HOME SWEET HOME

GUIDE TO HOMEOWNERSHIP

You are taking your first step to homeownership - Congrats!

Congratulations on taking the first step toward one of life's biggest milestones—purchasing a home!

This guide is designed to support you through every stage of the home-buying journey, offering helpful questions, worksheets, and checklists to keep the process smooth and stress-free. Let's begin your path to homeownership!

STEP ONE

Do your Due Dilligence

JOB & INCOME

Do you have a stable job and income? Are you staying in this line of work? What are your expenses, savings, and debts?

CREDIT SCORE

A credit score of 620 is typically required for conventional loans, while FHA loans have more flexibility depending on down payment.

DOWN PAYMENT

Depending on loan type, your down payment can range from 0%-20% of the purchase price.

CLOSING COSTS

Closing costs range from 2-6% of the loan amount. Other fees include inspection and appraisal costs.

LONG TERM PLANNING

Do you plan to stay in this location? Do you foresee major life changes? Consider how your career, family, and lifestyle might evolve over time.

ONGOING COSTS

As a homeowner, your budget should factor in your monthly mortgage payments, property taxes, homeowner's insurance, & maintenance costs (roughly 1%-2% of purchase price per year).

STEP TWO

The Mortgage Process

The next step in the home-buying journey is determining how much you qualify for by meeting with a local lender and obtaining a pre-approval letter.

Be sure to speak with several lenders to find the one that best fits your needs. Use the lender interview questions on the next page to guide your conversations—and check out a few of my trusted lender recommendations below.

Keep in mind that a pre-approval is typically valid for 30-90 days, so while it's great to start exploring your options early, plan to secure your official pre-approval closer to when you're ready to make an offer.

Lender Questionnaire

NAME: ______________________ COMPANY: ______________________

PHONE: ______________________ EMAIL: ______________________

WHAT TYPE OF LOAN DO YOU RECOMMEND FOR ME AND WHY?

DO I QUALIFY FOR DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS?

WHAT IS THE INTEREST RATE? WHAT IS THE APR?

WILL I PAY MORTGAGE INSURANCE?

WHAT WILL MY MONTHLY PAYMENT BE?

CAN I LOCK IN AN INTEREST RATE? FOR HOW LONG? WHAT ARE THE FEES?

WHAT WILL MY CLOSING COSTS BE?

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW?

STEP THREE

Find a Local Agent

Selecting the right real estate agent to guide you through your home purchase is an important decision. The ideal agent will understand your goals, know your local market inside and out, and have a proven record of advocating for their clients' best interests. Use the interview questions on the next page to help you identify the perfect agent to represent you. Here are some of the key benefits a great agent provides:

THE VALUE OF A BUYER'S AGENT

- Exclusive representation
- Network of trustworthy lenders
- Advice on market conditions
- Management of transaction deadlines
- Access to off-market listings
- Terms negotiated in your favor
- Identifying property potential and red flags
- Recommended service providers
- Protection from overpaying
- Decoding legal jargon
- Managing offer submission
- Ensuring smooth closing process

STEP FOUR

Wants vs. Needs



Before we hop into the home search, I advise my clients to create a "Needs" list and a "Wants" list. This will help us to focus on the things that are most important in your future home.

"Needs" are the non-negotiable features. "Wants" are the nice-to-haves, but you can live without or add down the road. Remember you can't change the lot, the location, or the price you paid.

NEEDS MIGHT LOOK LIKE

✓ Enough bedrooms for your family
✓ First floor master bedroom
✓ Close proximity to work or school
✓ Attached two-car garage
✓ Yard for children or pets

WANTS MIGHT LOOK LIKE

✓ Specific paint or exterior color
✓ Fenced-in backyard
✓ Specific flooring
✓ Kitchen amenities or appliances
✓ Walk-in shower or double vanity

NEEDS

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WANTS

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STEP FIVE

The Home Search Process

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Now that you've got your "Wants vs. Needs" list in hand, the fun really begins! I will set you up on an MLS search so you'll receive an email *the minute* a property that fits your criteria hits the market.

WANT TO DO SOME ONLINE SEARCHING YOURSELF?

- ***Use the search filters, but don't go crazy***. Expand your geographic search, and add $25k – $50k to your max price.
- ***Check Google Street View*** if you find something that catches your eye. And if you're local, drive by the property.
- ***If a home you like is "pending" or "under contract" don't panic!*** Pending contracts fall through occasionally so keep it on your list, especially if it checks all your boxes.
- ***Jot down the MLS number & address.*** Send this information to your agent, they will call the listing agent(s) to gather pertinent info.

Home Search Worksheet

WHAT AREA(S) ARE YOU INTERESTED IN?

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THIS/THOSE AREA(S)?

HOW MANY BEDROOMS, BATHS, SQUARE FOOTAGE?

DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN? PETS? DO YOU WORK FROM HOME?

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE HOME STYLE?

WHAT ARE THE TOP 5 MOST IMPORTANT THINGS IN YOUR FUTURE HOME?

WHAT IS A NON-NEGOTIABLE FEATURE OR ASPECT OF YOUR FUTURE HOME?

DO YOU PREFER A HOME THAT’S MOVE-IN READY OR ONE YOU CAN RENOVATE?

ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KEEP IN MIND DURING OUR SEARCH?

STEP SIX

Showings

MY BEST SHOWING TIPS

√ ***Read over your Wants vs. Needs list***. Having this fresh on your mind will help you stay objective and focused.

√ ***Utilize Google Street View.*** This is a great way to take a virtual walk around the neighborhood.

√ ***Take pictures and videos.*** This will help you to jog your memory later.

√ ***Consider the lot, lot size, and location.*** All of these things can't be changed.

√ ***Look past decor & staging.*** These things will soon be gone.

√ ***Do an after-dark drive by.*** Does the vibe of the neighborhood change at night?

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR

√ ***Structural integrity***
Look for signs of structural integrity. Water damage, cracks in walls or ceilings, sloping floors.

√ ***Noise levels***
From nearby roads, businesses, airports and railways.

√ ***Roof & water damage***
Check for leaks near plumbing sources, water stains on the ceiling, or damage to siding, windows, and doors.

√ ***Layout and flow***
Does the property's layout suit your lifestyle? Would it require renovations? Check room sizes, storage, and flow between rooms.

STEP SEVEN

Writing your Offer

So you think you've found "the one" and you're ready to put in an offer. Woohoo!

Let's talk about making an offer that truly stands out. Below are my tried and tested recommendations.

WRITING A COMPELLING OFFER

We'll include your pre-approval letter. This letter shows that you're serious, qualified, and ready to purchase.

We'll gather information about what the seller is looking for. Understanding their needs and motivations will be a big part of writing a great offer.

We'll put your best foot—and price—forward. In a competitive market, you may only get one shot, so we will make it count! We'll use comps and trends as a guide.

We'll propose to close quickly. Offering a shorter closing timeline will signal to the seller we have a serious offer and we're ready to move fast.

Purchase price

This is the amount you're offering to pay for the home. It's often negotiable, especially if there are multiple offers, the home needs repairs, or if the home has been on the market for a while.

Earnest money deposit

This is a good faith deposit showing your serious intent to buy. It's typically 1–3% of the purchase price and is held in escrow. If the sale goes through, the deposit is applied to your down payment or closing costs. If you back out without a valid contingency, you might forfeit the deposit.

Inspection period

Most buyers include a home inspection contingency, allowing time (usually 7–10 days) to hire an inspector to check the home's condition. If major issues are found, we can negotiate repairs or back out of the deal.

Contingencies

A contingency is a condition that must be met before a buyer and seller can finalize the purchase of a home.

A financing contingency protects you in the case that you are not able to secure a mortgage. If your loan falls through, you can back out without penalty. An appraisal contingency ensures the home appraises for at least the amount of your offer. If it doesn't, you can renegotiate or walk away. An inspection contingency allows you to renegotiate or cancel the offer if the home inspection reveals significant issues.

Closing costs

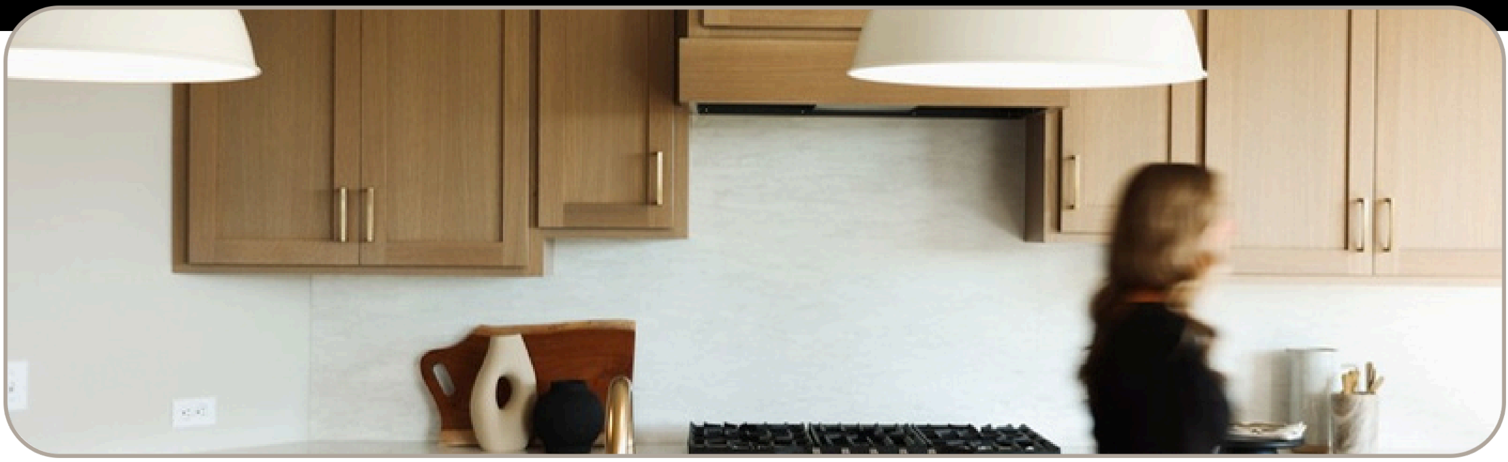
These include lender fees, title insurance, taxes, and other costs associated with finalizing the sale. Closing costs can range from 2–5% of the purchase price.

Closing date

This is the date you and the seller agree to finalize the transaction and transfer ownership. This is usually 30–45 days from when the offer is accepted but can vary based on financing or other factors.

STEP EIGHT

Inspections & Insurance



WHAT'S A HOME INSPECTION?

The inspection will uncover any issues in the home that would have otherwise been unknown. You will receive a written report of the inspection. I recommend that you are present for the inspection, so that you may ask any questions.

WHAT IS THE INSPECTION PERIOD?

Typically, inspection periods can last anywhere from 7 to 30 days. During this time, the buyer has the right to hire a professional to inspect the condition of the home.

THE INSPECTION REVEALED ISSUES...

If the inspection reveals any issues, the buyer may ask the seller to cover the costs of repairs or ask for a seller credit. The buyer has the right to back out and get their escrow deposit back.

DO I REALLY NEED AN INSPECTION?

The home may appear to be in perfect shape, but some of the costliest problems are difficult to spot: leaks, termite damage, foundation issues, poor ventilation, faulty wiring, and leaking appliances.

WHEN SHOULD I SCHEDULE IT?

Schedule all inspections immediately, so if we need to negotiate any repairs we can before the inspection period ends.

WHAT ABOUT HOME INSURANCE?

Once you have a signed contract, start looking for insurance providers immediately. Your lender will typically require evidence of insurance coverage before they approve your mortgage. Gather multiple quotes!

STEP NINE

We're Under Contract!

Your offer has been accepted — cue the confetti! And while it will be a few more days until you can move in, you're well on your way to closing the deal on your new home. Here's a quick rundown on what happens once your new home is "under contract."

01

Provide Escrow Deposit

This deposit shows your commitment to buying the property. It is typically held in an escrow account until the closing.

02

Schedule Inspection

Depending on the results, your agent may negotiate with the seller for repairs or credits. Schedule this immediately!

03

Finalize Loan Application

Submit your formal mortgage application.

04

Secure Insu rance

You'llneed homeowners insurance in place before closing. Your lender may require proof to finalize the loan.

05

Order Appraisal

Your lender will initiate this to ensure the property's value matches the sale price. If it comes in lower, we'll go back to negotiations!

06

Title Search

A title company will conduct a title search to ensure there are no liens against the property. You'll also purchase title insurance to protect against unforeseen title problems.

07

Final Walkthrough

Before the closing date, you'll do a final walk-through of the property to ensure it's in the agreed-upon condition.

08

Closing Day

Sign documents, pay remaining closing costs and down payment. The title is transferred to you and the keys are exchanged!

STEP TEN

Closing Time!

We've completed all the pre-closing steps. High five! Here's a quick rundown on what you can expect from the closing process and closing day.

Loan Approval

After the appraisal and inspection, your lender will finalize your loan. You'll hear the magic words "Clear to close!"

Review Closing Disclosure

You will receive a closing disclosure from your lender at least three days before closing. It outlines the final terms of your loan, including the interest rate, loan amount, and closing costs. Review it carefully - this will tell you the funds to bring on closing day.

Arrange Utilities Transfer

Contact utility providers to set up services like electricity, gas, water, and internet for the day of closing or move-in day.

Obtain Certified Funds

You'll need to bring certified funds (cashier's check or wire transfer) for your down payment and closing costs. Your closing agent will provide you with the exact amount a few days before closing.

ABOUT ME

What You Can Expect Working With Me

I'm *Curious*

I want to have a clear understanding of your goals, who you are, and what your home means to you.

I'm *Committed*

I bring my A-game to every transaction, and I'm committed to achieving the best outcomes for my clients.

I'm *Proactive*

I'm always one step ahead, anticipating potential roadblocks and finding creative solutions to overcome them.

I'm *Personal*

I believe in building relationships on mutual respect (and some humor!). I've found this is what leads to the best outcomes!

I LOVE helping first time buyers navigate the journey of becoming homeowners. It would be an honor to represent you in this huge life milestone. Shoot me a message if you have any questions – I'm here to be a resource to you!

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