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Tips for Finding a Real Estate Agent

There are well over 4,500 realtors covering San Francisco listed on sfirealtors.com alone, and there are many other resources and reference sources. Realtor.com offers these descriptions of the terms for real estate sales professionals:

- A **real estate agent** is anyone who has earned a real estate license, whether that license is as a sales professional, an associate broker, or a broker.
- A **realtor** is a real estate agent who is a member of the National Association of Realtors, which means that he or she must uphold the standards of the association and its code of ethics.
- A **real estate broker** is a person who has taken education beyond the agent level as required by state laws and has passed a broker's license exam. Brokers can work alone or they can hire agents to work for them.

The University cannot make recommendations regarding specific real estate agents or realtors, but we can offer some advice when looking for a real estate agent.

Search online: A Google search will provide several reference sites. Look for someone with experience and familiarity with your interests and areas of interest. Popular local sites for residential real estate information include zillow.com and sf.curbed.com. The San Francisco Bay Area and UCSF are committed to sustainability, and for energy savings and environmental concerns you may want to look for the term "eco-broker" in agent profiles. The San Francisco Association of Realtors is online at www.sfirealtors.com.

Ask around: The best referrals may be from people you know. Put word out to the faculty and staff in your department that you are looking for a real estate agent, and ask if they can recommend someone with whom they have had a positive experience. Other faculty may be best suited to understand your needs as a faculty member and your particular work/life interests and potential neighborhoods.

Look around: Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 pm, drive or walk to open houses in your neighborhoods of interest. You may find a good home, and possibly a good realtor. Feel free to approach other buyers or sellers and ask about their experience.

Interview potential agents: It is always good to interview **at least three** realtors before beginning your property search. HowStuffWorks.com has several recommended questions to ask your realtor. Some specific questions to consider:

- What is their number of years in the business and number of transactions per year?
- What are their area(s) of specialization?
- Will you be working directly with them or with an assistant?
- How available are they? Do they work nights? Weekends?
- What is their preferred mode of communication (phone, text, e-mail)? How often will they contact you?

Consider calling a real estate broker or manager at one of the more successful or popular companies in the San Francisco Bay Area and ask for a "buyer's agent interview." Ask if they have any agents who are experienced with working with UCSF faculty.