



If Moving To Charleston, South Carolina, Be Prepared To Never Want To Leave

Tyler Hawkins of Matt O'Neill Real Estate gives the scoop on the hottest neighborhoods in the Holy City.

Cristina Merrill
04/15/2019

Ask Tyler Hawkins about Charleston's hottest real estate neighborhood, and he'll easily point out more than one. Hawkins, a realtor and sales agent at [Matt O'Neill Real Estate](#), noted that Charleston has lots of different neighborhoods, each of which has their own benefits and price points. Plus, the city overall is vastly appealing. Hawkins may have been born in Wilmington, North Carolina, but he's lived in the Charleston area for about 30 years. He has some thoughts on why people are so drawn to the city. "I think it has a lot to do with the historical significance of the city," he said. "The ocean, of course, and it's a big beach community, boating community, fishing community. And then there are tons of restaurants. There's so much to do. It's just a very popular city, and so much is going on that it keeps bringing people in." Locals are especially passionate about their city. Hawkins himself lived elsewhere for a couple of years, but it just didn't compare to Charleston. "They always say that people from Charleston

think it's the center of the world," he said. "Funny fact about Charlestonians: They think it's the best place on earth." This is Hawkins' third year with Matt O'Neill Real Estate. "We're primarily a luxury real estate team," he said. "We sell more homes over \$500,000 than any other team in town. We have a very great marketing system, and we sell homes, on average, about 10 percent quicker than other teams here. We're a small team. We sold about \$180 million last year, and that was between about 30 agents." Now for the neighborhoods. Those who favor a more luxurious lifestyle might want to check out Sullivan's Island, which Hawkins describes as one of the nicest and most popular communities in Charleston. "Homes sell very quickly there," he said. "Usually they last a couple of hundred days on the market, and that's pretty quick for luxury real estate." Sullivan's Island, he said, is also very historic, which adds to its appeal. "It's just really a desirable place," he said. "That's where a lot of the celebrities that move to town live." He added that it's "a very exclusive community—a piece of land out there, just for a lot that's nowhere near the water, will cost you about \$1 million. That's just for the dirt." The natural landscape is also a huge draw for Sullivan's Island. "It's very peaceful," Hawkins said. "It's very relaxing out there. It's hard to be in a bad mood when you're listening to the ocean. I think that's an advantage in its own. And then you have the opportunity to run into some of the wealthiest people in town, and that's a good way to make connections with people." Residents seeking a home with more of a mid-range price can look to neighborhoods such as Wagener Terrace and Byrnes Down. "Those are very nice neighborhoods," Hawkins said. Wagener Terrace is downtown, and Hawkins noted that the neighborhood provides both a city-living vibe and a neighborhood feel. "You can still walk or bike to all the shops downtown," he said. "It's just that you still have a backyard, as opposed to living in a townhouse or duplex or a Charleston single house that doesn't have much of a yard. You get the downtown feeling, but with more of a community." Wagener Terrace, he said, consists of mainly college students and young professionals, plus older families who have lived there for generations. "That's a good mix," he said. And speaking of Charleston's college students, they can often find themselves living on some prime real estate. "One thing that's surprising is that most of the million-dollar homes downtown are occupied by college students," Hawkins said. "Everybody that goes to college rents a duplex or something, and they're paying tremendous amounts in rent just to live in those buildings—but if you have three or four roommates, it doesn't make it quite as bad. The majority of downtown Charleston north of Calhoun Street is primarily college students." Byrnes Downs, he said, was established in the 1940s and is notable for its brick cottages. "They're not big," he said of the cottages. "I'd say the biggest one there is about 1,200 square feet." What makes Byrnes Downs so desirable, he said, is its proximity to downtown Charleston. By car, someone can get to downtown Charleston within about five minutes, and Folly Beach is about a 20-minute drive away. "Of course, once you have a bigger family you have to move out because the houses are so small," he said, adding that the neighborhood is "basically living downtown but without the flooding issues." Ah, yes, the flooding. Per Hawkins, the downtown Charleston area is prone to a bit of flooding now and then. "Charleston, for the most part, was built on landfill, and what I mean by that is there are a lot of creeks and wetlands that were filled in to develop the city," he said, adding that a high tide will cause a flood. This doesn't happen in every single part of downtown, he said, "but it's definitely becoming an issue." So does all of this flooding affect his job? "You know, it really doesn't, just because everybody wants to be in downtown Charleston," he said. "You just accept that as a part of living downtown you're going to get flooded out every now and again." Hawkins' advice for people looking to purchase real estate in Charleston is simple. "Be

prepared to pay a little bit more than you would in an inland South Carolina city—and just be prepared to not ever want to leave,” he said. Oh, and use Matt O’Neill Real Estate. “Yeah, I think that would be my advice,” he said with a laugh.