THE GAINESVILLE NEW CONSTRUCTION
BLUEPRINT & UPGRADE PRIORITY CHECKLIST

Know Which Upgrades Protect Your Investment — And Which Ones to Skip

THE FLYING REALTOR®
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About Shannon Sanborn

Built on Grit. Fueled by Faith. Committed to Home.

My story isn't built on polished slogans or a carefully crafted sales pitch. It's built on hard work, responsibility, and years of hands-on experience around homes. Long before I became a Realtor, I spent more than two decades working in construction, remodeling, and home improvement. Those experiences taught me that a home is much more than four walls and a roof — it's where people build their lives, raise their families, create memories, and invest in their future.

That's why I don't take buying new construction lightly. It's not just a floor plan and a price — it's timing, contracts, upgrade decisions, and a builder relationship that lasts long after closing day.

Today, I'm proud to serve buyers throughout Gainesville, Hall County, and North Georgia. Brokered by eXp Realty, LLC, my goal is simple: help you see past the model home, understand what you're actually buying, and make confident decisions before you ever sign a contract.

Why My Construction Background Matters to You

Most Realtors can walk you through a builder's model home. Very few can tell you what's actually true about how it was built — and that gap is exactly where new construction buyers get hurt.

A new construction home isn't a finished product when you sign the contract — it's a promise. Twenty years of hands-on construction and remodeling experience means that when I walk a home with you, or review a builder's contract, I'm not just reacting to finishes and floor plans. I'm looking at what's structural versus cosmetic, what upgrade pricing is actually reasonable, and what a builder's warranty language really covers.

The Bottom Line

You're not just getting a Realtor to unlock a model home and write an offer. You're getting a second set of eyes — one trained specifically to catch what a builder's sales office won't bring up on their own.

Before You Visit a Sales Office: What This Guide Covers

Buying new construction means navigating builder contracts, design center upgrades, and a construction timeline most buyers have never dealt with before. This guide walks you through five checklists — choosing your builder and community, understanding your contract, prioritizing upgrades, the pre-drywall walk-through, and closing day — using the same approach I bring to every buyer I work with.

With more than 20 years of hands-on construction and remodeling experience, my goal isn't just to help you find a community. It's to help you understand exactly what you're signing, what you're buying, and what to prioritize before you ever sit down at a design center.

A Note Before You Start

This guide and its checklists are educational tools to help you prepare. They aren't a substitute for touring a specific community with me, a personalized conversation about your goals, or the terms of a signed buyer representation agreement. Reach out any time you have a question about how something here applies to a specific builder or community you're considering.

How This Guide Is Organized

Five checklists, one for each stage of the new construction process:

- ☐ Choosing Your Builder & Community — a side-by-side comparison framework so you're not guessing
- ☐ Understanding Your Contract — the 5 things every buyer needs to know before signing
- ☐ The Design Center & Upgrade Priority Checklist — what to buy now vs. handle later
- ☐ The Pre-Drywall Walk-Through — your one chance to see behind the walls
- ☐ Closing Day Checklist — what to expect, what to bring, and how to avoid last-minute surprises

Checklist 1: Choosing Your Builder & Community

Not all builders — or all communities — are the same. Use this framework to compare your options side by side, instead of falling for the first model home you tour.

Builder Comparison

- ☐ Compare quality of construction, not just finishes — ask about framing methods, insulation, and structural warranties
- ☐ Review the builder's standard warranty coverage and length, and how warranty claims are actually handled
- ☐ Ask how long the builder has been active in Hall County, and look into their reputation with recent buyers
- ☐ Compare incentives across builders — rate buydowns, closing cost credits, and upgrade packages vary significantly
- ☐ Understand each builder's typical construction timeline, and how they handle delays

Community Comparison

- ☐ Compare lot sizes, HOA fees, and what those fees actually cover
- ☐ Ask about future development phases — will more homes, retail, or amenities be added later?
- ☐ Confirm school zoning for the specific community, not just the general area
- ☐ Evaluate commute times realistically, at the times of day you'll actually be driving
- ☐ Consider long-term resale potential — how does this community compare to similar ones nearby?

Why This Matters

The community and the builder are two separate decisions that get blurred together in a model home visit. Evaluate them separately, and you'll make a much clearer decision.

Checklist 2: Understanding Your Contract

Builder contracts are written to protect the builder — not the buyer. That doesn't mean they're bad. It means you need to understand exactly what you're agreeing to before your signature is on it.

5 Things to Review Closely

- ☐ Scope of Work — confirm what's actually included in your price vs. what's considered an upgrade
- ☐ Change Orders — understand that any change after signing typically comes at the builder's price and can delay your timeline
- ☐ Warranties — know what's covered, for how long, and what qualifies as a valid claim
- ☐ Disputes — understand how disagreements get resolved (arbitration vs. other options) before you ever have one
- ☐ The Kickout Clause — know whether the builder can cancel your contract under certain conditions, even after you're under contract

> **The Kickout Clause: Most Buyers Miss This**
>
> This clause can allow the builder to cancel your contract under certain conditions — delays in financing, missed deadlines, or other terms not being met. It can affect your ability to secure the home, sometimes with very little warning. This is exactly the kind of language I review with buyers before they ever sign.

Registration Policies

Many builders require your agent to be registered before or during your first visit to the sales office — sometimes as early as your first phone call. This policy is different builder to builder, and can change without notice. Reach out before you visit any sales office, for any builder, so I can confirm their current policy first.

Checklist 3: The Design Center & Upgrade Priority Checklist

It's easy to fall in love with upgrade after upgrade in a builder's design center. This checklist helps you know which ones actually protect your investment, and which ones you can handle later for less.

Buy Now (Structural or Difficult to Retrofit)

- ☐ Additional electrical outlets and USB/data wiring
- ☐ Layout changes — moving walls, changing room configurations
- ☐ Plumbing rough-ins for a future bathroom or wet bar
- ☐ Structural upgrades — additional windows, ceiling height changes, extended garages
- ☐ Energy-efficiency upgrades built into the structure (insulation upgrades, window packages)

Handle Later (Cosmetic and Swappable)

- ☐ Light fixtures and hardware — often available for less outside the builder's design center
- ☐ Flooring — frequently one of the biggest markups at the design center; get outside quotes to compare
- ☐ Paint colors and interior finishes
- ☐ Landscaping beyond the builder's standard package
- ☐ Smart home devices and low-voltage upgrades you can add yourself after closing

The Rule of Thumb

If it's behind a wall or under a foundation once construction is done, buy it now. If you could hire someone to swap it out on a random Saturday afternoon, it can usually wait.

Checklist 4: The Pre-Drywall Walk-Through

This is the single most important inspection stage in the entire new construction process — and the one most builders won't offer to schedule on their own.

Why This Stage Matters

Once drywall goes up, your ability to see the framing, wiring, and plumbing disappears completely. This is your one and only chance to catch issues before they're permanently hidden behind the walls.

What to Look For

- ☐ Framing — spacing, straightness, and any visible shortcuts in structural members
- ☐ Electrical rough-in — outlet and switch locations match what you approved, wiring is properly secured
- ☐ Plumbing rough-in — pipe locations match approved layout, proper support and connections
- ☐ HVAC rough-in — ductwork sized and routed appropriately for the home's layout
- ☐ Insulation — properly installed with no gaps, especially around windows and penetrations
- ☐ Any change orders you approved are actually reflected in the framing

Where Construction Background Pays Off

With 20+ years building and remodeling homes, I know what proper framing and rough-in work actually looks like — not just what a sales rep tells you is standard. This is the walk-through where that experience matters most.

Checklist 5: Closing Day

Closing day on new construction should feel like the finish line, not a scramble. Here's what to expect and what to bring.

Before Closing Day

- ☐ Schedule your final walkthrough — ideally within 24-48 hours of closing
- ☐ Confirm all approved change orders and upgrades are actually completed
- ☐ Test all major systems — HVAC, appliances, garage doors, smart home features
- ☐ Get final closing figures from your lender at least three days before closing
- ☐ Confirm homeowner's insurance is in place before closing

What to Bring to Closing

- ☐ A valid government-issued photo ID
- ☐ Certified check or confirmed wire transfer for funds due
- ☐ Copy of your homeowner's insurance policy
- ☐ A written list of any outstanding punch list items not yet resolved

After Closing

- ☐ Keep all warranty documentation and builder contact information organized
- ☐ Know your warranty claim deadlines — many builder warranties run out after just one year
- ☐ Address any punch list items with the builder promptly, in writing

One Person Managing Every Deadline

From contract to design center to pre-drywall to closing — I coordinate every deadline directly with you so nothing slips through the cracks along the way.

What My Clients Are Saying

5.0 stars, based on current Google reviews for Shannon Sanborn Realtor - eXp Realty.

★★★★★ Ann Marie

"Shannon was an awesome agent to work with as an agent and as a client! When we went to sell our home, I was an agent at the time but didn't want the added stress, so Shannon picked up the pieces and ran with it, he carried the load I didn't want to. Its hard trusting many people with something so important but Shannon was the man for the Job! Our home was sold with ease and he made sure to keep us updated the whole way! He even came over to spread mulch!! Great guy, great business and awesome results. We appreciate you Shannon."

★★★★★ Melanie Nelms

"I know Shannon personally. He is genuine, caring, compassionate and honest. He is a hard worker. He loves helping others. Shannon loves real-estate and would be an awesome person to help you."

★★★★★ Heather Smith

"Shannon helped us so much. Great communication throughout, very knowledgeable, and transparent. Definitely recommend, and would use again!"

Ready to Start Comparing Communities?

This guide gives you a strong starting point, but every builder, every community, and every contract is different. If you'd like to talk through a specific community, get a second opinion on a contract, or just have questions before your first sales office visit, I'm happy to help.

Schedule a free, no-obligation consultation any time — before you register at any sales office.

Shannon Sanborn — "The Flying Realtor" — eXp Realty, LLC — ExploreGainesvilleGA.com