

The migrants guide to the best places to live In ACCRA - Ghana in the wake of globalization

Gad Asorwoe Akwensivie

Property Investment Advisor

Ghana Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Accra, Ghana

Afua Manko Abedi-Lartey

Ghana Institute of Management and public Administration, Accra, Ghana

Key Words

Neighborhood Quality, First Class Areas, Best Places in Accra, Ghana

Abstract

This article outlines and discusses the best neighborhoods to live in Accra based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of a combination of factors including: Crime rate; Safety; Emergency Response; Utility Services; Spatial Planning; Building architecture; Pride in ownership; Neighborhood quality; Good basic schools; Outdoor activities; Pollution levels; Night Life, Ancillary users such as Medical facilities and Public transportation, and the availability of Shops, Banks, Pubs, Eateries and Entertainment.

Introduction

For some decades up until the nineties, the Ghanaian experience was one of exodus to Europe, the USA, Canada, South Africa and neighbouring countries, particularly Nigeria, Liberia and the Gambia. However in recent years, Ghana has become a preferred destination for many people across the globe due to many factors including the peace and the favorable economic environment for business growth and development. Consequently, there has been a reversal of the net flow. Ghana is experiencing large net inflows of migrants and expatriates annually. Due to the recent legal immigration of skilled workers who possess Ghana Cards, there is a small population of Chinese, Malaysian, Indian, Middle Eastern and European nationals.

The city of Accra in particular is fast becoming the preferred relocation destination for many people, not only from the African continent, but the world over. The selection of Accra as the preferred destination implies an increasing demand for data and information on which to make decisions. Unfortunately data and information on the Capital city is largely absent. In the absence of data on residential areas and neighbourhoods, many immigrants find it difficult to decide on the best places to finally reside once they arrive in the capital Accra. This work therefore seeks to fill the vacuum created as a result of the lack of data on the best neighbourhoods in Accra to live in.

The work aims to provide a source of information to guide not only migrants but residents, citizens and foreigners in their relocation decision making processes. The work also aims to fill a big vacuum that has been created as a result of the absence of comprehensive and reliable data and information of first class residential neighborhoods in Accra. This study seeks to provide a detailed analysis of the different options of the best neighborhoods in the capital city of Accra to guide present and future settlers. The specific objectives of the study are to provide a one-stop-shop on the best neighborhoods in Accra based on the following parameters. crime rate; safety; emergency response; utility services; spatial planning; building architecture; pride in ownership; pollution levels and night life. The other parameters are the availability of residential ancillary users such as good basic schools, outdoor/indoor sports and leisure activities, medical facilities, public transportation, shops/malls, banks, pubs, eateries and entertainment avenues; provide the basis of selecting a residential area over another based on empirical data and information; provide a basis for computing land and property values and finally aid businesses in their quest to identify prime areas for targeted marketing of specialized commodities as these best neighborhoods harbor the wealthiest of the Ghanaian Society.

The study is important for many reasons. First, there is little published work on the best places to live in Accra let alone Ghana to help people in their relocation decision making processes. City authorities can use the information provided in this work as a yardstick for imposing levies such as property rates. The work will also aid property brokers and agents in their work processes in the area of providing suited accommodation for their clients. The study is based on the analysis of findings in Accra the capital city located in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The analysis and conclusions are based on data collected in the Greater Accra Region over a one year period from April 2017 to April 2018. Literature comprised mainly of responses from city authorities, residents and public sector agents by way of interviews and questionnaires.

The study and data capturing

The study employs a case study approach within a quantitative and qualitative data analysis paradigm. The purposive method was applied in the sampling process based on initial information collected from the Ministry of Local Government and the Accra Metropolitan Authority. The research and its findings and conclusion hinges on robust empirical evidence with analysis of field data sets collated from 875 respondents most Accra city dwellers over the one year period. 267 additional responses were collected from city authorities including the Fire Service, the Ghana Police Service, the Ghana Ambulance Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Ministry of Education, Town and Country Planning Department, the lands Commission, property agents and brokers, sanitation service providers, Valuers, using the purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Some telephone correspondences were used in the data collection process but to a limited extent. The data used in the analysis was further validated during a second round of random field visits to selected residential areas. Accuracy in both data collation and compilation was not compromised. Therefore, to ensure that, the level of information and data assembled was of high quality, steps were taken to cross check, verify and confirm conflicting data and information from different sources during the field visits. These ensure limited discrepancies in the final data employed and analyzed.

Ghana: Ghana, a country on the West Coast of Africa, is one of the most thriving democracies on the continent. Ghana is bordered by the Ivory Coast in the west, Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east and the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean in the south. *Ghana* means "Warrior King" in the Soninke language. Ghana covers an area of 238,500 Sq. Km, with an estimated population of 28,519,609 (Oct. 2017), drawn from over 100 ethnic groups - each with its own unique language. English, however, is the official language. The discovery of oil and gas off the Gulf of Guinea is making Ghana an important oil producer and exporter and set to change the fortunes of this once great African Country. The country's economy is dominated by agriculture, which employs about 40 percent of the working population. (Ministry of Finance, 2017). Ghana is one of the leading exporters of cocoa in the world and a significant exporter of commodities such as gold and lumber.

The latest and most enduring democratic experiment started in 1992 and it is what has gained recognition for Ghana as a leading democracy in Africa. Ghana has shown a lot of political stability and maturity over the years, earning it the highly respected, and enviable, reputation of most peaceful country in West Africa. Ghana has several tourist attractions such as the castles. Most of the major international airlines fly into and from the international airport in Accra. Domestic air travel is thriving and the country has a vibrant telecommunications sector, with five cellular phone operators and several internet service providers.

Migration to Ghana: Ghana continues to attract many people from all walks of life for varying reasons. Ghana is a relatively peaceful country. The country is currently the 58th most peaceful country on the Global Peace Index. It has been described as a wonderful place to live. Ghana like a few African countries is peaceful and has a vibrant and interesting culture. The people are generally warm and friendly and this contributes the traffic flow to the country. In Ghana, you can be sure to be well received nearly everywhere you go irrespective of your age, color, religion or creed. That is the hallmark of Ghanaians. A young American man we interviewed said "*finding a friend in Ghana is not a problem*". Apart from that, there are growing expatriate communities who have formed associations where they meet periodically to

celebrate occasions. As a result, many foreigners feel at home away from home in Ghana. Other factors that are pulling immigration to Ghana include a number of factors including the following the booming Real estate sector which is on the rise. The landscape offers very attractive options that cater for different classes of people.

Today in Ghana, there are new buildings under construction on a daily basis providing lots of jobs and earnings for investors and developer. The real estate industry also has impact on other sectors of the economy and other industries, ancillary businesses and trades. There is therefore a variety of real estate to meet every class and taste. Ghana is a preferred destination for many people from the continent and across the world because the people are generally receptive to technological changes and innovations. In addition, life is laid back in Ghana generally compared to other countries in the West.

The climate has a lot to offer with a "summer warmth season" all year round. There are a host of other reasons why many people are relocating to Ghana and one such reason is the availability of a variety of indigenous dishes. There are lots of other exciting reasons such as the availability of plush property both on sale and for rent at real competitive prices. Many foreigners we interviewed in course of this research confirmed that, they were contemplating relocating permanently.

The capital Accra is the 10th wealthiest city in Africa after Johannesburg, Cairo, Cape-Town, Lagos, Nairobi, Luanda, Durban, Pretoria and Casablanca and in fact among the top 10 preferred cities in Africa. And did you know that, Accra is home to 2,300 millionaires and 100 multi-millionaires (no billionaires)? That is according to AfrAsia Bank Wealth Report 2017 and the New World's Worth's 2017 Report which provide a comprehensive review of the continents wealth sector including luxury trends for the period 2006 to 2016. (AfrAsia Bank Africa, 2017)

The attractions to Accra are due to many factors including security and the peace. Urbanization, and both local & foreign investment by companies and individuals are also attracting people to the city. Depending on where you live in the capital, you will find that, life in Accra can be really stressful due factors including commuting time from one place to the other as a result of the vehicular traffic situation, etc. that is why it is important to know and to choose the best place to live.

We probed Accra from the north, south, east and west, collated and analyzed data and considered all factors affecting the quality of the neighborhoods to arrive at the best places to live in Accra. This report is based on analysis of data which was deemed essential to support the estimation of a neighborhood's quality. Analysis is based on factors including crime rate; safety; emergency response; utility services; spatial planning; building architecture; pride in ownership; neighborhood quality; good basic schools; outdoor activities; pollution levels, night Life and the access to ancillary users such as medical facilities and public transportation; and the availability of shops, banks, pubs, eateries, movie places and entertainment.

Crime and general safety is a major concern for everyone. One obvious and major criterion to distinguish between a good and bad neighborhood is the rate of criminal activity and this was key in our research. In good neighborhoods, there is a sense of ease and calm and this tends to draw people to the place. Many people are therefore willing to pay extra to live in safe neighborhoods.

Pride in ownership is another common characteristic of good neighborhoods. When residents have pride in ownership, they tend to individually take care of their homes and keep their surroundings in perfect shape which collectively translates to betterment of the neighborhood.

The presence of good schools makes a good neighborhood especially for residents with children. Good schools in an area increase the appeal and demand for properties in the area and this has a positive effect on property values. In the same vein, proximity to outdoor events such as parks, tennis and golf courts all increases the appeal for a neighborhood. Access to medical care is important to everyone but more especially to the wealthy, elderly, pensioners and retired wealthy individuals who like to access a medical facility quickly. Other important factors such as closeness to public transportation, shops and restaurants, nearness to fire station and police station, the night life counted in our rating of the best areas. Transportation, shopping centers and restaurants are important amenities for all lifestyles. Everyone loves to live in an area where restaurant chains are not too far off, within walking distances or at worst available with a short taxi ride.

Findings of the study

Having carefully considered the factors affecting a neighborhood's quality i.e., Crime rate; Safety; Emergency Response; Utility Services; Spatial Planning; Building architecture; Pride in ownership; Neighborhood quality; Good basic schools; Outdoor activities; Pollution levels; Night Life, Ancillary users such as Medical facilities and Public transportation, and the availability of Shops, Banks, Pubs, Eateries and Entertainment places, Cantonments topped the list of the best places to live in Accra as at March 2018 scoring 114.7 points out of a total of 135 points.

TABLE 1.0 - BEST PLACE TO LIVE IN ACCRA - GHANA RANKED

Residential Area of Accra	Low Crime Safety (20)	Emergency Response Police, Fire, Ambulance (15)	Utility Services Garbage, Electric, Water, etc. (15)	Pride in Ownership Ambience/Cleanliness (15)	Low Pollution Noise & Air (10)	Good Schools Private Basic Schools (10)	Medical facilities Public Private (10)	Transport & Comm. Public (10)
Cantonments	17.2	13.4	12.8	13.0	8.4	9.0	8.2	7.8
Airport Residential	15.9	12.4	12.4	12.5	7.6	9.0	8.8	7.9
Ridge	15.7	11.2	12.1	11.5	7.2	9.0	9.0	7.9
East Legon	12.6	10.0	10.2	12.4	7.0	9.1	8.6	8.1
Trassacco Valley	18.6	10.9	12.8	13.2	8.8	7.0	6.7	4.5
Roman Ridge	13.5	10.2	10.7	12.4	7.6	9.0	7.6	8.0
North Legon	12.4	10.8	9.8	12.0	8.0	9.0	8.3	8.0
East Airport	12.4	10.6	11.2	12.2	8.2	8.6	7.1	6.3
West Legon	11.6	10.0	10.2	11.8	6.8	8.0	6.8	7.7
Labone	10.3	9.8	8.6	10.0	5.7	7.7	6.9	8.1
Dzowulu	10.5	9.8	8.8	10.0	5.6	7.8	6.8	8.2
Osu	10.0	7.5	7.5	7.5	5.0	7.4	8.7	9.1
Tesano	10.1	8.6	8.6	10.5	7.3	7.6	6.1	7.8

(Total Score = 135, Pass Mark = 85) Source: Author's Survey & Analysis, 2018

Residential Area of Accra	Ancillary Users Shops, Banks, Eateries (10)	Outdoor activities Sports/ Leisure (10)	Spatial Planning Layout/ Building Designs (5)	Night Life Quality Variety (5)	Total Score and Rating (135)
Cantonments	7.6	8.6	4.2	4.5	114.7 (1 st)
Airport Residential	7.8	8.9	4.2	4.3	111.7 (2 nd)
Ridge	8.2	8.6	4.0	4.2	108.6 (3 rd)
East Legon	9.2	9.0	4.6	4.6	105.4 (4 th)
Trassacco Valley	5.7	6.9	4.9	3.0	103.0 (5 th)
Roman Ridge	7.9	7.9	3.8	4.1	102.7 (6 th)
North Legon	7.5	7.4	3.9	3.8	100.9 (7 th)
East Airport	6.0	7.5	4.0	3.8	97.9 (8 th)
West Legon	6.7	6.9	3.8	3.0	93.3 (9 th)
Labone	7.7	7.5	3.4	4.1	89.8 (10 th)
Dzowulu	7.3	7.3	3.4	4.1	89.6 (11 th)
Osu	9.8	8.0	3.0	4.9	88.4 (12 th)
Tesano	6.4	8.2	3.3	3.6	88.1 (13 th)

(Total Score = 135, Pass Mark = 85) Source: Author's Survey & Analysis, 2018

1st - Cantonments: Cantonments has for many years been the best place to live in Accra. Cantonments is meticulously well planned with tarred roads and major ancillary users such as medical facilities such as the Akai House Clinic and the 37 Military Hospital and good basic schools including the famous Ghana International School. Cantonments is home to top public servants, politicians, diplomats and businessmen as such security is of utmost priority to the government and individuals alike. In addition, Cantonment is only 15 minutes' drive from the Kotoka International airport. It is within easy

reach from Osu where you can find all the major banks, eateries and shops. We found that, Cantonments is among the safest neighborhood to live in Accra with an emergency response time of 9 minutes. What is more, air pollution is low because 98% of the roads in Cantonments are tarred. Except for the occasional noise from aircrafts taking off from the airport, noise levels is relatively low. It is believed that, the location of the American Consulate has greatly contributed to the security there. Cantonments is not a place for the common man because land and property values are among the highest in Ghana. See chart for the details of the analysis. The rest are as follows:

2nd - Airport Residential Area: Airport Residential Area takes the second place in our ranking. Airport Residential Area is one of the finest places to live in Accra and remains the preferred residential area for many foreigners. It is bordered on the north by Dzowulu and the West by Roman Ridge. As the name depicts, Airport Residential Area is located near the airport. It is only 15minutes drive from the Kotoka International Airport. Airport Residential Area is generally is quiet, clean and secure with as a result of the situation of the most popular police station in Ghana – the Airport Police Station. Many prominent Ghanaians including former President J. A. Kuffour reside there. There are a host of leading hotels and serviced apartments to choose from. Shopping malls, banks, hospitals, pharmacies, restaurants and a number of consulates are all located within Airport Residential Area. There are very good basic schools such as the Association International and the Roman Ridge School within 15minutes drive. The presence of the Nyaho Medical Center and top range pharmacies makes the place likeable for many. Just as Cantonments, Airport Residential Area is not for everyone because property prices there are high. An acre of land in Airport Residential Area currently sells for over One Million United States Dollars.

3rd - Ridge: Closely followed by Airport Residential Area in our ranking is Ridge. Ridge bears a lot of similarities with Cantonments. Divided into North, South, East and West, Ridge has a strong residential character. It is safe with low crime rate based on data collated from the Ghana Police Service. It is close to the seat of Government, the Government Ministries, the House of Parliament and the Central Business District. Ridge has a number of good basic schools such as the Ridge School and the North Ridge Lyceum. Ridge is also home to most senior public servants and a number of consulates including the British Embassy, the Canadian Embassy and the World Bank Country offices. Former President Jerry John Rawlings and many prominent people live at Ridge. Ridge is fast assuming a mixed used neighborhood with the construction of office spaces. Osu is within easy reach from Ridge.

4th - East Legon: Taking the 4th position in our ranking is East Legon. Located to the north of the city, the popular East Legon has it all. High earners are attracted to the range of stylish residential properties and residential ancillary users including Malls, Sport and fitness centres and Childrens play grounds. Good basic schools such as the popular French and a tall list of ancillary users such as banks, 3-Star hotels and private hospitals are available and within walking distances. East Legon is not far from the University of Ghana and harbours a number of University Colleges such as the Radford University College, the Knustford University College, the Islamic University College and others. Located within East Legon are fine pubs and eateries. One interesting feature about East Legon is that, it is home to some of the most popular musicians, pastors, footballers, politicians and businessmen. Residents also have high pride in ownership which contributes to the general ambience and appeal.

5th - Trasacco Valley: Trasacco Valley is the leading and the largest gated community in Ghana and the most sort after gated community for rich people in West Africa. Located between East Legon and Adjiringanor and near Otinshi, Trassacco Valley has the best luxurious properties. Trasacco valley has a layout and is well planned. It is 10minutes from East Legon where you can find an array of stalls and a Shopping Centre. Noise and pollution levels are low and there is a high pride in ownership. It is a very safe and secure neighborhood and home to all Ghana's international footballers, some politicians, businessmen and pastors. Residents of Trasacco Valley, were granted paid access to the motorway buy the Ghana Highways Authority. This provides a quick, improved and easy access for residents of the neighborhood to other parts of the city.

6th - Roman Ridge: Roman Ridge is bordered on the East by Airport Residential Area and West by Dwowulu. Roman Ridge is among the most sort-after residential suburbs of Accra. Roman ridge is well planned with tarred roads. Pollution is there low. Residential ancillary users such as good basic schools, shopping centers, eateries and medical facilities are available and within walking distances. There are a host of outdoor activities to choose from. Crime rate is also relatively low. Services including electricity, fresh water and garbage removal are reliable. Roman Ridge has a number of good hotels, serviced apartments, eateries and a mall, the Roman Ridge Shopping Mall. It is preferred due to easy access to many parts of the city. Roman ridge is home to public servants both retired and active.

7th - North Legon: North Legon is a relatively new residential area - of less than 20years, youngest of all the places featuring in our ranking of the best places to live in Accra. It is located less than one kilometer north of the University of Ghana and near the Wisconsin International University College. North Legon Residential Area has a layout and all roads within the neighborhood are tarred. Criminal activity is low. Utility services such as electricity, water and garbage collection are regular. Residential ancillary users such as schools, churches, hospitals, dental and pharmaceutical service providers and leisure centres are available and within walking distances. North Legon is home to some of Ghana's wealthiest business men, retire public servants and politicians.

8th - East Airport Residential Area: Also referred to as Airport Hills, East Airport is home to middle and upper classes but the dynamics is fast changing due to improved infrastructure including a new network of roads. East airport has an interesting appeal with a cluster of gated communities. The relocation of some high-profile politicians to airport east is set to raise the silhouette. East Airport is within reach to residential ancillary users such as medical facilities, eateries, sports & leisure centers and one of the largest shopping Malls in Ghana, the Palace Mall. It is also within easy reach of Spintex Road where one can find an array of shops, banks and other retail outlets. Refer to chart for more details.

9th - West Legon Residential Area: Taking the 9th position in our ranking of the best places to live in Accra is West Legon. It is also known as West-Lands. It is near the University of Ghana and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). West-lands has a layout and is well planned but many roads are yet to be tarred. There are lots of serviced apartments for beginners and international students. Residential ancillary users such as crèches, medical facilities, shopping places and good basic schools and some banks are available. West Legon is home students, politicians, retired public servants, businessmen and pastors. See table for more specifics.

10th - Labone Residential Area: Labone takes the 10th position in our ranking of the best neighborhoods to live in Accra. Labone has a layout which is well planned and accessible by network of tarred roads. Labone is home to senior public servants, politicians, many expatriates, businessmen, politicians, celebrities, middle to upper class. Residential ancillary users are available and within walking distances. They include crèches, basic schools, shops, banks, pubs and eateries. It is also 10mins from Osu. For the statistics refer to table.

11th - Dzorwulu Residential Area: Dzorwulu ranks 11th in the best places to live in Accra. It is boarded by Airport Residential and Roman Ridge. Dzorwulu is well planned and has a blend of residential and office accommodation. Residential complementary services such as good schools, medical facilities, pharmacies, leisure/sporting avenues and shops are available. It is just about 20mins drive to the Accra Mall (off peak). In the same class of Labone and Tesano, Dzorwulu has a layout with tarred roads and is a preferred base for expatriates and international businessmen. Refer to table for more niceties.

12th - Osu: Osu, one of Accra's oldest settlements takes the 12th position in our ranking of the places to live in Accra. Although not very well planned all the streets including the popular Oxford street are tarred. The suburb has an array of shops, pubs, medical facilities, a mall, entertainment places and 24hour public transportation. All the major banks have a branch there. Osu has a collection of Thai, Chinese, Italian, English, French and Mexican cuisines. There are good crèches and basic schools nearby.

Osu has the best night life by far but, noise and pollution levels are high. Osu is home to all classes. The chart illustrates further.

13th - Tesano Residential Area: Taking the 13th place in our ranking of the best places to live in Accra is Tesano. Tesano is a very old residential neighborhood of Accra and occupied by many Gold Coast politicians. Residents take pride in ownership. Ancillary users such as hotels, leisure centers, good basic schools, shops and medical facilities are available. Tesano has a layout and is accessible by a network of tarred roads. It is also relatively low on crime rate due to proximity to the Ghana Police training Academy and the heavy police presence for most parts of the day. It is clean, quiet and is home to businessmen, politicians, retired public servants and the rich. Refer to chart for more details.

Conclusion

It emerged during the analysis of the study of house ownership that, the percentage of residents living in owned properties in the 13 study areas listed above appear to be higher than people renting. This probably explains the reason why residents take very high pride in ownership which has a direct and positive correlation with the plush neighborhood quality. Furthermore, we found that most of these properties were fenced in with sand-crete block wall which tends to reduce intruders and prevent easy access and the crime rate happening in these areas.

Overall, this study has confirmed the fact that, access to utility services did not matter to residents equally as the safety of the neighborhood. However, access and availability of utility services scored higher than the quality of the nightlife and access and availability of good basic schools.

References

- AfrAsia Bank Africa (2017) Africa Wealth Report
Datta P.R., Akwensivie G.A., and Akwensivie D.M., (2006) *Bridging the Housing Gap in Less Developed Countries* - Journal of Business and Retail Management Research (JBRMR) Vol. 1 Issue 1 - October, 2006
<https://meqasa.com/blog/top-3-reasons-for-moving-to-ghana> accessed 31/12/17
https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/country_info accessed 02/02/18
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana> accessed 06/03/2018
Koranteng K.A (2015) *Migration in Ghana* Daily Graphic of 15/06/2017