



Sunday Column

By Kim Bragman, 2020 Chairman

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House, condo, or duplex? How to decide which one will be your home

When you think of your ideal home, do you envision a detached, single-family house with a big lawn? Many people do associate this image with homeownership, but the best fit for you might be a townhome on a tree-lined street or a top-floor penthouse overlooking a city skyline.

Whatever you imagine, choosing the right property depends on your situation and goals. Your San Antonio area REALTOR® can assist you in finding a home that fits your needs and help you understand what is involved in purchasing and owning property. Here are two types of property that your REALTOR® might suggest to you:

Condos

You get many of the same benefits from owning a condo as owning a single-family home. You can deduct your mortgage interest and property taxes from your federal income taxes if you itemize, and you increase your personal wealth as you build equity.

When you live in a condo, you avoid some of the maintenance and upkeep issues that come with a house. You'll pay a monthly condo association fee for that convenience, but you won't have to mow the yard, water or replace the plants, paint the exterior, or other tasks associated with owning a single-family house. Your association fee also goes toward repairs and routine maintenance. Remember, this money keeps the property well-maintained and protects its value.

You may also get to enjoy amenities like a pool, clubhouse or workout room. If a property has extensive upscale amenities that you don't think you'll use, you might prefer to look elsewhere. Condo association fees can vary greatly. Generally, the more upkeep required means higher fees.

Don't forget that condominiums often share walls. Living in close contact with your neighbors has advantages and drawbacks. Be realistic with yourself when you decide if a condo is a good choice for you. Also, don't assume that a condo will cost less than a detached house. There are upscale condos and inexpensive houses, just like there are upscale houses and inexpensive condos.

Multifamily

Duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes are another option. Though some people own small multifamily properties solely for investment purposes, others find it advantageous to purchase a property, live in one of the units and rent out the others. You may decide you like this arrangement solely for the financial aspects of it, or it may work well if you have a relative or friend that you'd like to live nearby.

In this scenario, remember that you are not only a homeowner but a landlord as well. That comes with benefits (a monthly rent check, equity that continues to build) and responsibilities (making repairs).

It's also possible to purchase half of a duplex—or one unit of some other multifamily property. You might hear properties of this type referred to as townhomes.

Regardless of what a property is commonly called—condo, co-op, loft apartment, townhome, garden home—it's important to know what legal definitions and documents govern the purchase and ownership of the property. It's equally important to know what those definitions and documents mean when it comes to your continued expenses and the rights of ownership you will enjoy.

For more information on buying or selling your home visit SABOR.com and use a San Antonio area REALTOR®.

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