

Rosie's tips for shopping rural Arizona Real Estate, finding your little piece of get away from it all heaven!

1. Location, location, location

- Sooooo many factors to consider; is this a family vacation retreat where locating close to urban areas of entertainment could be important for the teenagers, a retirement property where proximity to friends and medical facilities are the main determining factors or is this the real out of the way, off the map hermits retreat?
- Suffice it to say, you need to think down the road as to what your end use will be and what activity will generate the most enjoyment for you and your family.
- Jennifer and I were looking for raw property that would make good summer pasture for several horses, with good access to National Forest land for unlimited riding opportunities. We were looking for land with an excellent water supply for both livestock and domestic use. We wanted raw land to give us the opportunity to build our own dream home.

2. We had the distinct advantage of living in Arizona since the mid 60's, and in that time we traveled to, camped on, and hiked in practically every corner of the state. We knew the general area we were going to select. Even so, with our knowledge of the area, we took a retreat of several days for the express purpose

of driving every back road in the area, taking note of which realtor signs seemed to be planted on property owned by the locals. We felt the realtor we saw was used most often by the people who lived in the immediate area would be a good person to start with once we had an understanding of what was available, for what price range.

3. In driving the area we took lots of notes on terrain type, lot sizes, utility and egress availability, apparent water supplies, etc..etc. We rounded up every real estate publication we could get our hands on, from the diners and stores in the neighborhood. With this information we developed a set of parameters to submit to the Realtor we selected to work with. The Realtor was then able to very easily pull together all the properties in the area that fit our guidelines.
4. Making the offer: I requested a very long escrow period, twice what is normally given. We knew the property we selected had some flooding and access complications. I wasn't going to be able to stay in the area full time to do the research necessary for me to get comfortable with closing escrow, so the seller and I compromised on a reasonable time period for me to complete my due diligence. I made the earnest money fully refundable contingent on me researching the access and utility easements, talking to local septic tank contractors, well drillers and the county building department. If I didn't like anything any of these parties told me, my earnest money would be 100% refunded and I'd continue my search for property elsewhere.

5. Commence with the Due Diligence: I scheduled another block of time for 3 days to get back up to the area spend some concentrated time visiting with the key players mentioned above. In visiting with the local contractors and building inspectors I uncovered much more information about just how tenuous the access easement to this property really was.

I elected to bite the bullet and go spend the majority of one whole day in the bowels of the county records department to see what was and wasn't recorded. I found rural property has a much less clear trail of ownership or audit trail of easements and modifications to the property than we generally find on urban property. I believe this step, though tedious, bouncing for hours between the County Recorders Office and the County Assessors Office was the single most profitable day in the entire research phase of the purchase. I learned not to just pull the records of the parcels you wish to buy, but look at the records of every piece of adjoining or strategically critical piece of property in the immediate area. The meandering access easement I was counting on to get in and out of this particular piece of property in fact had many unaccounted for modifications and gaps, basically I had in escrow a property that had no clear recorded ingress and egress easement. There were many conflicting documents that were all a part of the Official County Records!

This research paid huge dividends for me when I received the preliminary title report and it showed documents that were in direct contradiction to the documents I had reviewed myself. This gave me the

opportunity to request a time extension to the escrow while the title company prepared the supporting and back up documentation. The other distinct advantage I perceive that I received from this day at City Hall is that I could then discuss with the Sellers representative the exact details of all my concerns, this intimate familiarity with the property's challenges greatly increased my negotiating leverage. I uncovered conflicting documents the seller wasn't even familiar with! I wasn't trying to "weasel" the price down, but only to get the sellers participation in assisting me in clearing up all these conflicting documents prior to close of escrow. These issues became "our challenges" as opposed to "my problems"!

Agencies I found that were very beneficial to contact were as follows

- Az Dept of Water Resources (www.water.az.gov), here I discovered there had been a permit issued several years ago to drill a water well that was never dug. This could have potentially uncovered more hidden problems with the property, however in this case it was irrelevant. I was also able to discuss and uncover the water rights to all the surface water this particular property had on it. It was here too that I discovered that 6 of the 10 acres were in the flood plain of the river that ran through the property. Especially pertinent when I realized that the access easement the neighbor had modified in the past put the easement right through

the middle off the flood plain, making the property inaccessible in the spring time, when we most wanted to be arrive for our summer stays!

- I walked the property and surrounding area with a representative of the local electrical supply utility company, this gave me a great idea of what my options were and potential expenses to bringing electricity into the building site. We elected to go underground through an old utility easement no one even realized was on the property.
- My second most profitable day in the research phase of purchasing this property was the afternoon I spent watching a local water witcher trace the underground water aqueducts on the property and assess which one would generate the best water well location. Whether you believe in this process or not, I found the time well spent. The witcher in this particular area had been born and raised just off the property I was contemplating purchasing and the 4 hours of discussion we had filled me in on the areas history over the last 84 years and current status of every neighbor feud in the county. This proved absolutely invaluable in accelerating my ability to mix with the locals, taught me who to stay clear of in commencing the construction of our dream

home and greatly enhanced my appreciation
for the area and it's pioneers.