

HOME BUYER INSPECTIONS CHECKLIST

GENERAL HOME INSPECTION

Hire a certified home inspector (even if the home was just built) – for listings check www.ashi.org (American Society of Home Inspectors). A qualified inspector should perform the following at minimum:

- Assess existing site grading for proper drainage away from home
- Assess yard and tree conditions for damage and disease
- Assess exterior finish / siding / brick / stucco conditions
- Structural assessment of frame, block, slab, and foundation
- Search for any water damage or infiltration
- Perform tests on plumbing system and fixtures ensuring all seals are in good condition
- Assess condition of water heater, septic or sewer connections and search for leaks
- Assess gutters and downspouts
- Assess the age and potential lifespan left in the heating and cooling system
- Assess the age and condition of the electrical system (homes built before 1980 may require updates)
- Assess the age and potential lifespan left in the roof – search for evidence of patching / repair
- Assess the age and condition of windows and flashings
- Assess existing insulation values in wall and roof (current code minimum is R19 wall and R38 roof)
- Assess adequate ventilation and exhaust systems
- Test fire and carbon monoxide detectors and alarms
- Assess crawl space conditions (moisture, ventilation, insects, insulation, etc.)

PEST INSPECTION

Many home inspectors do not cover pest inspection. Hire a certified pest control specialist to do both visual and physical tests inside and outside the home:

- Assess and test for termites
- Assess for carpenter ants
- Assess for other insects, infestations, and vermin

ENVIRONMENTAL INSPECTIONS

Radon Gas Identification and Remediation: Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas (odorless and colorless) emitted by the earth. Its concentration levels vary widely. The EPA recommends remediation of levels 4 pCi/L or higher. We recommend remediation of levels 2 pCi/L or higher based on research we've reviewed as people vary widely to their susceptibility. Sustained exposure to high levels of radon is known to cause lung and breast cancers. Many home inspectors will test for this – tests require a sensor be placed in a closed room for (not to be opened for several days) on the ground floor or basement. If the home inspector does not test for this you should consider hiring a radon or other environmental testing company. Remediation consists of simple PVC pipes through the floor slab to the roof with an inline fan to reduce gas buildup inside the home, thereby lowering levels.

If the home was built before 1980, an environmental testing company should preform the following tests:

Lead Paint and Lead Water Identification and Remediation: Paint containing lead was common prior to its U.S. consumer product ban in 1978. Lead paint may cause lead poisoning when ingested. Young children are particularly vulnerable to lead poisoning commonly obtained through the ingestion of peeling paint chips or air born dust from degrading paint. Lead may also be found in drinking water due to decaying lead pipes within the building. Lead poisoning may severely affect the mental and physical development of young children.

Asbestos Identification and Remediation: Asbestos is a fibrous material that was common in many building products (particularly insulation) prior to its U.S. phase out in the late 1970s through 1980s. Asbestos becomes a hazard when asbestos containing materials become airborne, often due to deterioration or damage. Asbestos is microscopic and cannot be identified by the naked eye. Sustained exposure to airborne asbestos is known to cause lung cancer.

FUTURE PLANNING

If you are considering an addition to the home be sure to familiarize yourself with the local zoning code to understand before you buy what you can and cannot build. Some items to consider:

- Setbacks: areas on your lot where you cannot build
- Overlay district restrictions: historic district, neighborhood covenants, local watershed overlay, etc.
- Easements: sewer, water, electrical, watershed, environmental, etc. that may run through or along side the property
- Surface to land ratios for built area and impermeable surface: zoning restrictions that limit the total area allowed to be constructed on a property. If the home is close to the allowed ratios it's possible no further building on the property will be permitted.

GO GREEN

Old homes are often much less energy efficient and more costly to operate. Consider the following improvements to save on your utility bills for years to come:

- Insulated double-pane windows with Low-E coatings (to reduce heating and cooling loss)
- Increase insulation in walls and roofs as much as you can
- Proper sealing around windows, doors, pipes, etc. will reduce air loss and help control pests
- Water efficient faucets, showerheads, and toilets will reduce water usage. A rainwater harvesting system will further reduce reliance on costly municipality water or extend the life of well water.
- Consider solar photovoltaic panels on the roof (an open area mostly shade-free is needed). A local solar installer can test the site potential for free. A typical 5kW residential installation is around \$20-\$25K of which a large portion can be recouped through federal and state tax-credits (up to 65% in some cases). In the long run solar is free electrical energy.
- Visit the EPA website for a list of federal tax-credits for energy improvements including Solar and Geothermal installations and various small home improvements:
http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=tax_credits.tx_index

GET AN ASSESSMENT BY AN ARCHITECT

If you're considering purchasing a home and renovating, contact us for a Property Evaluation to determine the constraints and opportunities before you buy. www.CUBEdesignResearch.com

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