
Toronto question

Posted by Inca - 09-05-2008 17:36

I've started watching this show on HGTV called "Property Virgins," about first-time home buyers, and most of the episodes are set in Toronto (when they're not, they're all in Texas, which just seems strange). Anyway, they show a map of the city and the neighborhoods that the houses are in.

What's up with the neighborhood names in Toronto? Cabbagetown? I remember one had "Baby" in the name, and there were some other odd ones.

Also, it seemed like a shitload of neighborhoods on the map. LA is huge and sprawling, but our neighborhoods here are kind of vaguely defined (ask 5 people where the Westside begins, and you'll get 5 different answers), and don't seem as plentiful as the ones in Toronto do on the map. Are they all distinctly different?

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 09-05-2008 17:39

They're as distinctly different as real estate agents seeking to extract money from the mystique of exclusivity can make them.

Few would contain more than a couple of tens of thousands of people or be more than twenty square blocks.

Not that different from London, actually.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 09-05-2008 17:47

Oooo...I could write pages. Toronto is actually often describe as "a city of neighbourhoods". The current City of Toronto is actually an amalgamation of smaller former Cities, including (among others) Toronto, East York, North York, Etobicoke, Scarborough (what am I missing, Gramsci?).

Each of those is also very 'regional' in nature. I, for instance, live in Toronto, but I also live in Scarborough, West Hill and Rouge Hill.

Cabbagetown used to be where the Irish working class lived when they arrived. It reeked of boiled cabbage at dinnertime, since that's generally a staple of poor-Irish meals. The name has been attached to that little (very beautiful and desirable) section of Toronto. There's also The Danforth (Greeks), Little Italy, Little Portugal, The Beach (NOT The Beaches), Kensington Market, Riverdale, Leslieville, The Junction, and about a hundred others. Among residents, pitched arguments can erupt over exactly where one (desirable) neighbourhood ends and another (less so) begins.

I love Property Virgins. Especially the aspect where two wide-eyed Jr Bankers making a combined \$60,000 want to live in a \$750,000 fixer-upper in Rosedale, and nothing less will suffice.

Are they all distinctly different? No, but the residents would have you believe as much. Many have a unique flavour and their own charm, but not that you couldn't find in other equally nice areas.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Coffy - 09-05-2008 17:48

This is a good place for a question I've had about LA geography. Are places like Encino or Reseda or whatever, which I'd thought of as discrete suburban towns, actually part of the city proper? This seems to cause confusion to the writers of Cold Case, because they'll have the Philly PD handle cases that seem to be in the suburbs, which would definitely not happen here.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 09-05-2008 17:50

Theyre as distinctly different as real estate agents seeking to extract money from the mystique of exclusivity can make them.

Case in point: The Beach is a very distinct (and desirable) area just north of Lake Ontario. Within spitting distance of actual sand and water. But for real estate purposes, The Beach stretches so far north that you couldn't see water without the use of a telescope and very tall tower.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 09-05-2008 17:50

On the West Sayiiiiid!!

<http://animatedtv.about.com/library/graphics/hiphopcartman.jpg>

Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 09-05-2008 17:55

Neat. Didn't know this existed. Click on each section to the see 'hoods within.

<http://www.torontoneighbourhoods.net/search/search.html>

Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 09-05-2008 18:02

Oh, and Baby Point is in the York area. You'd be very happy living there.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by Inca - 09-05-2008 18:04

Coffy wrote:

This is a good place for a question I've had about LA geography. Are places like Encino or Reseda or whatever, which I'd thought of as discrete suburban towns, actually part of the city proper? This seems to cause confusion to the writers of Cold Case, because they'll have the Philly PD handle cases that seem to be in the suburbs, which would definitely not happen here.

Those two in particular are neighborhoods in Los Angeles, not their own incorporated cities, so sounds like that's where problems like that come from, Coffy. There are some places that are actual independent, incorporated cities (Beverly Hills, Santa Monica), but are surrounded by LA, and just tend to get grouped in with City of Los Angeles proper. West Hollywood is its own city, for example, but Hollywood is just an area of Los Angeles. Some LA neighborhoods are so distinct people think that they're their own cities--Venice, San Pedro--but they aren't, though the post office will deliver mail addressed to Venice, or San Pedro.

Thanks, WOM. LA is also very much a "city of neighborhoods", though like I said, people don't always agree on just what those neighborhoods are called. The City of Los Angeles has an official map with district names, and you can see the signs posted (this Flickr group trying to get them all), but those tend to get ignored. A neighborhood I used to live in was named Crestview, but people called it the Cadillac district, or Palms, or Pico-Robertson (for nearby streets), or "Beverlywood adjacent", a nice real-estate technique of trying to link a somewhat marginal area to a well-known nice area nearby. "Beverly Hills adjacent" is a classic example.

I like "Property Virgins" more than "House Hunters," a similar show, because I find it more realistic--there are shows where people don't get the house, they get dicked around by the sellers when they see there's a lot of interest, and they don't always end up happy. Plus, I kind of like Sandra Rinomato, the realtor/host.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 09-05-2008 18:10

In the US, it's often easy to determine where the desirable neighborhood ends and another begins. It's the boundary of the school district.

I currently rent, but will probably buy a condo soon. 36 is a bit old to be buying one's first home, but whatever. I just dread it because I know that there's nothing in the DC area that I can afford that I'll actually feel good about owning.

That's why those shows are so depressing to me. I'm afraid I'll end up like those uptight people, demanding new appliances and bathroom fixtures, loads of space, a place to run their dogs, a Starbucks nearby, and space to paint watercolors or whatever the fuck they do. I know it's hypocritical for me to say this, but I don't want to be so fixated on stuff and, well, you know, be so damn bourgeois.

I just want a structurally sound place that is big enough to hold my stuff (modest), stays cool in summer, is reasonably clean, doesn't have roaches or other vermin and stays reasonably quiet between the hours of 10 pm and 10 am. And it needs to include one parking spot.

And yet, even in boring sprawl Rockville- my likely target, since I think I may be able to afford it and it's close to my office - that's hard to find. Most places are "luxury" or "executive" or "deluxe" and/or total abject shitholes.

I like where I am now and could possibly buy something in the building, but I'd like to be a little closer to the Metro and maybe closer to work if I can. There's no hope of me living somewhere genuinely cool.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 09-05-2008 18:11

Do you get 'Holmes on Homes' there? That's my favourite. He's called in by people who've had a shoddy (or deadly) reno job done on their home and he 'makes it right' (TM). Excellent for DIY fans. My wife bought me his book "Make It Right" just before I was going to do a spit 'n polish reno on our bathroom. After reading it, I ripped it out to the wood studs and redid the entire thing, floor to ceiling.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Inca - 09-05-2008 18:17

Perhaps. I'm still a bit ashamed that I watch HGTV, so I don't know the full schedule. I'm not really into DIY shows that much. Though I find "This Old House" and Norm Abram very hypnotic.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Coffy - 09-05-2008 18:21

My favorite is My House Is Worth What?, really just to have a look inside other people's houses. I envy people outside of the Northeastern rowhouse belt, where ordinary neighborhoods consist of cute Craftsman bungalows with lawns.

The guilty pleasure is How Not to Decorate on BBC America. Even the afters are cringe inducing: huge mirrors, loud wallpaper, weird color schemes.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Inca - 09-05-2008 18:27

There was one House Hunters that I saw recently, set in part of New Jersey near Philadelphia (Cherry Hill?). The homes were all equally hideous inside--early 1970s decor, yellow or purple bathrooms, etc. I just couldn't believe that all three were nearly identical inside.

My wife and I watch House Hunters and get nauseous at how much home people are buying with so little, even ones made before the real estate crash. People in Texas are buying 5 bedroom houses on almost 1 acre lots for \$200,000, and they're not just in the boonies.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 09-05-2008 18:29

And every bedroom on those Brit real estate shows has a massive, built-in (yet flimsy) closet and shelves thingy around the head of the bed.

I'm addicted to both Location, Location and Relocation, Relocation. Very sad, really.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 09-05-2008 18:33

Are you saying \$200,000 is a lot or a little? Because where I live, \$200,000 is dirt cheap. Indeed, I'm not sure I can get anything at all for that price.

Nightline did a nice piece on Maricopa, Arizona as an example of a town that exploded in the housing boom and is now imploding in the crash. It looks so depressing in that uniquely American way - houses being knocked-up by the dozen, no trees, heat rising from the wide asphalt strips to nowhere.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 09-05-2008 18:38

Quite. If I could find something livable for \$200K, I'd buy two.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by Inca - 09-05-2008 18:45

Yes, that's what I was saying--that's peanuts. Prices have come down in some neighborhoods in LA, but a starter condo where we are now--and we'd like to stay here because of childcare and work--would be at least \$600k.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 09-05-2008 18:45

There's something very wrong with that. There's something very wrong with the real estate market in general - speculators, people doing upgrades they don't really want just to "increase the value," real estate agents telling people what they "must have," and tax subsidies for buyers, even if they're already loaded or already have a first house.

I don't know exactly what the problem is, or how to fix it, but all of this smells right.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by Coffy - 09-05-2008 18:47

Some friends of mine bought a house in Cherry Hill a couple of years ago, and she hates the 100% yellow retro-looking kitchen, which probably is the original from the '50s or early '60s. I'd take it in a second, and not just because my own kitchen is so awful--it's adorable.

But as for the Texas thing, I've seen that, and it is depressing until you remember that it's Bush country, so those people have also sold their souls.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 09-05-2008 18:55

My kitchen and bathroom has 1970's "harvest gold" fixtures and appliances. I hated that at first, but I've gotten over it. My apartment is so overrun with my own stuff - paintings, antiques, hockey pucks, old Reds pennants, rugs, that I don't notice it anymore.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 09-05-2008 19:06

Our 1970-house kitchen had plywood doors on molded plastic cabinets, while the bathroom had lavender tub & toilet. When I ripped out the vanities, I found the original bathroom carpeting (!) was a stunning bright purple.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Coffy - 09-05-2008 19:09

Yeah, my house had a lot of terrible updating done by the previous owners: paneled walls, dropped ceilings, wall-to-wall carpet in the bathroom (and the rest of the second floor, and it was commercial grade). But I have to be careful what I say about it, because it's the childhood home of my next-door neighbor.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Inca - 09-05-2008 19:18

I've never understood carpet in the bathroom. It just seems like a mildew magnet.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 09-05-2008 19:20

You know when they say to buy the shittiest house on a nice street? That was us. The previous owner (an old electrician/tinkerer/junk collector) had built a workshed in the yard that was only high enough for a roughly 5'4" man (him) to stand up in. He'd jury-rigged some electricity to it (which I promptly disconnected before knocking the whole bug-trap down. He left the basement and garage full of his old electronic/electrical flotsam (including old phone guts, which he apparently collected because they contain small amount of valuable metals). When we moved in (Nov. 1, '99), the house had no working furnace. There was a carbon monoxide detector mounted to it. Seems they'd run the furnace for heat until it set off the detector, and then they'd shut it down for a while. I've since replaced the kitchen, both bathrooms, the roof, front and side doors, and all the windows.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 09-05-2008 20:38

That's always been the approach in our family, but if I buy a condo, I don't want to have to do too much tearing and repairing because I have to live there while that's going on and in a small place that could be very hard or even unsafe.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Coffy - 09-05-2008 20:49

To return to the original topic, sort of: If you like neighborhood names, we've got 'em out the wazoo.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by dgih - 10-05-2008 03:52

What's the definition of small, Reed?

Yours,
Manhattan.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by dgih - 10-05-2008 04:00

I am just crabby at living in the mostly densely populated place I could imagine, and not having the money to get space beyond 300sq ft. For two of us.

Mind, they used to squeeze six in back in the day without a bathroom.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Inca - 10-05-2008 04:31

Los Angeles neighborhoods: I counted 162, and that's not counting smaller areas in neighborhoods.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by Reed of the Valley People - 10-05-2008 05:18

That's really small for two people. How much worse does it have to get until New Yorkers admit that their city isn't livable?

My stuff seems to expand to fill whatever space it's in, so I figure that wherever I live, I could always use a little more. My current place is about 600 sq/ft.

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Re:Toronto question

Posted by dgih - 10-05-2008 15:14

The city isn't viable for a student and a person in publishing, for sure.

It might be a bit more than 300sq ft, but it certainly is a very small and puts a strain on things. But it also hopefully stops me going into unfathomable levels of debt over the next two years.

The idea is that by next fall I will be in a position that we can move somewhere bigger (read - earning money). I know a lot of people living in bigger apartments who are at school, we just wanted to avoid debt being a big issue.

But at \$1300+ per square foot on buying on this island, it isn't fun to consider getting a place any time too soon.

12ft by 26ft or thereabouts. so maybe 350 at best. Bijou.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by TonTon - 10-05-2008 15:22

Is this the right place to say that pretty much every interior photograph I've seen of a Canadian property has shown the most frighteningly awful taste in interior decor?

Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 10-05-2008 20:04

(looks about living room...tugs nervously at collar...)

Re:Toronto question

Posted by TonTon - 10-05-2008 21:40

No offence, like. I'm sure your place is very different.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 10-05-2008 22:10

Oh, 'very different' doesn't quite begin to describe it.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 11-05-2008 13:11

Not that I've ever met you, TT, but you've never struck me as the kind of guy who looks at a lot of photos of housing interiors. Let alone made mental notes about which country the photos were from and coming to conclusions about national standards of decor.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by TonTon - 11-05-2008 13:27

hahahahaha. It's a fair point. I reckon friends who know me well would say the same, too.

I think I mentioned (though it may have been in "another place" rather than here) that while I was feeling fucking rotten last year, one of the weird ideas I got into my head was that I should leave the country.

Yer man WOM at some point posted some links to the Canadian estate agents site thingy. I've looked at hundreds, maybe thousands of photos of Canadian interiors. And yeah, usually I wouldn't notice, but they're so frighteningly awful, it's hard not to.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 11-05-2008 13:36

Ah. Yes, I remember you mentioning the emigration thing to me but hadn't realized you had got as far as actually checking out real estate.

We are cheap, utilitarian and functional when it comes to most things around architecture and design. Does it work? Will it keep us warm in winter? If yes, keep it. If not, knock it down/throw it out and get something new.

This is why most of our cities contain so much frighteningly ugly architecture.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by TonTon - 11-05-2008 13:43

I wouldn't have chandeliers down as particularly cheap, utilitarian or functional, meself. The overall impression is of fussy and cutesy, with the light fittings, the curtains, the wallpapers, everything really.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 11-05-2008 14:05

Well, see, in older homes in eastern Canada simple chandeliers were kind of de rigeur until the 50s. They still work, so we don't replace them. I have one in the room I'm sitting in right now. Never really thought about it until now, though.

Re:Toronto question

Posted by TonTon - 11-05-2008 14:26

Maybe that's it, all that horrible old stuff was fashionable once, many years ago, and people haven't replaced it.

The preponderance of wood floors rather than the hideous carpet thing is a big plus, of course.