower than other means in its demographic category. Green and Red indicate that those two scores are statistically significantly different from one another, but not necessarily from the third score, with red being the low score and green the high score. Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.
## Why Move to the Region: Corpus Christi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids</th>
<th>With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Property type (bedrooms, baths, amenities, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5.67</td>
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<td>5.91</td>
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<td>6.29</td>
<td>5.25</td>
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<td>Neighborhood aesthetics, amenities, or reputation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>6.37</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>5.63</td>
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<td>6.17</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient access to services (banks, grocery stores, entertainment, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.45</td>
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Notes: Scores are surveyed means of importance, where 7 is extremely important and 1 is not important at all.
Green (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly higher than other means in its demographic category.
Red (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly lower than other means in its demographic category.
Green and Red indicate that those two scores are statistically significantly different from one another, but not necessarily from the third score, with red being the low score and green the high score.
Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.
### Why Move to the Neighborhood: Corpus Christi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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**Notes:** Scores are surveyed means of importance, where 7 is extremely important and 1 is not important at all. Green (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly higher than other means in its demographic category. Red (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly lower than other means in its demographic category. Green and Red indicate that those two scores are statistically significantly different from one another, but not necessarily from the third score, with red being the low score and green the high score. Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.

### Why Choose the House: Corpus Christi

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<th>With Kids</th>
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<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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<td>5.37</td>
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Appendix I: Rural and Other Urban Areas Data Tables

### Why Move to the Region: Rural and Other Urban Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen-X</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Rent</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Under-employed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property type (bedrooms, baths, amenities, etc.)</td>
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<td>4.92</td>
<td>5.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convenient access to services (banks, grocery stores, entertainment, etc.)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proximity to family and friends</td>
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<td>4.26</td>
<td>1.95</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.85</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in relationship status or establishment of household</td>
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<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.19</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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Notes: Scores are surveyed means of importance, where 7 is extremely important and 1 is not important at all. Green (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly higher than other means in its demographic category. Red (with no other color) indicates a score that is statistically significantly lower than other means in its demographic category. Green and Red indicate that those two scores are statistically significantly different from one another, with red being the low score and green the high score. Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.
### Why Move to the Neighborhood: Rural and Other Urban Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor (Type, Aesthetics, Safety, Access, Etc.)</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials Gen-X Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own Rent Employed Under-employed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property type (bedrooms, baths, amenities, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>5.26 5.35 5.00 5.51 5.18</td>
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<td>5.35 5.10 5.32 5.12</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood aesthetics, amenities, or reputation</td>
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<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.90 4.53 3.40 4.44 5.27</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime or perceived safety</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Convenient access to services (banks, grocery stores, entertainment, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Affordability (lower taxes, lower home price, etc.)</td>
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<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.18 4.25 5.00 4.40 3.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proximity to family and friends</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.92</td>
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<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.77 4.09 4.80 3.79 3.73</td>
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<td>Job relocation, career change, or retirement</td>
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<td>3.03</td>
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<td>Transition from owner/renter to renter/owner</td>
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<td>Cool factor or hipness</td>
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<td>2.73 2.35 2.20 2.56 2.63</td>
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<td>Change in relationship status or establishment of household</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>2.04</td>
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<td>2.34 3.35 2.50 2.24</td>
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<td>Health reasons or natural disaster</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.38 2.01 2.53 2.32 1.82</td>
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<td>2.12 2.60 2.07 2.41</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend or leave college</td>
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<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.39 1.89 2.60 2.01 1.69</td>
<td>2.21 2.25 1.47</td>
<td>1.97 3.05 2.06 1.80</td>
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</table>

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Green, red, and orange indicate all three means are statistically significantly different from one another.

### Why Choose the House: Rural and Other Urban Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor (Price, Type, Number, Presence, Square, Acreage, Year, Cost, Upgrade)</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>No Kids With Kids</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Middle Income</th>
<th>High Income</th>
<th>Millennials Gen-X Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Own Rent Employed Under-employed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>5.64 5.57 6.33 5.74 5.18</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of house (single family detached, townhouse, condo, multifamily, etc.)</td>
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<td>5.58</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>5.43 5.62 5.07 5.49 5.43</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of bedrooms</td>
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<td>5.19</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>5.10 5.29 4.93 5.26 4.98</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of bathrooms</td>
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<td>5.02</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>5.05 5.07 4.13 5.21 4.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presence of yard</td>
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<td>4.90</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>4.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Square footage</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.90</td>
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<td>4.89 4.70 4.84 4.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acreage and/or lot size</td>
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<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.62 4.59 4.20 4.73 4.57</td>
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<td>Year structure was built/renovated</td>
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<td>4.47</td>
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<td>4.28 4.43 3.80 5.11 4.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of utilities</td>
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<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>4.09 3.98 4.27 4.23 3.86</td>
<td>4.20 3.86 3.82</td>
<td>3.95 4.30 3.91 4.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presence of a particular upgrade the client could not live without</td>
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<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.71 3.96 3.80 3.92 3.86</td>
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</table>

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Appendix J: Corridor Analysis Methodology

This appendix addresses the specific details of how the corridor analysis was designed and executed to produce the results in this report. The methodology has been separated into sections:

1. Corridor Selection.
2. Data Sources and Aggregation.
3. GIS Analysis.

Corridor Selection

To perform an assessment of underutilized corridors in the four major metropolitan areas in Texas, researchers first had to discern which corridors would be suitable for study. Researchers used information from TxDOT’s Texas 100 Most Congested Roadways list to identify the most underutilized roadways in the Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio metropolitan areas. Note that other metropolitan areas were not considered due to data availability and overall corridor need.

The basic premise of this analysis was to find underutilized corridors in major metropolitan areas where changes in the surrounding land use and an overall increase in residents may better utilize the infrastructure investment already made in that corridor. Plainly, why spend significant funds on a facility that few actually use? By increasing the number of residents in the corridor, not only will that facility provide a higher benefit to cost, it may also delay the expenditure of new funds on new facilities. Additionally, the increased density in the area may make other transportation modes, like transit, bicycling, and walking, more efficient, practical, and usable to the surrounding area. Legacy costs of infrastructure (including maintenance and replacement) would also be reduced for the entire metropolitan area. Therefore, it is important to select corridors that have been overbuilt for their current use, either in one or both directions, and experience few (if any) slowdowns and little to no delay.

Researchers looked specifically for corridor segments that fell very low on the list, were generally freeway or major arterial in nature, and held a minimum of two lanes in each direction. Researchers also looked specifically for corridors with low values for specific congestion measures commonly used in practice.

- **Texas Congestion Index**—The TCI is a unitless measure that indicates the amount of extra time for any trip. A TCI value of 1.40 indicates a 20-minute trip in the off-peak will take 28 minutes in the peak. Rider 56 specified the TCI as the performance measure for congestion.

- **Planning Time Index (95th)**—The PTI is a travel time reliability measure that represents the total travel time that should be planned for a trip. Computed as the 95th percentile travel time divided by the free-flow travel time, it represents the amount of time that should be planned for a trip to be late for only one day a month. A PTI of 3.00 means that
for a 20-minute trip in light traffic, 60 minutes should be planned. The PTI value represents the “worst trip of the month.” This measure resonates with individual commuters and truck drivers delivering goods—they need to allow more time for urgent trips.

- Speed Profile—The speed profile is a 24-hour chart that displays the average speed in each direction on the corridor every 15 minutes. This fine-grained chart provides detailed information about how much traffic slows during peak hours and in what direction.

- Delay Profile—Similar to the speed profile, the delay profile displays the average delay for each direction over 24 hours in 15-minute increments. This chart provides added depth to the speed profile.

Researchers chose corridors with low index values and with no or little identifiable slowdowns in speed or spikes in delay throughout the day. Where there was some delay, researchers examined if it was in a particular direction or on a smaller sub-segment. These qualifiers, in addition to local knowledge of the corridors, produced a shortened list of suitable corridors for an exploratory analysis of the corridors under the context of the survey results. In all, 28 corridors were selected for analysis among others in the top 100 most congested.

Data Sources and Aggregation

One difficult task in performing a corridor analysis based on factors studied in the survey was finding data sets that matched the survey categories. While not all were able to be used, researchers were able to find suitable data sources for many of the primary categories studied from a variety of sources.

Using the information from Figure 6 and in light of available data, researchers chose to look at four primary characteristics:

- Demographic characteristics.
  - Population density.
  - Age distribution.
  - Marital status.
  - Presence of children under the age of 18.
  - Living alone or with others.
  - Household income.
  - Average commute time (as compared to the metropolitan area as a whole).

- Real estate characteristics.
  - Average median home value.
  - Average appreciation over 1 year.
  - Average annual appreciation over 5 years.
  - Property tax rates.
- Crime characteristics.
  - Violent crime as a percentage of crimes that occurred in the corridor buffer.
  - Violent crime density per square mile.
- School quality characteristics.
  - Percent of schools in the buffer that met a set or alternative standard.
  - Percent of schools that did not meet the standard.
  - Percent of schools that achieved the seven campus distinctions for achievement in math, postsecondary readiness, reading, science, social studies, top 25 percent closing performance gaps, and top 25 percent student progress.

These data were collected from the following various data sources for the 2014 year (however, some real estate transaction data also fell into 2015). Note that researchers used private data sources for some variables in order to have a unified and cleaned data set since crime and real estate transaction data can vary greatly by individual source.

- Location, Inc.
  - Real estate transaction data (various variables).
  - Crime (various variables).
  - Data crosswalks to other data sets.
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.
  - Sex by Age (ACS_14_5YR_B01001).
  - Travel Time to Work (ACS_14_5YR_B08303).
  - Household Type (ACS_14_5YR_B11001).
  - Households by Presence of People Under 18 Years by Household Type (ACS_14_5YR_B11005).
  - Campus Ratings.
  - Campus Distinctions.
    - Mathematics Academic Achievement Distinction.
    - Postsecondary Readiness Distinction.
    - Reading/ELA Academic Achievement Distinction.
    - Science Academic Achievement Distinction.
    - Social Studies Academic Achievement Distinction.
    - Top 25% Closing Performance Gaps Distinction.
    - Top 25% Student Progress Distinction.

Once the data sources were chosen, researchers then aggregated them by comparable terms and geography—at the census tract level—in order to provide an even baseline of comparison. Researchers used a PostgreSQL database instance host on an Amazon web server to store and analyze the data.
GIS Analysis

Once the data sets were cleaned and compiled, the next step was to prepare the corridors for analysis. Researchers used GIS applications to map the selected corridors from the Texas 100 Most Congested list and created a 1.5 catchment area buffer around the corridor to represent the neighborhoods that could potentially impact and increase use of the studied roadway segment.

Researchers performed the GIS analysis of the real estate, crime, demographics, and education data for selected Texas 100 corridors using ArcGIS Pro software by ESRI. Researchers developed a spatial analysis model (Figure 62) in ArcGIS Pro to perform the buffering and intersecting of layers. PostGIS library was used to join the data tables with their respective geographic layer, and Tableau was used to visualize the GIS analysis results in the form of dashboards that can be hosted on the web via a Tableau server. Tableau dashboards are interactive and allow the viewer to explore the data analysis results using both data graphics and mapping capabilities.
Figure 62. ArcGIS Pro Spatial Analysis Model.
Researchers used areal interpolation to calculate the proportion of a specific variable that fell within the 1.5-mile corridor buffer zones. For example, the yellow census tract in Figure 63 overlays the corridor buffer zone in blue, but not completely. Instead of assigning the tract’s entire population to the buffer zone, it was proportioned equal to the amount of area that is located within the buffer zone. This method assumes that the population of an area is evenly distributed throughout. Attributes of both census tracts and independent school districts were all assigned to the corridor buffer zones using areal interpolation. This entire process was automated using the ArcGIS Pro model builder, as shown in Figure 62.

Additionally, researchers used visual assessment of areal imagery to assess characteristics of the built environment, including flood plains, environmentally sensitive areas, land use and quality, open space, and roadway interactions.

The outputs from this model were then assessed using Tableau data visualization software to quickly identify trends, outliers, and other information from each corridor. Researchers used these dashboards and data visualizations to combine the results with the local results from the Texas REALTORS® Survey. Using the researchers’ best professional judgment based on the
analyzed results, potential solutions were inferred for maximizing the attractive qualities of the corridor for new or redevelopment and infill.

Note that these results should not be construed as fact but rather suggestions based on the results of the analysis and survey. Limitations in the analysis, such as the method of areal interpolation, may not accurately capture those attributes in the specific corridor buffer. However, researchers are confident that they do represent a fair estimate of reality. Additionally, the housing location decision is incredibly complex, and to distill it down to even the expansive list of variables from this report would be shortsighted. Other factors, including race and ethnicity, life milestones, or the location of family and friends, which have purposefully not been discussed in this report, greatly affect a person’s location decision. Use of the assessment should be done with caution.

References
