2026 EDITION · FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS

Your First Home

in San Antonio, start to finish



The eight steps in plain language, the loans and down payment help open to first-time buyers here, how the Texas option period works, and what closing really costs.

Eight steps

The whole process on one page, from a first conversation to closing day

Down payment help

The City's HIP, TSAHC and TDHCA programs and USDA loans, with who may qualify and how to check

Cash to close

A worksheet for the money you'll need, plus the closing-day wire check

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WELCOME

Buying your first home? Here's where to start.



I'm Tiffany Reed, a REALTOR® with Real Broker LLC in San Antonio and a Military Relocation Professional (MRP), licensed since 2022. This guide walks through the whole purchase in order, with the 2026 numbers and where each one comes from.

Read it front to back or jump to whatever is keeping you up at night. If your question isn't here, ask me. Nothing is too basic.

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Start with these three things

1

You may need far less than 20% down

FHA allows 3.5% with a 580 score, some conventional loans 3%, and VA and USDA none for eligible buyers.

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2

Plan 2% to 5% for closing costs

$6,000 to $15,000 on a $300,000 home, on top of the down payment. The seller can agree to pay part.

PAGES 13 AND 14

3

The option period is your inspection window

End the contract by 5:00 p.m. on the last option day and your earnest money comes back.

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Good to know

- ☐ Line up your pre-approval before the first tour. Since January 1, 2026, Texas law requires a signed buyer agreement before any agent shows you a home.
- ☐ After you close, file for the homestead exemption. School districts exempt $140,000 of your home's value, and the general deadline is April 30.

Inside

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SECTION 1 · THE PROCESS

What are the steps to buying a home in San Antonio?

Eight, in this order: talk it through, get pre-approved, search, make an offer, inspect during the option period, get through appraisal and financing, do the final walkthrough, and close. Once you're under contract, each step has a date written into the contract.

1
A first conversation
What you want and what payment feels right. You sign a buyer agreement before the first showing.
PAGE 9

2
Pre-approval
A lender checks your finances and tells you in writing what it will lend.
PAGE 4

3
The home search
Tours in person or by video, with my homework done on each house first.
PAGE 9

4
The offer
Price, earnest money, option days, financing terms, who pays what, and a closing date.
PAGE 10

5
Inspections and the option period
Inspect, then accept, negotiate repairs, or walk away by the deadline.
PAGE 11

6
Appraisal and financing
Appraisal, underwriting, clear to close, and your Closing Disclosure 3 business days ahead.
PAGE 12

7
Final walkthrough
One more look at the home and the agreed repairs before you sign.
PAGE 16

8
Closing day
You sign, the loan funds, and the keys are yours.
PAGE 16

Can I buy? A five-question check

Can you show steady income with pay stubs, W-2s or tax returns?	YES ☐ NO ☐
Have you pulled your free credit reports at AnnualCreditReport.com?	YES ☐ NO ☐
Do you have savings for closing costs and a down payment, or a plan for down payment help?	YES ☐ NO ☐
Would the full monthly payment (loan, taxes, insurance, HOA) leave room for your other bills?	YES ☐ NO ☐
Will you live in the home? VA and USDA loans and the City's HIP all require it.	YES ☐ NO ☐

Got a no or two?

A no just shows you where to start. A lender can tell you what to work on, and a HUD-approved housing counselor can help you build a plan: answers.hud.gov/housingcounseling or (800) 569-4287.

Sources: TREC resale contract 20-19; CFPB; FTC; VA.gov, USDA and City of San Antonio HIP guidelines (occupancy); HUD. Data current as of October 2026.

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SECTION 2 · PRE-APPROVAL

How does pre-approval work, and what should I ask a lender?

> A lender reviews your credit, income, debts and savings, then tells you in writing how much it's willing to lend. Do it before you tour. It shows you your real budget, and you'll send the letter with your offer. Still looking for a lender? I'll introduce you to a few.

What does a lender look at?

AREA	WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU
Credit	Your score and history. Get all three reports free every week at AnnualCreditReport.com, the only site the FTC authorizes, and dispute errors. Score minimums by loan and program are on page 19.
Debt-to-income	Your monthly debt payments divided by your gross monthly income. Per the CFPB, the limit depends on the loan and the lender.
Income	Expect to show recent pay stubs, W-2s or tax returns.
Savings	Money for the down payment and closing costs. A family member can give you some of it with a signed gift letter and a paper trail.

Pre-qualified or pre-approved?

The CFPB says lenders use the two terms differently, and neither one is a guaranteed loan offer. What matters is what the lender actually checked. Ask whether they pulled your credit and reviewed your documents, or only took your word for the numbers.

Will shopping lenders hurt my credit?

Not much if you keep it tight. Per the CFPB, multiple mortgage credit checks within a 45-day window count as a single inquiry. Get a Loan Estimate from more than one lender and compare them side by side.

Questions to ask every lender

- [ ] Which loans fit me: FHA, VA, USDA or 3% conventional?
- [ ] Do you work with the City's HIP, TSAHC or TDHCA down payment programs?
- [ ] What did you verify for this pre-approval?
- [ ] What's my full monthly payment, with taxes and insurance?
- [ ] About how much cash will I need at closing?
- [ ] What are the rate, APR and points, and when can I lock?
- [ ] How many days do you need to close?
- [ ] What do you need from me next?

Until you close, hold still

The CFPB says to avoid applying for new credit during the mortgage process: no car loan, no new credit cards, no big purchases on the cards you have. Lenders may check your credit again just before closing. Thinking about a new job? Talk to your lender first.

Sources: CFPB (prequalification and preapproval letters; credit checks; debt-to-income; Loan Estimates); FTC, Free Credit Reports; HUD Mortgagee Letter 2026-11; TSAHC; TDHCA Lender Guide; VA.gov; Fannie Mae Selling Guide B3-4.3-04 (gifts). Data current as of October 2026.

SECTION 3 · LOANS

Do I need to put 20% down on a San Antonio home?

> No. Depending on the loan, you can put down far less: 3% on some conventional loans, 3.5% on FHA with a 580 or better credit score, and nothing at all on VA and USDA loans for those who qualify. Less money down usually means some kind of mortgage insurance or fee, so compare the full cost, not just the down payment.

LOAN	MINIMUM DOWN	MORTGAGE INSURANCE OR FEE	GOOD TO KNOW
Conventional, 3% options	3%	PMI. Ask to cancel at 80% of the original value; it ends on its own at 78%.	HomeReady and Home Possible: income up to 80% of the area median. Fannie Mae's standard 97% loan: one buyer must be first-time.
FHA	3.5% with a 580+ score; 10% with 500 to 579	1.75% upfront premium, usually rolled in, plus a monthly premium that lasts the life of the loan with less than 10% down.	Insured by HUD. Scores from 500 can qualify, with more money down.
VA	None, if the price isn't above the appraised value	No PMI. Funding fee of 2.15% on first use with under 5% down, can be financed; waived with VA disability compensation.	Eligible service members, veterans and some surviving spouses. The lender pulls your Certificate of Eligibility.
USDA guaranteed	None	1% upfront guarantee fee and 0.35% a year (fiscal year 2027 rates).	Eligible rural area, your primary residence, household income up to 115% of the area median.

Put 20% down on a conventional loan and PMI generally doesn't apply; with less down, federal rules let you ask to drop it at 80%.

What does that look like on $300,000?

3% down is $9,000, FHA's 3.5% is $10,500, and VA or USDA is $0. Closing costs come on top of any of these (page 13). On a $300,000 VA loan, the first-use funding fee is $6,450 unless you're exempt, and it can be rolled into the loan.

Do I count as a first-time buyer?

You may, even if you owned a home years ago. Fannie Mae and FHA count you as a first-time buyer if you haven't owned a home in the past three years, and the City's HIP and TDHCA's My First Texas Home use the same three-year test.

Check a USDA address

USDA eligibility goes by the property, not the ZIP code or the city name in a listing. Look up any address on USDA's Income and Property Eligibility Site, eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov. It gives you a likely answer; the lender makes the final call.

Taking a homebuyer class

Fannie Mae requires a homeownership course when every borrower is a first-time buyer on HomeReady or any loan above 95% loan-to-value. The down payment programs on the next page require one too, so take it early.

Sources: HUD Mortgagee Letters 2026-11 and 2023-05; Fannie Mae Selling Guide; Freddie Mac; CFPB; VA.gov; USDA Rural Development (FY 2027 fees). Data current as of October 2026. USDA fees reset each October; other loan rules are reviewed each January.

SECTION 4 · DOWN PAYMENT HELP

What down payment help is there in San Antonio?

Three main sources: the City of San Antonio's Homeownership Incentive Program (HIP), for homes within the city limits, and two statewide agencies, TSAHC and TDHCA, that pair a mortgage with help of up to 5% of the loan. You apply through a lender, and funding and limits change, so confirm before you count on any of it.

PROGRAM	WHAT IT OFFERS	WHO MAY QUALIFY
City HIP 80	A 0% second loan, no monthly payments, $1,000 to $30,000 for down payment and closing costs. Forgiven over 5 or 10 years, by amount, while it's your homestead.	First-time buyers (no ownership in 3 years), household income up to 80% of the area median, home inside San Antonio city limits, FHA, VA or conventional loan.
City HIP 120	$1,000 to $15,000. 75% is forgiven over 10 years; 25% is repaid when you sell or do a cash-out refinance.	The same rules, with household income up to 120% of the area median.
TSAHC Home Sweet Texas	A 30-year fixed loan plus up to 5% of the loan amount, as a grant or a second lien, depending on the option.	Income limits by county and household size. Score 620 (FHA, VA, USDA) or 640 (conventional). Past owners may qualify.
TSAHC Homes for Texas Heroes	The same help as Home Sweet Texas.	Full-time public school educators (including aides, librarians, counselors, school nurses), peace officers, firefighters and EMS, corrections officers, nursing and allied health faculty, veterans and active military.
TDHCA My First Texas Home	A 30-year fixed loan plus up to 5% as a 0% second lien, forgiven after 3 years, or deferred and repaid when you sell, refinance or pay off.	First-time buyers (qualified veterans exempt). Score 620, county income and price limits, a TDHCA-approved loan officer.
TDHCA My Choice Texas Home	The same help as My First Texas Home.	No first-time rule, higher income limits. Same score and loan officer rule.
Mortgage Credit Certificate	A federal tax credit of 15% of the mortgage interest you pay each year (current TSAHC and TDHCA rate).	First-time buyers (veterans exempt). TSAHC's comes only with its down payment help. Selling within nine years can mean paying some back.

This year's income and price limits for a Bexar County purchase are on the next page. Sources: City of San Antonio, HIP page and HIP 80 and HIP 120 Procedural Guides; TSAHC program pages and rate sheet (Oct. 23, 2026); TDHCA Lender Guide and rate notice (Oct. 23, 2026). Data current as of October 2026; reviewed quarterly. Rates and percentages change daily, so your lender quotes today's.

Is HIP open right now?

The City sets HIP's funding in its budget each year and lends first come, first served while the money lasts. Check the HIP page at sa.gov or call (210) 207-6459 for availability and this year's limits.

Can I use more than one?

Sometimes. The City's HIP FAQ says HIP can be combined with other assistance and leaves the call to the lender. Ask before you count on two at once.

SECTION 4 · DOWN PAYMENT HELP

What are this year's limits in Bexar County?

Each program sets its own, by household size and the home's price. These are the figures each one publishes today for a Bexar County purchase. They change every year, so use them as a first check and let your lender confirm the ones that apply to you.

City of San Antonio HIP limits (sa.gov)

HOUSEHOLD	HIP 80 INCOME	HIP 120 INCOME
1 person	$56,350	$84,500
2 people	$64,400	$96,600
3 people	$72,450	$108,650
4 people	$80,500	$120,700
5 people	$86,950	$130,400
6 people	$93,400	$140,050
7 people	$99,850	$149,700
8 people	$106,300	$159,350
Price cap, resale	**$260,000**	**$301,700**
Price cap, new build	**$284,000**	**$332,800**

Household income has to be below the limit. The City's page labels the HIP 80 table 2026 and the HIP 120 table 2025, and its October 2024 program guides list slightly different price caps, so confirm with the City at (210) 207-6459 before you apply.

An example household

Say three people live in your household, earn $70,000 a year together, and want a $250,000 resale home inside San Antonio city limits. That's under HIP 80's $72,450 limit for three and its $260,000 cap, so the household can ask a lender about HIP 80, and it's under the state limits too.

At $95,000, HIP 80 is out, but HIP 120 ($108,650 for three) and the state programs below are still in range. This household is made up for the example; your lender runs your real numbers.

Whose income counts?

Often more than yours. TDHCA counts everyone who will sign the deed of trust, including a spouse who isn't on the loan, so ask your lender how each program counts it.

State program limits for Bexar County

PROGRAM	HOUSEHOLD INCOME LIMIT	PURCHASE PRICE LIMIT
TDHCA My First Texas Home and Texas MCC	$104,725 for 1 or 2 people; $120,434 for 3 or more	$583,580
TDHCA My Choice Texas Home	$178,033 with an FHA, VA or USDA loan; $172,720 with a conventional loan; any household size	None
TSAHC Home Sweet Texas	$157,358, any household size	None listed by TSAHC
TSAHC Homes for Texas Heroes	$178,339, any household size	None listed by TSAHC
TSAHC help paired with its MCC	$104,905 for 1 or 2 people; $120,641 for 3 or more	$583,581

Higher limits apply in targeted areas, and parts of Bexar County are targeted (for My First Texas Home, $125,670 and $146,616 in income and a $713,265 price). Ask your lender whether an address qualifies.

Sources: City of San Antonio, HIP page (sa.gov); TDHCA income and purchase price limits, effective July 13, 2026; TSAHC County Income Limits tool (Bexar County). Data current as of October 2026; reviewed each spring, summer and October.

SECTION 4 · DOWN PAYMENT HELP

How do I check whether I qualify?

> Start with your lender, since every one of these programs runs through one. Then confirm this year's income and price limits for your household on the program's own page.

PROGRAM	WHERE TO CHECK	BEFORE YOU APPLY
City HIP 80 and HIP 120	sa.gov, search "Homeownership Incentive Program," or (210) 207-6459	8-hour HUD-approved homebuyer class; at least $500 in earnest money
TSAHC programs and MCC	tsahc.org, Homebuyer Programs	An approved homebuyer education course; a TSAHC participating lender
TDHCA programs and Texas MCC	welcomehome.tdhca.texas.gov	A homebuyer course; a TDHCA-approved loan officer
USDA guaranteed loan	eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov (address and income)	A lender that makes USDA loans
Homebuyer education	answers.hud.gov/housingcounseling. The City's HIP page lists its Neighborhood and Housing Services Department and Neighborhood Housing Services of San Antonio.	Ask which classes your program accepts before you sign up

Questions to ask about any program

- ☐ Is it a grant, a forgivable loan, or a loan I repay? When?
- ☐ What happens if I sell or refinance in the first few years?
- ☐ Do I have to live in the home, and for how long?
- ☐ What are this year's income and purchase price limits for my household?
- ☐ Which loan types can I pair it with?
- ☐ Which homebuyer class counts, and when do I need the certificate?
- ☐ How long does approval take?

A note on HIP and city limits

A San Antonio mailing address doesn't always mean a home is inside the city. HIP requires the home to be within San Antonio city limits, so check the taxing units for the address on the Bexar Appraisal District's property search (bcad.org): if the City of San Antonio is listed, the home is inside the city.

Sources: City of San Antonio HIP page, procedural guides and lender FAQs; TSAHC; TDHCA; USDA Income and Property Eligibility Site; HUD Housing Counseling. Data current as of October 2026.

SECTION 5 · TOURING HOMES

What should happen before I tour a home?

> Three things: sign a written buyer agreement (Texas law requires it before any agent shows you a home), tell me your must-haves and deal-breakers, and let me do the homework on each house before you walk in. You'll spend your time on homes that could actually work.

What's in the buyer agreement?

Texas law (Occupations Code §1101.563) requires one before an agent shows you a home, or before presenting an offer if you never tour. Per TREC, it lists the agent's services, how long it lasts and how the agent is paid, and says in plain view that broker compensation is not set by law and is fully negotiable. Your offer can ask the seller to put money toward what you owe your agent. On new construction, the builder pays my commission.

What I do before you tour

- [ ] Ask for the seller's disclosure on each home, plus any earlier inspection reports.
- [ ] Find out how old the roof, the air conditioning and heating, and the water heater are.
- [ ] Look into your HOA deal-breakers (rentals, fences, parking, dues) so you know before you go.
- [ ] Walk you through on a video call when you can't make it in person.
- [ ] Pull rental comps if a future PCS could mean renting it out, so you can set likely rent next to your payment.

New listings: save a search at tiffanyreedtx.com/listing and they'll come to your inbox.

Think these through first

- [ ] **Approval amount vs. comfortable payment.** They're different numbers. Taxes change from one neighborhood to the next, so the same price can carry a different payment (page 15).
- [ ] **Whether a school district matters to you.** If it does, confirm the district for each address, then look up its campuses at TXschools.gov.
- [ ] **Your HOA deal-breakers.** Write them down and send them to me.
- [ ] **Must-haves and deal-breakers.** Two short lists. They make every tour faster.
- [ ] **The drive you'll make most.** Try it at the hours you'd really drive it. Drive times vary by time of day, traffic, and gate. Check current conditions for your route before deciding.
- [ ] **Flood maps and foundations.** Check each address's flood zone at msc.fema.gov, FEMA's Flood Map Service Center, before you fall for the house.

Why foundations get extra attention here

Many Texas soils are expansive clays that shrink when dry and swell when wet, and the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation calls that movement a very common cause of foundation problems. On a tour, sticking doors, cracks above door frames and gaps at trim are worth pointing out to your inspector. Not every crack is a problem; let the inspector tell you which ones are.

Sources: TREC, "What Changes in 2026 About Buyer/Tenant Representation in Texas"; TREC resale contract 20-19, ¶12B; Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, Technical Bulletin 10-01; FEMA Flood Map Service Center; TEA, TXschools.gov. Data current as of October 2026.

SECTION 6 · THE OFFER

What goes into an offer on a Texas home?

> Your offer is the state's standard contract (TREC form 20-19 for a resale home) filled in with your terms. Each blank is something to negotiate: price, deposits, option days, financing deadlines, who pays which costs, and the closing date. I write and negotiate it with you.

TERM	WHAT IT DOES
Sales price	What you'll pay, and what the appraisal has to support (page 12).
Earnest money	A good-faith deposit to the escrow agent (usually the title company) within 3 days after the contract is fully signed. At closing it goes toward your down payment, then your other costs. In my transactions it's typically about 1% of the price on a pre-owned home; on a new build, the builder sets it.
Option fee and days	A separate payment, due at the same time, that buys the right to end the contract for any reason during the days you negotiate. Credited to the price if you close (page 11).
Financing addendum	The Third Party Financing Addendum sets a number of days for "Buyer Approval." If your loan isn't approved, you can end the contract within those days, with the lender's written statement, and get your earnest money back.
Appraisal addendum	Conventional loans only (TREC 49-1): decide up front what happens if the appraisal is low. FHA and VA loans have their own provision in the financing addendum.
Seller-paid costs	The seller can agree to pay up to a set dollar amount of your closing costs. How much sellers agree to pay varies too much from deal to deal to give a typical figure. Your loan caps it: on a conventional loan with less than 10% down, Fannie Mae allows 3% of the price; VA caps extras beyond normal closing costs at 4% of the home's value.
Title policy and survey	Who pays the owner's title policy, and the fee to amend its survey exception, are boxes in the contract (dollar amounts on page 13). An existing survey can be reused with a T-47 affidavit if the title company and lender accept it.
HOA	If membership is mandatory, an HOA addendum is attached, and Texas law entitles you to the HOA's rules, bylaws and a resale certificate showing dues.
Closing date and possession	The date you close. Possession passes on closing and funding unless a written lease says otherwise.

The seller's disclosure

Texas Property Code §5.008 requires most sellers of a previously lived-in home to disclose its condition in writing (TREC form 55-1). Get it after you sign, and you can end the contract within 7 days, earnest money refunded. Homes built before 1978 also need a federal lead-based paint disclosure.

Deadlines are real deadlines

The contract says time is of the essence for the deposits and the option period. If day 3 for the deposits lands on a weekend or holiday, it moves to the next business day. Option period notices are due by 5:00 p.m. local time. Calendar every date the day you sign.

Sources: TREC One to Four Family Residential Contract (Resale) 20-19, effective July 1, 2026 (¶5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 18); TREC Third Party Financing Addendum 40-11; TREC 49-1; TREC 55-1 and Texas Property Code §5.008; Fannie Mae Selling Guide B3-4.1-02; VA.gov. Data current as of October 2026.

SECTION 7 · OPTION PERIOD

How does the Texas option period work?

In the Texas resale contract, an option fee buys an unrestricted right to end the contract within a set number of days, the window for your inspections. End it in time and your earnest money comes back; the seller keeps the fee. Close, and it's credited to your price.

DAY 0
Contract signed
The day the last party signs. Option days count from here.

WITHIN 3 DAYS
Payments due
Option fee and earnest money to the escrow agent. A late option fee means no option period.

EARLY ON
Inspections
A TREC-licensed inspector, usually 2 to 4 hours; the report often in 24 to 48.

NEXT
Repair talks
Repairs, a credit or a lower price, in a written amendment.

LAST OPTION DAY
Decide by 5:00 p.m.
Notice to end the contract is due by 5:00 p.m. local time.

Your three choices

Keep going
You're fine with what the inspection found and move ahead as is.

Negotiate
Ask for repairs, a credit or a price change. If you can't agree, you can still end the contract before the deadline.

Walk away
Give written notice by 5:00 p.m. on the last option day. You get the earnest money back; the option fee stays with the seller.

How many days, and how much?

Both are negotiated. You don't have to have an option period, but without one you give up the right to walk away for any reason. In my transactions the fee is generally $10 to $20 a day, and an option period of 7 to 10 days isn't unusual. Both are set offer by offer, depending on how competitive it needs to be. Leave room to inspect, get repair bids and an insurance quote (page 15).

After the option period ends
The right to walk away for any reason is gone. Other terms (the financing addendum, a late seller's disclosure) may still let you end the contract, but backing out otherwise can cost you the earnest money.

Which inspections should I get?

TREC's standards set the minimum: structure, roof, electrical, heating and cooling, plumbing and built-in appliances. Inspectors don't have to check anything buried or concealed, like the sewer line. At a minimum, I recommend a general home inspection and a sewer scope on every purchase, new builds included. In my transactions, a general inspection runs $400 to $900, depending on the size of the home. Irrigation, mold, pool or termite inspections depend on the home or what the report shows (page 13). I set up the ones you choose.

Inspection reports are long on purpose
Even a well-kept home produces pages of notes. Sort them into safety items, major systems (roof, foundation, HVAC, water heater, plumbing, electrical) and upkeep. Most repair requests come from the first two.

Sources: TREC resale contract 20-19 (¶5, ¶7A); TREC option period FAQ and inspection standards; ASHI. Data current as of October 2026.

SECTION 8 · CONTRACT TO CLOSING

What happens between the contract and closing?

The lender orders the appraisal, underwriting verifies what you submitted, you answer any last requests, and the loan is cleared to close. In my transactions, a home that's ready to move into generally closes 21 to 30 days after the contract. Nationally, ICE's latest figure was 36.8 days for the average purchase loan (March 2026). Your contract sets your own date.

Application LOAN ESTIMATE

- [ ] Your lender must give you a Loan Estimate within three business days of your application (CFPB). It shows the rate, payment and estimated closing costs.

Appraisal VALUE CHECK

- [ ] The appraisal confirms the home's value. On a VA loan it also checks VA's minimum property requirements; it isn't an inspection.
- [ ] If it comes in low, you can renegotiate, pay the difference, or end the contract if your financing or appraisal terms allow it. On a VA loan, you can also ask for a reconsideration of value.

Underwriting CONDITIONS

- [ ] An underwriter verifies your income, assets and credit and may ask for more documents. Send what they ask for quickly so your closing date can hold.
- [ ] Watch the Buyer Approval deadline in your financing addendum. Can't get approved? End the contract by that date and your earnest money comes back. After it passes, that money is at risk.

Clear to close CLOSING DISCLOSURE

- [ ] You must receive your Closing Disclosure at least three business days before closing (CFPB). Compare it line by line with your Loan Estimate.
- [ ] Three changes after that restart the three-day wait: the APR rises more than 1/8 of a percentage point on a fixed-rate loan (1/4 on an adjustable one), a prepayment penalty is added, or the loan product changes.

While you wait

Buy the homeowners policy you priced during the option period (page 15). Your lender requires it, and the Texas contract lists that required premium among your costs at closing. If the home is in a flood zone, ask about flood insurance now, since a standard homeowners policy usually doesn't cover flooding.

Using down payment help?

The program's approval runs alongside your loan, and HIP wants your homebuyer class certificate before closing. Ask your lender where both stand as underwriting moves along, and send the certificate as soon as you have it.

Sources: ICE Mortgage Monitor, May 2026 (the latest ICE days-to-close figure as of October 2026); CFPB (Loan Estimate, Closing Disclosure, three-day rule, credit checks); VA.gov home buying process; TREC Third Party Financing Addendum 40-11 and 49-1; Texas Department of Insurance, HelpInsure.com; FloodSmart.gov. Data current as of October 2026.

SECTION 9 · CLOSING COSTS

What do closing costs look like in San Antonio?

> Per the CFPB, buyer closing costs typically run 2% to 5% of the purchase price, not counting the down payment. On a $300,000 home, that's $6,000 to $15,000. Your Loan Estimate shows your own numbers, and the seller can agree in the contract to pay part of them.

What's in them?

From the buyer's list in the Texas contract:

- ☐ **Loan charges:** application and origination fees, the appraisal, the credit report, underwriting.
- ☐ **Title and escrow:** the lender's title policy, half the escrow fee, recording fees, and the owner's policy if your contract puts it on you.
- ☐ **Prepaid items:** the first homeowners insurance premium and starting reserves for taxes and insurance in your escrow account.
- ☐ **Loan insurance or fees:** PMI, FHA's upfront premium or the VA funding fee, if they apply and aren't rolled into the loan.

Property taxes are split with the seller as of the closing date, so you get a credit for the part of the year the seller owned the home.

What does title insurance cost?

In Texas, the Department of Insurance sets title insurance premiums, so every title company charges the same rate for the same policy; other fees can differ. These are TDI's rates in effect since March 1, 2026.

TDI basic premium for an owner's policy

POLICY AMOUNT	OWNER'S POLICY	SURVEY AMENDMENT
$250,000	$1,521	$76
$300,000	$1,768	$88
$350,000	$2,015	$101

Between $100,000 and $1 million, TDI's formula is $780 plus $4.94 for each $1,000 above $100,000. The survey amendment narrows the policy's survey exception to "shortages in area" only, for 5% of the premium.

The lender's policy is $100 when the title company issues it together with the owner's policy (TDI rate rule R-5).

Who pays which costs?

Your contract decides. It has boxes for who pays the owner's title policy and the survey amendment, and a dollar amount the seller agrees to put toward your other costs, up to your loan's cap (page 10). The worked example on the next page shows how each piece lands in your cash to close.

What do inspections cost?

Inspections are paid in the first days under contract, apart from your closing costs. In my transactions:

General home inspection	$400 to $900
Sewer scope	$99 to $150
Irrigation	$99 to $150
Mold	$99 to $150

The general inspection price depends on the size of the home. Some inspectors include irrigation in the general inspection.

Sources: CFPB; TREC resale contract 20-19, ¶6A, 12, 13 and 18; Texas Department of Insurance, title insurance FAQ, Texas Title Insurance Premium Rates effective March 1, 2026 (Order 2025-9697), and Basic Manual rate rules R-5 and R-16. Inspection prices are from my own transactions. Data current as of October 2026; TDI reviews title rates in periodic hearings.

SECTION 9 · CASH TO CLOSE

How much cash will I need, and when?

> It comes in two stages: deposits and inspections in the first days under contract, then the rest at closing. Below, one purchase is worked through: a $300,000 resale home with an FHA loan and 3.5% down. Fill in the blank column from your contract and Loan Estimate.

LINE	EXAMPLE	YOURS
IN THE FIRST DAYS UNDER CONTRACT		
Earnest money About 1% of the price on a pre-owned home, in my transactions: 1% × $300,000	**$3,000**	$
Option fee 10 days at $15 a day, inside the $10 to $20 a day I usually see; credited to the price if you close	**$150**	$
General home inspection $400 to $900 in my transactions, depending on the size of the home; not counted in the totals	**$400 to $900**	$
Sewer scope, and others the home calls for Sewer scope, irrigation or mold, $99 to $150 each (page 13); not counted in the totals	**$99 to $150**	$
Appraisal, if your lender collects it up front Some lenders do; otherwise it's part of your closing costs. Your Loan Estimate lists the fee.	**quote**	$
AT CLOSING		
Down payment FHA's 3.5% × $300,000	**$10,500**	$
Closing costs, prepaids included Example: 3% × $300,000. Use your Loan Estimate.	**$9,000**	$
Minus earnest money and option fee already paid $3,000 + $150; the option fee is credited to the price	**-$3,150**	-$
Minus seller-paid costs, down payment help or lender credits None in this example (programs on page 6)	**-$0**	-$
Estimated cash due at closing	**$16,350**	**$**

How the numbers add up

At closing: $10,500 + $9,000 − $3,150 = **$16,350**.

Paid earlier: $3,000 + $150 = $3,150.

All in: $16,350 + $3,150 = **$19,500**, plus inspections. The deposits aren't extra money; they're credited at closing, so they just leave your account sooner.

What moves the bottom line

Seller-paid costs, down payment help and lender credits come straight off the last line. If your contract puts the owner's title policy on you, it's inside your closing costs ($1,768 on $300,000, page 13). Your Closing Disclosure has the final figure at least three business days before closing.

The 3% for closing costs is an example inside the CFPB's 2% to 5% range, not a quote. Earnest money, option fee and inspection figures come from my own transactions; the deposits are negotiated in each offer. Sources: TREC resale contract 20-19, ¶5 and ¶18; CFPB; HUD; Texas Department of Insurance title rates. Data current as of October 2026.

SECTION 10 · YOUR MONTHLY PAYMENT

What will my full monthly payment be?

> Principal and interest, plus property taxes, homeowners insurance, mortgage insurance on most low-down-payment loans, and HOA dues where there are any. Taxes and insurance are the lines that surprise people here, so price both for each house.

THE SAME $300,000 FHA EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	YOURS
Principal and interest $294,566 loan ($289,500 plus FHA's 1.75% upfront premium rolled in), 30 years at an example rate of 7%	**$1,960**	$
Property taxes ÷ 12 Stone Oak's 2026 rate on $300,000, before the homestead exemption (table below)	**$575**	$
Homeowners insurance ÷ 12 TDI's 2025 statewide average premium, $3,489 a year	**$291**	$
FHA monthly premium 0.55% a year of the $289,500 base loan, first year	**$133**	$
HOA dues None in this example	**$0**	$
Full monthly payment: $1,960 + $575 + $291 + $133 + $0	**$2,959**	**$**

The 7% is only an example; Freddie Mac's weekly survey (freddiemac.com/pmms) and your Loan Estimate show today's rates. HUD's 0.55% applies to most 30-year FHA loans with less than 5% down.

How much do property taxes add?

It comes down to the address, because the bill stacks county, school district, usually city and sometimes special district rates. Per Bexar County's 2026 rates, Stone Oak (San Antonio, North East ISD) totals $2.300464 per $100.

$300,000, STONE OAK	YEAR	MONTH
Before any exemption	$6,901	$575
School homestead exemption saves ($140,000 × $0.9754 per $100)	$1,366	$114

Look up an address's taxing units at bcad.org and each unit's rate at bexar.org.

How do I compare homeowners insurance?

Start at HelpInsure.com, run by the Texas Department of Insurance with the Office of Public Insurance Counsel. It shows policies sold in your area, their rates and coverage types, for comparison rather than as a final quote. TDI's homeowners market overview maps average premiums by county. Compare deductibles too: TDI notes a policy can have a different one for each type of coverage.

Get a quote before the option period ends

Your lender requires the policy, and its premium lands in your cash to close and your payment. A quote on the actual house, while you can still end the contract for any reason, tells you what it costs to insure before that right is gone.

Sources: HUD Mortgagee Letter 2023-05 and Handbook 4000.1, Appendix 1.0; Bexar County Tax Assessor-Collector, 2026 rates; Texas Comptroller, Tax Code §11.13; Texas Department of Insurance, homeowners market overview and home insurance guide; HelpInsure.com. Data current as of October 2026; tax rates are set each fall and TDI's averages update yearly.

SECTION 11 · CLOSING DAY

What happens on closing day?

First the final walkthrough, then the money: your funds reach the title company by wire or cashier's check. You sign at the title company, the loan funds, and the deed is recorded. Under the Texas contract, the home is yours to move into on closing and funding.

Before you send a dollar: the wire fraud check

Criminals send fake emails that look like they come from title companies, lenders and agents, with "updated" wiring instructions. The CFPB and the Texas Department of Insurance give the same advice:

- **Never follow wiring instructions sent by email or text.** Before wiring funds, verify the instructions by calling the title company at a phone number you've confirmed independently, such as the one in your contract, never one from an email.
- **Be suspicious of urgency.** An email saying payment details changed, or that you must send money right now, is a red flag.
- **Confirm the wire arrived** by calling the title company right after you send it.
- **If something went wrong,** call your bank immediately and ask for a wire recall, then file a report with the FBI at ic3.gov.

That goes for an email that looks like it came from me, too.

The final walkthrough

I do the final walkthrough with you before closing. Bring your contract, the repair amendment and any repair receipts, and check:

- ☐ Agreed repairs are done, with receipts or invoices.
- ☐ Everything that conveys with the home is still there.
- ☐ No new damage since your inspection.
- ☐ Lights, water, HVAC and appliances work. The seller has to keep the utilities on while the contract is in effect.

What kind of money counts?

Texas title companies can't pay anything out until they've received "good funds" (TDI Procedural Rule P-27). That means a wire or a cashier's, certified or teller's check. A personal check counts only under $1,500, and you can't split a bigger amount across several checks. Ask the title company which form it wants and when.

At the table

Bring a government-issued photo ID and your cashier's check if you're not wiring. You'll sign the promissory note and the deed of trust for your loan, along with the Closing Disclosure and the title company's documents. Once the lender funds the loan, the title company records the deed with the county.

Sources: CFPB, "Mortgage closing scams"; Texas Department of Insurance, title insurance tips; FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center, ic3.gov; TDI Procedural Rule P-27; TREC resale contract 20-19, ¶7A and ¶10. Data current as of October 2026.

SECTION 12 · AFTER CLOSING

What should I do in my first 90 days as a homeowner?

File for the homestead exemption, put the utilities in your name, change the locks, and learn where the water shutoff and breaker panel are. Then mark your calendar for spring: appraisal notices arrive, and May 15 is the usual deadline to protest your value.

First week MOVE-IN

- [ ] Put electricity and water in your name for your closing date. Inside San Antonio that's usually CPS Energy (cpsenergy.com/startservice) and SAWS (saws.org); many suburbs use other providers, so confirm by address.
- [ ] Change or rekey the locks, and reset garage door and keypad codes.
- [ ] Find the main water shutoff, the breaker panel and the HVAC filter size.
- [ ] Save your closing documents, inspection report, survey and warranties in one place, paper and digital.

First month HOMESTEAD

- [ ] File the residence homestead exemption (Form 50-114) with your county's appraisal district; in Bexar County that's bcad.org. School districts exempt $140,000 of the value, and the county or city may add more.
- [ ] The general deadline is April 30. Bought after January 1? If the seller didn't claim it this year, you can, as long as you apply before the first anniversary of your purchase.
- [ ] BCAD's online portal (bcadonline.org) takes homestead filings, but signing up needs the owner ID and PIN printed on an appraisal notice. No notice yet? File the paper form.

Before storm season INSURANCE

- [ ] Most homeowners policies don't cover flood. A new flood policy usually takes 30 days to start, unless it's bought along with your mortgage, so don't wait for a forecast.
- [ ] Sign up for free low-water crossing alerts at BexarFlood.org, Bexar County's high water detection system. When a road is flooded, turn around, don't drown.
- [ ] Compare homeowners insurance at renewal on TDI's HelpInsure.com.

Next spring TAXES

- [ ] Appraisal districts send homestead value notices by April 1, or as soon as practical after.
- [ ] Think the value is too high? The protest deadline is May 15 or 30 days after your notice arrives, whichever is later. It's printed on the notice.
- [ ] Once the homestead is in place, your taxable value can't rise more than 10% a year (plus new improvements), starting the year after you qualify.

Down the road: dropping PMI

On a conventional loan, you can ask your servicer in writing to cancel PMI once you owe 80% of the home's original value, and it ends automatically at 78% if you're current (CFPB). Extra principal payments get you there sooner.

Sources: Texas Comptroller (exemptions, protests, appraisal limits); Texas Tax Code §§11.13, 11.42, 11.43, 23.23, 41.44; Bexar Appraisal District; CPS Energy; SAWS; FloodSmart.gov; Bexar County HALT system, BexarFlood.org; National Weather Service; TDI; CFPB. Data current as of October 2026; homestead and protest rules are reviewed each January.

SECTION 13 · GLOSSARY

What do all these real estate words mean?

> Here are the terms you'll hear most between pre-approval and closing, in plain English. Each one is explained in more detail on the page listed.

Appraisal
An appraiser's opinion of value for your lender, so the loan matches the home. Not an inspection. (Page 12)

APR
Annual percentage rate: the interest rate plus certain loan costs, shown as a yearly rate. Handy for comparing Loan Estimates. (Page 4)

Buyer agreement
The written agreement Texas requires before an agent shows you a home. It states the agent's pay, which is negotiable. (Page 9)

Clear to close
The lender's final OK: every underwriting condition is met and the loan can fund. (Page 12)

Closing Disclosure
Your final loan terms and costs, which you must receive at least three business days before closing. (Page 12)

Debt-to-income (DTI)
Monthly debt payments divided by gross monthly income. Limits vary by loan and lender. (Page 4)

Earnest money
Your good-faith deposit, held by the escrow agent. It goes toward your down payment at closing. (Page 10)

Escrow account
An account your loan servicer uses to pay your taxes and insurance from your monthly payment. (Page 15)

Escrow agent
The neutral party, usually the title company, that holds your deposit and runs the closing. (Page 10)

Homestead exemption
A Texas tax break on the home you own and live in. File Form 50-114 with the appraisal district. (Page 17)

Loan Estimate
The standard form showing your rate, payment and estimated closing costs, due within three business days of applying. (Page 12)

Mortgage insurance
PMI on conventional loans with less than 20% down; MIP on FHA loans. It covers the lender, and you pay for it. (Page 5)

Option fee and option period
A small fee that buys the right to end the contract for any reason during a set number of days. (Page 11)

Pre-approval
A lender's written statement of what it's willing to lend you, after reviewing your finances. Not a guaranteed loan offer. (Page 4)

Proration
Splitting costs like property taxes and HOA dues between you and the seller as of the closing date. (Page 13)

Seller's Disclosure Notice
The seller's written report on the home's condition, required for most previously lived-in homes. (Page 10)

Seller concessions
Money the seller agrees to put toward your closing costs. Your loan type sets the limit. (Page 10)

Survey and T-47
A map of the lot's boundaries and improvements. The T-47 affidavit can let an existing survey be reused. (Page 10)

Title insurance
Coverage for problems with the home's ownership history. The lender's policy covers the lender; the owner's policy covers you. (Page 13)

Underwriting
The lender's review of your income, assets, credit and the appraisal before final approval. (Page 12)

SECTION 14 · FAQ

The questions people feel awkward asking

Is my credit score too low to buy a house?

Maybe not. FHA allows 3.5% down with a 580 score and 10% down from 500 to 579. TSAHC's programs need 620 on FHA, VA and USDA loans (640 on conventional), TDHCA's need 620, and the City's HIP 80 sets no score at all. VA has no minimum, though lenders set their own. If you're below what a lender needs, ask exactly which number you're aiming for, and pull your free reports to fix any errors first.

What happens to my earnest money if the deal falls apart?

It depends on why and when. End the contract during the option period, within your financing addendum's Buyer Approval days, or within 7 days of a late seller's disclosure, and it comes back to you. Back out for some other reason after those windows close, and you can lose it. The contract's dates decide, so keep them on your calendar.

Do I have to pay my agent?

Your buyer agreement (page 9) says how I'm paid and, as Texas law requires, that the amount is negotiable. Your offer can ask the seller to cover some or all of it, and on new construction the builder pays my commission.

Can my parents help with the down payment?

Yes. Lenders generally accept gift money from family with a signed gift letter and a record of the transfer. Tell your lender before the money moves so they can tell you what paperwork they'll want.

I'm buying a new build. Do I still need all this?

Most of it, yes. A brand-new home that's never been lived in doesn't come with a seller's disclosure, which makes your own inspections more useful, not less. I recommend a general inspection and a sewer scope on a new build too, plus an inspection at every stage the build allows. Call me before you visit any builder; my new construction page explains how I work with builders.

Can I buy if I'm not in San Antonio yet?

Yes. When you can't be here, I tour homes with you over a video call. While you're away, I can draft and negotiate the offer, line up inspections and walk the home for the final check. Ask your lender and title company early which documents you can sign remotely.

How long does the whole thing take?

The search is up to you. Once you're under contract, a home that's ready to move into generally closes in 21 to 30 days in my transactions. A new build depends on where the home is in the build. Your contract sets your own closing date.

NEXT STEP

What does working with me look like?

Tiffany Reed here: REALTOR®, Military Relocation Professional (MRP), Real Broker LLC. This is what I handle for my buyers between hello and keys.

- Connect you with lenders, VA lenders included, if you haven't chosen one yet.
- Ask for each home's seller's disclosure and earlier inspection reports, and check how many years are on the roof, HVAC and water heater, all before you tour.
- Check the HOA deal-breakers on your list before you see the house.
- Show you homes on a video call when you're out of town.
- Pull rental comps when a PCS could have you renting the home out later.
- Draft your offer and handle the negotiation.
- Line up inspections when you need them.
- Go through the house with you at the final walkthrough.
- Looking at new construction? Call me before the first model home visit, so I learn what you like from the start and negotiate with the builder for you. I attend every walkthrough too: tiffanyreedtx.com/new-construction.

35+ closed transactions · $12M+ in sales volume · licensed since 2022 · Military Relocation Professional (MRP)

Send me the price range you're thinking about and the part of town you like.

That's enough to start. You don't need a pre-approval or a perfect credit score to reach out, and you're welcome to ask me anything first.

LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR NEXT MOVE

Call or text (919) 800-9870 · tiffany@tiffanyreedtx.com

KEEP READING ON MY SITE

The home buying process, step by step: tiffanyreedtx.com/buyers-process
Buying a home in San Antonio: tiffanyreedtx.com/buy
Neighborhood guides: tiffanyreedtx.com/neighborhoods
Using a VA loan: tiffanyreedtx.com/va-loans
Mortgage calculator: tiffanyreedtx.com/mortgage-calculator · Search homes: tiffanyreedtx.com/listing

SOURCES

Where these numbers come from

Each figure is named where it appears and listed here, and every one was checked against the source below in October 2026. Down payment programs are reviewed quarterly, and their income and price limits when HUD and the City publish new ones (spring, summer and October 1); title rates after each TDI rate hearing; insurance averages each year; FHA, VA and conventional loan rules each January; USDA fees each October; Texas contract forms after each legislative session; tax rates each fall; homestead and protest rules each January.

Process and disclosures: CFPB, consumerfinance.gov: Loan Estimate, Closing Disclosure, the three-day review rule, prequalification and preapproval letters, credit checks when shopping, debt-to-income, APR, closing costs ("figure out how much you want to spend"), PMI cancellation, and "Mortgage closing scams"

Credit reports: Federal Trade Commission, "Free Credit Reports," consumer.ftc.gov; AnnualCreditReport.com

FHA: HUD, hud.gov: Mortgagee Letter 2026-11 (credit score thresholds), Mortgagee Letter 2023-05 and Handbook 4000.1 Appendix 1.0 (mortgage insurance premiums); HUD Handbook 4000.1 glossary (first-time homebuyer)

Conventional: Fannie Mae Selling Guide, selling-guide.fanniemae.com: B5-6-01 (HomeReady), B2-1.3-01 (97% LTV), B2-2-06 (homeownership education), B3-4.3-04 (gifts), B3-4.1-02 (interested party contributions), glossary; Freddie Mac, myhome.freddiemac.com (Home Possible)

VA: VA.gov purchase loan, funding fee and closing costs, eligibility and home buying process pages, va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans

USDA: USDA Rural Development, Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program, rd.usda.gov; FY 2027 guarantee fee bulletin (Sept. 16, 2026); Income and Property Eligibility Site, eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov

City of San Antonio HIP: Neighborhood and Housing Services Department, HIP page (income limits and price caps), HIP 80 and HIP 120 Procedural Guides and lender FAQs, sa.gov; FY 2026 and FY 2027 budget documents

State programs: Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation, tsahc.org (Home Sweet Texas, Homes for Texas Heroes, Mortgage Credit Certificate, daily rate sheet); Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, welcomehome.tdhca.texas.gov (My First Texas Home, My Choice Texas Home, Texas MCC, Lender Guide, rate notice, and the income and purchase price limits tables effective July 13, 2026); TSAHC County Income Limits tool, tsahc.org/resource/county-income-limits

Housing counseling: HUD, answers.hud.gov/housingcounseling

Contracts and agents: Texas Real Estate Commission, trec.texas.gov: One to Four Family Residential Contract (Resale) 20-19; Third Party Financing Addendum 40-11; Addendum Concerning Right to Terminate Due to Lender's Appraisal 49-1; Seller's Disclosure Notice 55-1; option period FAQ; "What Changes in 2026 About Buyer/Tenant Representation in Texas"; property inspection articles; Texas Occupations Code §1101.563; Texas Property Code §5.008

Inspections: TREC Standards of Practice; American Society of Home Inspectors, homeinspector.org; Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, Technical Bulletin 10-01 (expansive soils)

Title, insurance and closing funds: Texas Department of Insurance, tdi.texas.gov: Texas Title Insurance Premium Rates effective March 1, 2026 (Order 2025-9697), Basic Manual rate rules R-5 and R-16, title insurance FAQ and tips, Form T-47, Procedural Rule P-27, Texas homeowners insurance market overview (2025 averages), home insurance guide; HelpInsure.com (TDI and the Office of Public Insurance Counsel)

Closing times: ICE Mortgage Technology, Mortgage Monitor, May 2026 (March 2026 data, ICE's latest days-to-close figure as of October 2026). Earnest money, option fee and option period, and contract-to-close figures are from my own transactions

Wire fraud: CFPB; TDI; FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center, ic3.gov

Property tax: Bexar County Tax Assessor-Collector, 2026 official tax rates, bexar.org; Bexar Appraisal District, bcad.org and bcadonline.org; Texas Comptroller, comptroller.texas.gov (exemptions, appraisal limits, protests and deadlines); Texas Tax Code §§11.13, 11.42, 11.43, 23.23, 41.44; Texas Constitution Art. 8 (Proposition 13, Nov. 4, 2025)

Flood and weather: FEMA Flood Map Service Center, msc.fema.gov; FloodSmart.gov; Bexar County HALT system, BexarFlood.org; National Weather Service, weather.gov

Utilities: CPS Energy, cpsenergy.com; San Antonio Water System, saws.org

Schools: Texas Education Agency, TXschools.gov

This guide is general information, not legal, tax or lending advice. Program rules, rates and limits change; confirm loan terms with your lender, program terms with each program, and taxes, flood zone and school zoning for any specific address. Texas law requires all license holders to provide the Information About Brokerage Services and the Consumer Protection Notice, both linked at tiffanyreedtx.com.