



ESL Podcast 958 – Selecting a Neighborhood to Live In

GLOSSARY

downtown – the center of a city, especially where there are a lot of businesses

* The train station is downtown, near several hotels.

on foot – walking; without using a vehicle

* They live close to the school, so their kids can go on foot or by bike.

amenities – a useful or desirable feature that makes something more attractive, comfortable, or enjoyable

* This cruise ship has wonderful amenities, including several restaurants, two bars, dance clubs, pools, exercise rooms, and more.

bustling – very busy, with a lot of movement and interest, especially with many people moving through an area

* The stores are bustling with holiday shoppers in December, but there weren't as many people in the mall during other times of the year.

crime rate – the number of crimes that happen over a period of time divided by the number of people living in that area

* The police chief is trying to lower the crime rate by having more police officers walking and driving around this neighborhood, especially late at night.

proximity to – closeness; a measure of how near two things are to each other

* It's difficult to find an affordable apartment with proximity to public transportation.

open space – an undeveloped area; an area in or near a city with many plants and without buildings

* The city has a lot of regulations that prevent developers from building homes in the remaining open spaces.

commute time – the amount of time one spends traveling between home and work or school

* If the city starts to build a new bridge, the construction delays might double our commute time.

public transportation – the system of buses, subways, trains, ferries, and more that are operated by a city or county to take people where they want to go

* If the city had a better public transportation system, we wouldn't need to have two cars.



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to settle down – to move to a place and stay there for a long time, becoming comfortable and familiar with the area

* When Hannah was in her 20s, she traveled all over the world, but now she's ready to settle down and start a family.

suburbs – the areas surrounding a city center, where homes are larger and more spread out, with fewer large office buildings

* This whole area used to be farmland, but in the past few years it has been developed into suburbs of McQuillan City.

character – traits or characteristics that make a person or thing different from others and more interesting

* Old homes require a lot of repairs and maintenance, but they have more character than new homes.

cookie-cutter – identical; a phrase used to describe many objects, especially homes, that are exactly the same or very similar

* The street has cookie-cutter homes with the same floor plan, but at least they're painted different colors.

nightlife – activities and events that happen in a city at night, especially at dance clubs, bars, parks, and outdoor festivals

* This city needs more nightlife. I wish someone would open up some new restaurants and bars!

to lounge – to relax, especially sitting in a relaxed position or lying down

* What could be better than lounging near an outdoor pool on a summer day?

close-knit community – a group of people who have strong relationships and participate in shared activities

* This neighborhood is a close-knit community where the children play together and the adults often cook meals for each other.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why doesn't Jeremy want to live downtown?
 - a) Because it's noisy.
 - b) Because it smells bad.
 - c) Because it isn't safe.

2. What does Leona mean when she says "everything is cookie-cutter"?
 - a) All the homes and neighborhoods look the same.
 - b) People eat too much junk food and are overweight.
 - c) It's too expensive to buy a home in the suburbs.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

on foot

The phrase "on foot," in this podcast, means walking, without using a vehicle: "It would be great to go to work on foot and not have to worry about driving and parking." The phrase "the foot of (something)" means the bottom or base of something: "They own a small cabin at the foot of Mount Rainier." The phrase "to be on (one's) feet" means to be standing: "Nurses have to wear comfortable shoes, because they spend all day on their feet." Finally, the phrase "to put (one's) foot down" means to do or say something very firmly, making one's opinion clear: "We understand teenagers like to try new things, but we put our foot down when it comes parties with drugs and alcohol."

to settle down

In this podcast, the phrase "to settle down" means to move to a place and stay there for a long time, becoming comfortable and familiar with the area: "Why are so many young men and women scared to settle down and get married these days?" The phrase "to settle" means to end an argument: "I hope we can settle this matter just between us, without going to court." The phrase "to settle down" means to become calm and quiet: "It took a long time to get the kids to settle down and go to bed last night." Finally, the phrase "to settle up" means to pay all the money that is owed on an account or bill: "Don't forget to return the room key when you settle up with the hotel."



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CULTURE NOTE

Crime Rates and the Most Dangerous Cities

Local, state, and federal “agencies” (government departments) “track” (record; monitor) “crime statistics” for cities across the country. “Crime statistics are data about the number and types of crimes that are “committed” (made to happen by criminals). The crime statistics for different cities are often compared to identify the safest and most dangerous cities in the United States.

The “FBI” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, a federal agency) “releases” (makes available to the public) each year “Uniform Crime Reports” that provide “aggregated” (total) statistics for crime in the United States. In 2012, the rate for “violent crime” (crimes that hurt people, such as murder, rape, robbery, and “assault” (attacks)) was 386.9 “per” (for every) 100,000 people, and the rate for “property crime” (crimes that do not hurt people, but involve stealing things of value) was 2,859.2 per 100,000 people.

It’s difficult to compare the crime statistics for cities to determine which ones are the safest or most dangerous. Nevertheless, some cities have reputations for being more dangerous than others. New York City is “commonly” (by many people) thought to be the most dangerous city in the United States. However, in September 2013, many “news outlets” (newspapers, magazines, and other types of media that report news) reported that Chicago had “surpassed” (gone beyond) New York as the “murder capital” (the place where the greatest number of murders occurs) in the United States. Apparently Chicago had more “homicides” (murders) than any other American city in 2012, even though New York City has “three times more” (300% of the number of) residents.

However, another city is even more dangerous than New York City or Chicago. Flint, Michigan had the highest crime rate in the United States. With a population of only 101,632, the city had 63 murders in 2012. That “works out to” (is calculated as) a crime rate of one murder per every 1,613 residents.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – a



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 958 – Selecting a Neighborhood to Live In.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 958. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is ESLPod.com. You don't have to come to Los Angeles to learn about us – just go to our website. When you're there, you can become a member of ESL Podcast and get a Learning Guide for this episode.

This episode is a dialogue about choosing a place to live in a city or town. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Leona: I want to live close to downtown. We can get everywhere on foot and walk to most amenities.

Jeremy: Downtown is always bustling and noisy, and the crime rate is really high. I'd rather have proximity to parks and open spaces.

Leona: If we lived downtown, we wouldn't have to worry about commute time and traffic. I could walk to work and you could take public transportation.

Jeremy: That's true, but there aren't any good schools near downtown.

Leona: Hello, we don't have any kids.

Jeremy: Not yet. I want to settle down somewhere for a while, not move every couple of years.

Leona: Is that why you want to live in the suburbs? The suburbs have no character. Everything is cookie-cutter.

Jeremy: That's not true.

Leona: Downtown has character and it's close to nightlife.



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Jeremy: That's less important to me than a place in a quiet neighborhood. Imagine lounging in the backyard or taking a walk in the park. We can raise our kids in a close-knit community.

Leona: I think you're planning for a family that we don't have.

Jeremy: Yet!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Leona saying to Jeremy, "I want to live close to downtown." "Downtown" (downtown) is the center of a city, especially a larger city with a lot of businesses in it, but really any city or town can have a downtown. Sometimes, in a small town, the downtown area is very small, only two or three blocks long. But in a big city, the downtown area can be very large, such as here in Los Angeles. Leona wants to live close to downtown.

She says, "We can get everywhere on foot and walk to most amenities." To travel "on foot" means to walk. It's just another way of saying you can walk to these places. What kind of places? Well, Leona tells us that they can walk "to most amenities." "Amenities" (amenities) are usually features or aspects or things about a certain area or a certain place that make it more comfortable, more enjoyable.

Normally we talk about amenities in a hotel. For example, the hotel might have a swimming pool and a spa. Those would be "amenities" – nice things that add to the pleasure of being in the hotel. We don't usually talk about amenities in terms of places where you live, but it is possible, and that's what Leona is doing here. She's saying that they can walk to all the interesting things that they want. They will not have to get in their car and drive to different places.

Jeremy says, "Downtown is always bustling and noisy." "To be bustling" (busting) means to be very busy. A place where a lot of people are coming and going could be described as "bustling." "Noisy," of course, is when there is a lot of loud noise. Noisy is usually a bad thing when you are thinking about where you want to live, and that's certainly Jeremy's opinion. He doesn't want to live in the downtown area.

He says, "The crime rate is really high." The "crime rate" (rate) refers to the number of crimes that take place in a certain area. If the crime rate is high, that means there is a lot of crime in that area – a lot of people who are being robbed or killed or having their cars stolen, and so forth. Jeremy says, "I'd rather" –



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meaning I would prefer to – “have proximity to parks and open spaces.” “Proximity (proximity) to” something is closeness to something – how close you are to a certain thing. “Proximity to” refers to distance.

We could say, “We are in close proximity to several stores and gas stations.” Those things are close to us. They are not very far from us. “Open spaces” refers to places like parks or areas where there aren't any buildings. Jeremy doesn't want to be downtown. He wants the opposite of downtown. He wants to be in a place where there is a lot of open space.

Leona says, “If we lived downtown, we wouldn't have to worry about commute time and traffic.” “To commute” (commute) means to travel from your house or apartment to the place where you work. Your “commute time” would be how long it takes you to get there. For example, I used to work at the university, and when I did that, I had to commute about 45 minutes to an hour each way. So, 45 minutes to get there and then 45 minutes to come home by car. That was my “commute time.”

Leona says if they lived in downtown, they wouldn't have to worry about commute time – because they would be close to their jobs, one supposes. Leona says, “I could walk to work and you could take public transportation.” So, Leona works downtown, and Jeremy works somewhere close to downtown where you can take public transportation. “Public transportation” refers to a government-owned bus or subway or train – anything that the average person can get on and use could be called public transportation.

It might not be owned by the government, although usually in the United States the buses and trains and subways are owned by the local government. The word “public” can mean owned by the government or it can mean something that anyone can use, that you don't need any special permission to use. You could have a private museum that is “open to the public,” meaning anyone can go there. Jeremy still doesn't like Leona's idea. He says, “That's true, but there aren't any good schools near downtown.”

Leona says, “Hello, we don't have any kids.” The use of the word “hello” is supposed to be funny. When a person says something that indicates that he hasn't thought of something very obvious – that he's not considering something that should be very clear to him – we might use this expression, or this word, “hello.” But we say it in a certain way – the way that Leona says it. “Hello,” meaning you are forgetting something or you are not remembering something that is very obvious or that should be clear to you.



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In this case, Jeremy is talking about schools for children, and Leona reminds him that they don't have any children. Jeremy says, however, "Not yet," meaning we don't yet have any kids, but we might in the future. He says, "I want to settle down somewhere for a while, not move every couple of years." "To settle down" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to move to a place and stay there for a long time – to move to a certain community or neighborhood and stay there for many years.

Sometimes, the expression "to settle down" refers to a lot of different things that a young person might consider doing as they become adults and more mature, such as getting married, buying a house, having children. Those might also be considered part of "settling down" somewhere. Leona says, "Is that why you want to live in the suburbs?" The "suburbs" (suburbs) are the areas outside of the main city.

Leona says, "The suburbs have no character." "Character" here refers to things that make a person or a place interesting. If you say, "This house has a lot of character," you mean it's interesting. Perhaps it's old and has some historic interest to you, or it might just be decorated in a way that makes it interesting. Those would be uses of the term "character" in describing the place.

Leona says, "Everything" – meaning everything in the suburbs – "is cookie-cutter." "Cookie (cookie) - cutter (cutter)" is an expression that means the same, boring, not very original. If you think about making cookies, the things you eat, you might think about something that you use to make sure all the cookies are the same shape. That little kitchen instrument, that kitchen tool, is called a "cookie cutter," and makes sure that all of the cookies look the same.

So, if you want to make cookies in the shape of a bunny, then you would have a cookie cutter in the shape of a bunny, and you could make each cookie look that way. That is what cookie cutters are. But the expression used in general conversation refers to things that are identical, but usually more than that – things that are considered not interesting, that lack or don't have character.

Jeremy says, "That's not true" – what Leona said about the suburbs. Leona says, "Downtown has character and it's close to nightlife." "Nightlife" (nightlife) – one word – refers to things that you would do at night for excitement, such as going to a bar or going dancing. That would be all part of nightlife. We usually associate the idea of nightlife with younger people who are going out and drinking and dancing and having a good time. All of that ends when you get married.



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Jeremy says, “That’s less important to me than a place in a quiet neighborhood.” Jeremy is saying that nightlife is not important to him. He says, “Imagine lounging in the backyard or taking a walk in the park.” “To lounge” (lounge) means to relax, usually by lying down in a chair or on a couch. Jeremy is talking about lounging in the backyard – in the place behind your house.

He says, “We can raise our kids in a close-knit community.” “Close (close) - knit (knit)” refers to a group or a place where everyone is very close to each other. They’re all friends. They all care about each other. They all know each other. A “close-knit community” would be a neighborhood or an area where everyone knows each other. Everyone is friends with each other. Jeremy wants to live in a close-knit community because it would be good for their children.

Leona says, “I think you’re planning for a family that we don’t have,” and Jeremy responds by saying, “Yet,” meaning we don’t have one yet, but we will have a family someday.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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Leona: I think you're planning for a family that we don't have.

Jeremy: Yet!

[end of dialogue]

Our scripts have character and are never cookie-cutter. That's because they're written by a wonderful scriptwriter – Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. Come back and listen to us again right here on ESL Podcast.

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