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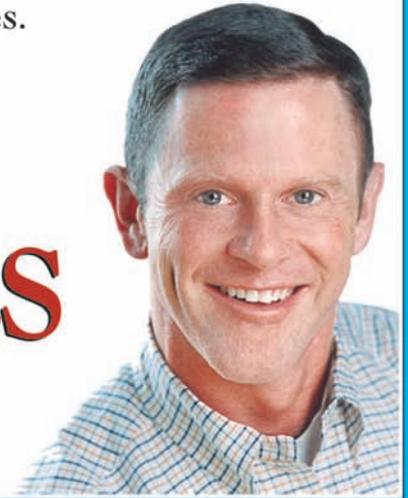
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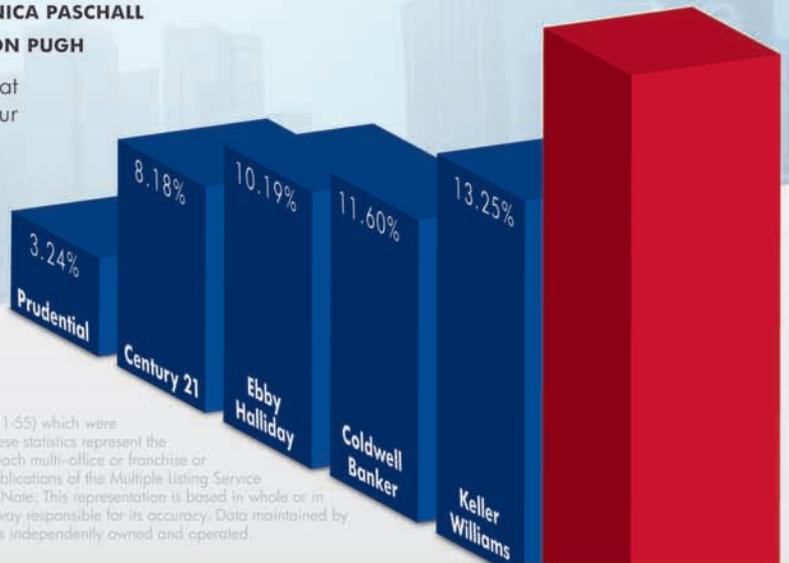
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Getting it right the first time

Area real estate experts offer their best suggestions for assisting first-time home buyers

As the economy slowly bounces back, many first-time buyers scared off by all the talk of sub-prime and bailouts may feel a bit skittish about how to avoid the traps that had such an affect on the housing market. So we asked area experts this question: "What is the single most important piece of advice you can give a first-time home buyer to make the process go as smoothly as possible?" Here's what they said.

**Kathy Hewitt,
Hewitt & Habgood Realty Group**

Buy now! Interest rates are so incredibly low and the first time home buyer's tax credit expires Dec. 1. The \$8,000 credit is such a bonus. Plus, prices are very low right now. Don't think they're going to continue to go lower. Don't wait.

**Diane Sherman,
David Griffin Real Estate**

Give strong and serious consideration to location issues. Let's say you fall in love with a house on a very busy street. Unless there are offsetting factors — a large lot or quality — houses that have location issues suffer the most. If you were in a situation where you had to sell quickly, you'd be hard-pressed to do so easily. Buy a house that is internally placed — in a subdivision or neighborhood.

By David Taffet



John Weber

**John Weber,
Ebby Halliday,
Hickman Weber
Real Estate Group**

The best thing that I would recommend is *not* to believe everything you read on the Internet or see on television. Information that you read or see may or may not pertain to Texas real estate or more importantly, the Dallas market. I would definitely verify the information that you come across with your trusted real estate and mortgage professionals. Don't be afraid to ask questions!

I can't begin to tell you how frustrated I get when I watch one of the national morning television news shows and they have their "real estate expert" on talking about how to negotiate a contract or navigate the



Diane Sherman

home buying process. It is very region specific and many times is even neighborhood specific. The only person that can give you the best advice is a local Realtor that knows the ins-and-outs of the market.

**Chad J. Brozovich,
3B Real Estate Company**

Align yourself with a good, knowledgeable real estate agent. An agent offers representation, understands the process, has market knowledge, knows what a house is worth, can help you through negotiations, inspections, the mortgage process and help with filing for the \$8,000 credit. A good agent can help a first-time home buyer along each step of the way.

**Bob McCranie,
Texas Pride Realty**

All buyers need to know that buying from some sellers will take time. Short sales, bank-owned, and government-owned houses can take several weeks or months to get offers returned. Often those homes are in horrible condition and will take additional capital to bring up to livable standards. Buying the cheapest house may not meet the needs of the buyer. It's often more expedient and cost-effective to pay a bit more and get the home listed by a seller who can make their own decisions and who has improved and prepped their property for sale.

**Steven Graves,
Steven Graves Insurance**

Contact an insurance agent who can quote you from multiple companies to make sure you're getting the best rate as well as the best coverage. If you're buying a condo, so many people think the interior is covered by the condominium association's master policy. That is not true. You need your own policy to cover the interior structure.

**Barbara Stone,
Allie Beth Allman & Associates**

Understand what the costs and expenses of home ownership are. Taxes and insurance are part of the annual expenses whether you escrow or pay it directly. Also, understand the cost of maintenance and updating. If you're used to living in apartment, you have to take care of those things yourself now.

Jim Kramer, Keller Williams Urban Dallas

Buying a home is a huge step and can be a scary, especially if it is your first time and you don't know what to expect. I would recommend to a first-time home buyer after they have talked with their lender and real estate agent to be realistic with your expectations and be patient. Often first-time buyers have unrealistic expectations of what they want. Be patient! It takes time to find the home that you will be comfortable enough to live in. In addition to being patient, expect the unexpected. After submitting an offer, it could take some time before getting a response back from the other party.



Barbara Stone


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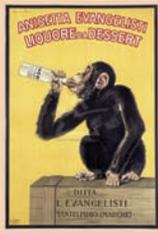




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In with the old, in with the new

Lofts, Art Deco and ultra-modern: the Merc offers something for everyone

By David Taffet

ROOM WITH A VIEW: This common area pops with color that's sure to keep smiles on the faces of the Merc's residents. (ARNOLD WAYNE JONES/Dallas Voice)

Many downtown dwellers across the country are grateful for the convenience of a shop or cafe across from their building. But only residents of the Mercantile and Wilson buildings in Dallas can boast the entrance to the flagship Neiman Marcus directly across from their front door.

Developer Forest City Enterprises has converted the Mercantile, a 1940s Art Deco office tower and the classically styled hundred-year-old Wilson and added a third building. The newly constructed Element is the first tower built exclusively for apartment rental in Downtown Dallas since Manor House opened in the 1960s.

Eric Hernandez, assistant community director for the project, says the ultra-modern Element complements the lofts of the Wilson while the Art Deco Merc provides something for every taste.

The project is a milestone in the city's Downtown development plans with an adjacent park opening in November on a site that was recently a blighted city block. The area between the Element and the Dallas Municipal Building is being transformed into open green space including a dog park and an intimate concert area.

Rents for apartments currently available at the Element range from \$1,345 for a one bedroom on the second floor to \$2,069 for a 13th floor two-bedroom, two-bath corner apartment in this ultra-modern high rise. The signature 15th floor features higher ceilings, better appliances and finer finish out.

The Wilson is one of Dallas' most historic buildings. Opened in 1904, it was modeled after the Grand Opera House in Paris. The 12-story building was originally the home of the department store, Tiche-Goettinger. When Tiche's moved to a larger location a few blocks away in 1928, H.L Green's took the ground floor, which they occupied until 1997. In 1979, the structure was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The renovated building features 143 lofts ranging in price from \$959 for a 544 square foot studio to \$2,240 for a two-bedroom apartment with more than 2,100 square feet.

Much of the building has been left intact. Eagles and ornately carved Ws on the exterior of the building look like masonry but are made of plaster and are well preserved.

Oversized windows are original. Interior doors are still marked with names of the optometrist or insurance agent who at one time leased an office here. Within one loft, the floors may change from terrazzo to hardwood or concrete, indicating where interior walls have been moved to create the living spaces.

Kitchens and bathrooms are new. Cabinets and appliances have been updated even since the building's earlier renovation about a dozen years ago. Each unit features either a Jacuzzi tub or walk-in marble shower.

The Merc was built as home to Mercantile Bank, founded by R. L. Thornton who later became mayor of Dallas (and a highway). The company's long-time advertising campaign featured a one-word slogan, "Momentum," and in the '80s was sung over video of Olympic gold medalist Greg Louganis high-diving.

A spire with clocks facing each direction tops the 31-story tower that has been a Dallas landmark since 1942. At the time it opened, it passed the Magnolia Building as tallest skyscraper west of the Mississippi. Lights above the clocks indicate the weather — green for fair and red for bad — and a neon star moves up and down 45 feet of white, lighted rings indicating warmer or colder temperatures.

Mosaics from the bank's former boardroom and offices have been rescued and restored. Along with photos of the building and neighborhood from an earlier era, they decorate hallways, staircases and lounges.

Forest City prides itself as a green company.

See MERC on PAGE 22





VINTAGE DALLAS: The old Mercantile has been redone and restored to become the newest residential hot spot in Downtown. (DAVID TAFFET/Dallas Voice)

The replacements

As gays move to new gayborhoods, many young and first-time buyers are discovering Oak Lawn

By Arnold Wayne Jones

GIRL IN THE HOOD: Suzanne Melville feels right at home in the gayborhood. (ARNOLD WAYNE JONES/Dallas Voice)

As a Houstonite, Suzanne Melville was used to living near the throbbing heart of a vibrant downtown-adjacent neighborhood, and Las Colinas just didn't do it for her. When she decided to buy her first house, she considered staying in Irving, close to her job as a physician's assistant. But ultimately, she felt the pull of the city center.

Or as close as she could get. Melville wanted a single-family house but felt priced out of Park Cities and even the M Streets. But what about Oak Lawn? Like Goldilocks and the porridge, the gayborhood turned out to be just right.

But Melville's not the only person to have discovered the appeal of Oak Lawn. In fact, she's just one of a new influx of gentrifiers. As more and more same-sex families, couples and gay singles opt for the less traditional digs of the suburbs, the Cliff and even high-rise living, Oak Lawn has become attractive for single women and straight couples comfortable with having — ahem — more fashionable neighbors.

"When I decided to live in Dallas I knew I wanted to live in the Uptown area. I had a friend who lived at Oak Lawn and Cedar Springs, and it just seemed like a lot of young people were there," Melville says of her decision. "The location was huge: Good restaurants, and it's a nice area close to Downtown. I work in Irving, so I just hop on I-35 going against the traffic," providing a breezy commute.

Many people who choose to live closer to a population center opt for loft spaces, apartments, condos, even townhouses. Indeed, Melville was one of them. Originally, she expected that, in order to get the yard and quiet people she desired she'd have to forego the neighborhood she wanted.

"I was looking all over — Grapevine, Irving, Valley Ranch. But I'm just so sick of the suburbs — the chain restaurants are all the same, just in a different place. I didn't want a place where everything was the same."

But the Maple Springs area, a little farther from the multi-family dwellings and pricier houses directly off the strip, offered everything she was looking for.

"The houses have so much character in the area where I'm — older houses were built better. Having a yard is nice. It's quiet, I'm surrounded by good people," Melville says.

Including, it turns out, her Realtor. Keith Yonick, who found the house for Melville, lives within spitting distance of his client, and is naturally a strong supporter of the neighborhood.

"You can't be on this side of 75 and get anything anymore — that's why they're going over to Henderson," Yonick says.

But value is an elusive thing. Melville got a good deal on her house, but the deals may become harder to come by as the area continues to grow and attract more and varied home buyers. But she's O.K. with that.

"I'm hoping the same thing [that happened in M Streets and other desirable neighborhoods] happens to my area when I get ready to sell," she says with a smile.

And there's no downside to being in the gay area.

"I've gone to the gay bars a couple of times, although usually I go to McKinney and Henderson," which are close by. "One of my best friends is a lesbian so I've gone to Sue Ellen's a few times even."

There's another good reason for a single girl to choose these digs, Melville admits.

"Where would you feel more safe than with a bunch of muscular guys who won't hit on you?"

“The houses have so much character ...”





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Under one roof

'Mixed-use developments' bring a little of bit everything, just outside your front door

By Steven Lindsey

There's an allure to living in a small neighborhood where everything you need is within walking distance. Ramp that concept up a notch and you have what are affectionately called "mixed-use developments" — although "lifestyle centers" might be a more appropriate term. Dallas is definitely a car-centric city, but a mixed-use property can at least eliminate the necessity to drive for a portion of each day.

The goal of a mixed-use development is not to breed a generation of homebodies, but to create a greater sense of community. After all, when living in a large apartment complex, it helps to know just which neighbors have the most plentiful cups of sugar to borrow.

From resident-only amenities to public spaces that include retail and restaurants, "mixed-use" can equal "sought-after destination." West Village is a prime example of a very successful development that's as popular with the Uptown crowd as it is with its residents, though retail there has a more prominent focus.

For the last couple of years, anticipation has been high over what would become of the city block on Cedar Springs where the old "Mary Thumb" grocery store used to stand. Now, ilume (yes, that's a lower-case "l") has finally opened the doors to its first residents and the retailers are on their way.

Among the businesses taking up residency: Dish, described as a "modern-day supper club;" the crazy-popular frozen yogurt chain Red Mango, which will list Cedar Springs as its first Texas location; and Beyond the Box, which provides prepared take-out meals, fresh produce and grocery products. There's also gallery space open to showcase local artists and other special exhibitions will add an extra dose of culture.

But what really makes ilume special is the residential experience. It feels less like an apartment building and more like a swank boutique hotel.

"We are different in many different facets in regards to being mixed-use. The key thing is that we are first and foremost a residential development with the retail component as a secondary piece that complements both our suites and the neighborhood," says Ryan Baldwin, ilume's property manager.

Taking residence smack in the middle of the gay neighborhood, the property is focused on being a good neighbor to surrounding businesses and families, as well as a significant part of the gay community. Not only have they donated office space to the North Texas GLBT Chamber of Commerce, they've also trademarked a new tagline: "a PROUD community."

Ilume residents (called "members") are showered with amenities. The fitness center looks more like a miniature Equinox than the random weights and outdated treadmills that occupy many apartment gyms. A room dedicated for spinning classes and yoga and a self-service tanning booth add to the appeal for the workout crowd.

Just off the lobby, there's a luxe game room with

a wet bar, a game table for poker and board games, and comfortable furniture to Wii the night away. The true showstoppers, at least until the South Beach-worthy courtyard pool area opens in a few months, are the Great Room and adjoining Champagne Room.

The Great Room is like a luxurious cocktail lounge with its cozy banquettes and sofas, except there's no bar. It's just a nice place for residents to gather, whether it's unwinding after work or grabbing breakfast on the way out the door on days when the property puts out a delectable spread.

The Champagne Room is available for residents to throw immaculate dinner parties at the sexy illuminated table for 14. Complete with a refrigerator and warming oven, the room can be home to a professionally catered event or simply an extension of a member's dinner party from upstairs.

There's more to ilume than a mere laundry list of amenities, and that's largely to the credit of designer Travis Terry, an artist who proudly claims that "space just happens to be my medium."

"I try to take my elegance and sophistication and a lot of amazing features that are in the multi-million dollar houses and downsize that and make it a part of everybody's life, every day," Terry says of the work he's done at ilume.

Every space in the building has been touched by Terry, who has a mission to bring back glam, whether in the public areas or the residential suites (don't dare use the "A" word here to describe the units). He developed a sophisticated color palette from which residents can choose to have accent walls painted in their living areas, and each ties in to one of the striking hues seen throughout the building. He applies a specific set of fundamentals in designing the ilume interiors, or any space.

"I believe that rhythm, balance, scale and symmetry are the four keys to making things look extremely sophisticated and elegant. Put three mirrors and frame something or place three columns in a row. It takes us back to our architectural past, the Greeks, the Egyptians."

Where he's trying to make his mark is changing the way people think about "green." It doesn't have to be all granola and bio-diesel.

"My whole goal in life is to make eco-friendly glamorous," he says.

"We tried to be as eco-friendly as possible. Everything is Energy-Star rated, we're classified as Green Built Texas," he says. "We wanted to be earth friendly, and neighborhood conscious, but put our own spin on glamour in these times when things are kind of hard. It doesn't have to be expensive to be sophisticated."

Though nothing at ilume looks cheap, it is surprisingly affordable for the location and square footage with one-bedroom units starting around \$1,200.

If you're looking for a new place to rent, a mixed-use property might be the ideal place to call home. Terry recommends looking for "convenience, a sense of excitement, fabulous amenities and a solid sense of community."

DESIGNER'S DIGS: Travis Terry feels less like a designer and more like an artist when it comes to creating interior spaces. (STEVEN LINDSEY)



Wrecking ball escape

Old Parkland gets nursed back to health thanks to Trammell Crow

By Howard Lewis Russell

As anyone venturing out lately in the neighborhood knows, it is rapidly a-changin'. Cedar Springs' lively rainbow strip — with the jarring disappearance of its Crossroads Market coffee shop and Tom Thumb grocery store cornerstones, as well as that iconic bastion of gaydom, the 4242 Cedar Springs apartment complex adjacent to Kroger — is these days barely recognizable from what it was just a year ago.

And though condo-gentrification's alarming pace may be creeping in ever-more stealthily everywhere one looks, there is at least one dazzling escapee to such bulldozing "progression" that gives cheerful solace to our fabulous neighborhood spirit amidst the wrecking balls. Not everything gets torn down.

Forlorn, forgotten and overlooked for years, the Old Parkland Hospital complex, at the intersection of Maple and Oak Lawn avenues, had been hunkered behind a gnarled grove of old post oaks, abandoned and rotting, since 1974. Her 35 years of being ignored in a spooky corner had taken a savage toll on the once grand queen, flanked within spitting distance of her banishment by no less than a half-dozen of our neighborhood nightlife's finest haunts: The Grapevine, Pekers, Illusions and the recently lamented Brick and Buddies II, to name a smattering.

The site of Dallas' public hospital from 1894 to 1954

— when "Old" Parkland was replaced by "New" Parkland down the road on Harry Hines Boulevard — the discarded old dame entered a declining, debauched phase in which she was forebodingly rechristened the "Woodlawn Detention Center." For her remaining 20 pathetic years prior to 1974's total abandonment, she harbored every assorted ignominy of horror film stage setting: a tuberculosis ward, a minimum-security jail, a rape crisis center, a makeshift homeless shelter and a psychiatric "treatment" institution.

Old Parkland had become, in kind lingo, a snake pit. Then, at pit's bottom, fully 15 years following her utter neglect, something miraculous happened: In 1989, the preservation panel of Dallas' Landmark Commission bequeathed "landmark status" upon the former beauty at the very nadir of her agonizing death throes. From then forward, it was a matter of finding *someone* with deep enough pockets, very deep, and visionary enough to see this ghastly wreck as not only capable of being restored to her former razzle-dazzle, but worthy to surpass it, even. Enter then a new century and a fresh hope.

Enter Trammell Crow, and his enterprises. A sublime hybrid of classic revival and Georgian
See HOSPITAL on PAGE 22

“ Old Parkland had become, in kind lingo, a snake pit.”

MORE THAN A FEW STITCHES: The old Parkland Hospital on Maple and Oak Lawn is being transformed into a crowning development achievement. (ARNOLD WAYNE JONES/Dallas Voice)

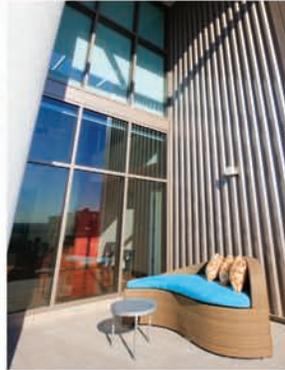


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East on down the road

Is the development along Henderson Avenue set to become the new Uptown?

By Jef Tingley

For years, Knox/Henderson has reigned supreme as one of Dallas' hottest neighborhoods, with its swanky condos, abundance of trendy dining, boutique shopping and fabulous-by-association proximity to Highland Park.

But the geographic street cred of the area only spread so far. A drive just a little too far east down Henderson and the urban landscape changed from something out of *Rent* into something more *West Side Story*. Well, at least, that used to be the case.

Just like the urbanization that swept through Uptown, creating entities like West Village, over the past few years the gentrification train has once again rolled up and transformed another Dallas neighborhood: Henderson Avenue and all points east. Only this time, the mix of posh-living abodes and see-and-be-seen watering holes

sit side by side in a sea of single-family homes and *taquerias* in a phenomenon one might call *el barrio fabuloso*.

"The new places seem to be an extension of the hot spots on Henderson closer to I-75 like Fireside Pies, Old Monk, Vickery Park, which were extensions of Knox and Travis Walk. Basically I see it as urban sprawl for retail/restaurant/bars. And it makes sense considering the East Dallas population and their eclectic tastes. It has an upscale feel with a little 'dive' thrown in for good measure," says Jeff Duffey, a Realtor with Duffey Homes.

John Artis, who has rented a townhouse in the East Henderson area for

about a year now, says that it's convenience and community that drew him to the area.

"I work downtown, so my daily commute is 10 to 15 minutes, max. This area is where I spend the majority of my free time. Some of my favorite restaurants and hang-out spots are just a few blocks away from my front door," he says.

But "it" eateries aside, there are also new places to live in East Henderson, giving people more access to the "Knox/Henderson" lifestyle. New developments include high-end rental living like Eastwood at Henderson and the Belmont Apartments. Or, buyers can choose from options ranging from new con-

dos with museum finish floors to a variety of traditional freestanding homes.

According to Tony Nuncio with Keller Williams Realty – Dallas City Center (which offices in the area), "From a price perspective, housing is still more affordable east of I-75 than it is on the west side of I-75, so you can get more home for your money, regardless of the style of home you choose to buy. There are a variety of types of housing: single family detached, town homes, condos, single family attached (duplex), threeplexes and four-plexes. In Uptown, for example, there are very few single family detached homes, so for those people who want a backyard



ON THE EAST SIDE: Complexes like this are adding to Henderson Avenue's new appeal. (ARNOLD WAYNE JONES/Dallas Voice)

and space from other homes, it is not easy to find."

So, is East Henderson the "New Uptown?" "It's more like an extension of Uptown," says Artis.

But Pearl Cup owner Carlene Saelg, who opened shop in February with partner Rita Davis, sees it as something more: "We chose the area specifically for the diversity and eclectic feel that reminded us so much of Austin."

Both parties agree that the growth for the neighborhood has not completely displaced the original flavor of the area and that, in fact, the expansion has been beneficial for all involved.

"There are pockets along some streets that are gentrified," Artis says, "however, I don't think the changes to the community are intended to force the lower income residents out. As a matter of fact, I think the lower income residents will benefit from improved safety, city services and employment opportunities. The improvements make the neighborhood a more attractive place to live regardless of socio-economic status."

And what about the inclusiveness of the LGBT community in this new landscape? Both Artis and Saelg agree that like everything else in the neighborhood, it adds to the diversity. And that diversity will just continue to spread.

"I see continued growth and more awareness from folks outside the neighborhood that haven't ventured in to start making the trip to enjoy all that Henderson Avenue has to offer" says Saelg. "[Now], if we could just get the city to repave the street ... it would be more appealing to drive down a smooth street!"

DON'T SHAKE YOUR FOUNDATIONS

Dave Herbster of Rainbow Repair and Remodeling recommends checking the foundation and plumbing of that new home before closing the deal.



Foundations — Foundation issues are mostly visible. Cracks on the walls stemming from the corners of doors and windows is a good indicator. Cracks on the exterior bricks and hard to shut doors can be good indicators the foundation is shoddy. Check gutter drainage as well. They should be directed away from the house because soil moisture can affect the strength of the foundation. "A slab is only as strong as what it's built on. Even new and high dollar homes can have these problems. The thing is to have the seller get it fixed or keep looking," Herbster says.

Plumbing — It's important to know the type of pipes your new home may have. Plastic is the most common but some have copper pipes also. Metal is stronger for handling water pressure issues, however, they can be costlier to fix. Plastics are much less pricey should they need repairs. Shut-off valves throughout the house should be checked. The most overlooked item is also the most obvious. "Most people forget to look at the water heater. This is crucial and even a brand new one should be double checked," Herbster says.

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NAVIGATING THE CREDIT MINEFIELD

Buying a house can be a scary thing. It requires getting a lot of ducks in a row before heading into years of monthly payments and sometimes that's not so easy. And with today's tighter lending restrictions, that would apply to a lot more people than ever before.

"Buying a house is most everyone's biggest transaction in their lives," Jeff Updike says.

For those with great credit, it is still fairly easy to move forward with home buying just not as quick. Approval was just a mouse click away and three days later a payment plan was getting started. It's a bit more formal now — and that's a good thing.

"Some new consumer disclosure laws went into effect last month and now it's about 20 days at the shortest. I think there are a lot of benefits in doing that because it provides good consumer protection," he says.

Protection that saves the buyer from missing out on some of the fine print details as well as from disreputable lenders looking to get things done quickly.

But for everyone else, including the good credit people, Updike says first and foremost to resolve all credit issues, no matter how small.

"Make the minimum payment on everything. Period. Proactively reduce credit card debt and pay on time without fail. And don't fall for traps where

lenders offer to reduce your credit line," he says.

Credit line reduction may sound like a godsend but it only increases the debt ratio. According to Updike, debt should be less than 50 percent of the limit. That alone can immediately improve a credit score by several points.

That's just the starting point.

"People with bad credit struggle for the next 18 months. Buyers with a credit score below 620 will struggle to find a mortgage that makes sense for them to do," he says.

For those who have declared bankruptcy, lenders won't even consider giving a loan for two to five years out. Despite the positives of credit counseling, it can detract from a buyer's potential. Lenders see these as people who demonstrated they couldn't manage their finances. Lenders will wait to see how it is turned around.

It may sound like the odds are stacked against anyone with a blemished record but it's not impossible to become a home owner.

"It used to be strongly credit score based but now, lenders will look at loans from a layering of risk. A consumer may have 680 score—at their job for a year — make a good income — but has high debt. These are layers of risk," Updike says.

What that means is there are ways of still looking good to a lender. A long tenure at the job is favor-

Jeff Updike



able. Cash in the bank is considered one of the strongest points by lender. 401(k)s are easily built up because employers tend to match contributions when offered through their company.

"Home buying is hard to understand and to get details right all the way through. Find a Realtor but look for longevity to indicate stability," he says.

This will keep the new buyers from some of those scarier lenders out there. An established Realtor will have viable relationships with lenders. That's plural because people still have to do their research.

"There is a strong value between good lenders and good Realtors. A good Realtor should refer you to their best lenders so go to at least three different ones," Updike says.

That alone is one big step through that credit minefield.

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MERC

Continued from Page 8

In addition to rescuing and repurposing older downtown properties, they use recycled materials throughout their projects. Carpets, made from recyclable materials, are laid in squares so that if pieces need to be replaced, only small amounts, rather than entire lengths, are discarded.

Currently available apartments at the Merc rent from \$1,059 for 715 square feet to \$2,410 for a 1,787 square-foot unit. Two penthouses are listed. Both are two-bedroom with two and a half baths. At 2,571 and 2,620 square feet, they rent for \$5,650 and \$6,650 per month. The larger one, on the 31st floor includes a glassed-in conservatory and views in all directions.

Hernandez said they have sponsored a number of events in the building celebrating its history. R.L. Thornton's daughter even pointed out the spot on the 31st floor (now a penthouse) where she was proposed to. Early directors of the bank gathered for a reunion, many wearing their original bank name tags. He said they hope to schedule future events with their neighbor, Neiman's.

The park between the Element and the old municipal building opens Nov. 20 in conjunction with the Neiman Marcus Christmas lighting, putting the Merc and the Element right in the middle of the festivities. The development on this block, along with the new performing arts center, pushes a revitalized downtown Dallas further east, linking it to a reinvigorated Deep Ellum thanks to DART's new Green Line.

A two-story building called the Jewel connects the Element and the Merc. The new construction houses common area services and amenities, workout facilities and access to the cabana, salt water pool, outdoor fireplace and hot tub area. Carrying through the art deco theme from The Merc, the floor was patterned after the GE building in New York's Rockefeller Center, one of the classic skyscrapers of the era.

Forest City also owns a fourth tower on Commerce Street located behind the Element and next to the old Dallas Grand Hotel. As the economy improves, they plan to renovate this '50s era building into more apartments and incorporate it into this development.

The Merc, The Element and The Wilson Building, 1800 Main St. Mercantileplace.com.

HOSPITAL

Continued from Page 16

pavilion styled real estate, Old Parkland, now the home headquarters of Crow Holdings, has been given a facelift worthy of a legendary movie star and, in fact, looks far grander better than she did even when brand new in 1913 (the year when her current limestone and brick edifice replaced 1894's former wooden structure). Meanwhile, the former Nurses Quarters next to the hospital is receiving its final sprucing, and construction of a majestic, brand new building on the 6-acre site, Woodlawn Hall, is now nearing completion as well.

"Old" Parkland's lawns have been lovingly landscaped, the red masonry brickwork all splendidly repointed, and her new bronze lion's-head fountains spew forth water from their mouths as if roaring, "We're here for the neighborhood, we're proud, we belong and we're beautiful. We're here to stay."



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