

ENGEL & VÖLKERS · SOUTH TAMPA



Full-bleed: Tampa Bay from the air — downtown, the bay, and the Gulf beaches at dusk  
or [browse files](#)

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TAMPA BAY · FLORIDA

# The Luxury Buyer's Guide

2026 EDITION

# Welcome to Tampa Bay

Buying a home in the Tampa Bay region at the luxury level rewards preparation. The area holds many distinct markets across three counties — the historic Tampa peninsula, downtown towers on both sides of the bay, the Gulf beaches, and lakeside and acreage communities inland — each driven by things you can only understand market by market, from deep-water access to flood zones and county tax and insurance differences.

I wrote this guide to give you that context before we ever walk a property together. It explains how value is set across the region's markets, what due diligence a waterfront home or a condominium demands, how the buying process actually unfolds here, and how the tax and insurance realities of Florida affect what you'll pay to own.

You'll find no interest rates and no market predictions in these pages. Those change; the fundamentals don't. Current figures live only in the labeled snapshot sidebars, which I refresh each year from local sales data.

When you're ready to move from reading to looking, I'd be glad to help. Much of what sells at this level across Tampa Bay never reaches a public search — and knowing about it early is often the whole game.



## Shane Vanderson

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# About Shane Vanderson

Shane Vanderson has been licensed for fourteen years and has closed more than 150 sales, representing over \$150 million in career volume. He works as a License Partner and Broker Associate with Engel & Völkers South Tampa.

That local practice sits inside the Engel & Völkers global network, which spans more than 30 countries. For a buyer relocating from another market — or another country — it means a single point of contact connected to advisors wherever a search or a sale needs to reach.

Shane's practice concentrates on waterfront, historic, and new-construction homes across Tampa and the South Tampa peninsula, where knowing the difference between a canal lot and open-bay frontage, or an original 1920s structure and a teardown parcel, changes the advice entirely.

Discretion is part of the service. Sensitive searches, off-market inquiries, and client identities are handled confidentially as a matter of course.



14

YEARS LICENSED

150+

CLOSED SALES

\$150M+

CAREER VOLUME

30+

COUNTRIES, E&V  
NETWORK

## PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE ADVISORY

A dedicated program for professional athletes and their representatives, built around compressed timelines, relocation between markets, privacy, and the specific financing and ownership structures these clients often use.



Full-bleed: aerial spanning Tampa, the bay, and the Gulf coast  
or [browse files](#)

WHY TAMPA BAY

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A three-county region  
shaped by bay, Gulf,  
and downtowns

The Tampa Bay region wraps around the bay and reaches to the Gulf of Mexico, spanning Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco counties. Tampa and its downtown anchor the east, St. Petersburg and the barrier-island beaches define the west, and lakeside and acreage communities extend to the north. Water is never far, and Tampa International keeps the region practical for buyers who travel often.

Value is driven first by land and location. On the peninsula's established streets, older houses are frequently bought for the parcel beneath them and replaced with new construction, so two homes of similar size can carry very different prices depending on lot, elevation, and street. Downtown, value follows the view, the floor, and the building.

Water is the second driver. Direct, deep-water access with no fixed bridges commands a premium over canal frontage, which in turn sells above interior lots. Bayshore Boulevard — the continuous waterfront balustrade said to be among the longest in the country — gives the city its signature address.

Daily life is shaped by geography. Hyde Park Village and the Water Street district concentrate dining and shopping in walkable cores, the Riverwalk links the downtown waterfront, and island communities sit a single bridge from the center of the city.

#### WHAT DRIVES VALUE

##### **Land & lot**

Dimensions, elevation, street

##### **Water access**

Deep & bridge-free > canal > interior

##### **Proximity**

Downtown · airport · Bayshore

##### **Condition**

Original, renovated, or teardown

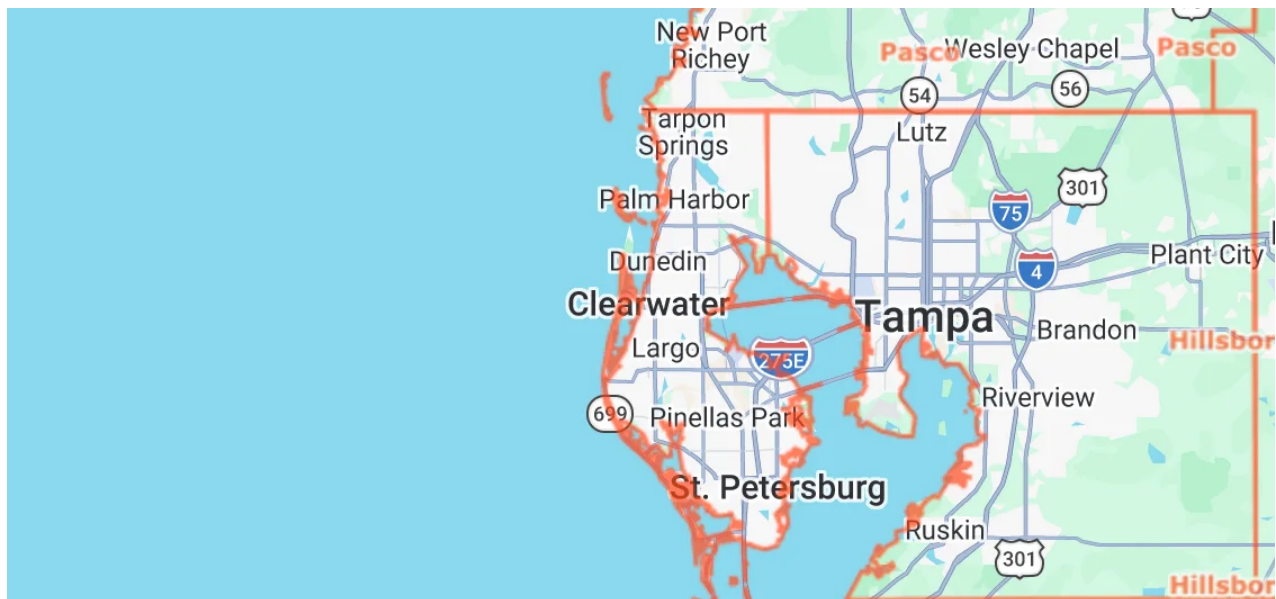
The region spans Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco counties — property taxes and insurance are assessed at the county and parcel level, so they differ across the bay. Property taxes and insurance are assessed at the county and parcel level.



Explore available homes at [shanevandererson.com](https://shanevandererson.com), or reach Shane directly at 813-205-5430.

# Orienting yourself

The region wraps around Tampa Bay and reaches to the Gulf across three counties. This orientation groups the markets in this guide by where they sit — the east bay in Hillsborough, the west bay and beaches in Pinellas, and the northern communities that reach into Pasco — a quick way to picture the area before the profiles that follow.



## EAST BAY — HILLSBOROUGH

South Tampa, Downtown & Water Street, Apollo Beach — the Tampa peninsula, the urban core, and a deep-water community on the bay's south shore.

## WEST BAY — PINELLAS

St. Petersburg & Old Northeast, Snell Isle, Belleair, Dunedin, Safety Harbor, Largo, Tierra Verde — downtown St. Pete, waterfront enclaves, and the walkable Gulf-coast towns.

## THE GULF BEACHES — PINELLAS

The barrier islands from Clearwater Beach and Sand Key south to St. Pete Beach — beachfront condominiums and select coastal homes.

## NORTH — HILLSBOROUGH & PASCO

Westchase & Odessa, New Tampa & Lutz — master-planned, lake, and acreage communities where two of the areas span into Pasco County.

# The markets of Tampa Bay

Thirteen areas span the region across Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco counties — from the historic Tampa peninsula and downtown towers to St. Petersburg’s waterfront, the Gulf-coast beaches and towns, and lakeside and acreage communities. Each carries its own architecture, property mix, and the specific things that lift or limit value. Every profile includes a labeled market snapshot, updated annually from local sales data.

|                                           |    |                    |    |
|-------------------------------------------|----|--------------------|----|
| South Tampa                               | 01 | Safety Harbor      | 08 |
| Downtown Tampa & Water Street             | 02 | Tierra Verde       | 09 |
| St. Petersburg — Downtown & Old Northeast | 03 | Largo              | 10 |
| Snell Isle                                | 04 | Westchase & Odessa | 11 |
| The Gulf Beaches                          | 05 | New Tampa & Lutz   | 12 |
| Belleair                                  | 06 | Apollo Beach       | 13 |
| Dunedin                                   | 07 |                    |    |

## 01 South Tampa

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

The peninsula south of downtown Tampa, bounded by Old Tampa Bay and Hillsborough Bay, encompassing Hyde Park, Palma Ceia, the waterfront enclaves, and Davis Islands. Brick streets, historic districts, and a steady teardown-and-rebuild cycle sit alongside Bayshore Boulevard. Land value and water access are the primary price drivers.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### South Tampa

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]



## 02 Downtown Tampa & Water Street

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Tampa's urban core, including the Water Street district's new residential towers along the Riverwalk and Garrison Channel. High-rise condominiums and penthouses offer skyline and water views within walking distance of arenas and dining. Views, building amenities, and walkability drive value; condo diligence is central.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### Downtown Tampa & Water Street

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]

## 03 St. Petersburg — Downtown & Old Northeast

PINELLAS COUNTY

St. Petersburg's walkable waterfront core and the adjacent Old Northeast historic district, pairing new downtown condominium towers with brick-street bungalows and revival homes near the museums and Beach Drive. Waterfront views, walkability, and historic character drive value; condo diligence applies downtown.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

St. Petersburg —  
Downtown & Old  
Northeast

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]



St. Petersburg waterfront and Beach Drive at dusk

or [browse files](#)

## 04 Snell Isle

PINELLAS COUNTY

An established waterfront enclave in St. Petersburg of Mediterranean Revival and new estate homes on canals and open water near Coffee Pot Bayou and a private country club. Deep-water access, estate lot size, and the established setting are the value drivers.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

Snell Isle

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]

## 05 The Gulf Beaches

PINELLAS COUNTY

The barrier-island beach markets along the Gulf coast — Clearwater Beach and Sand Key, Belleair Beach, Indian Rocks and Indian Shores, Redington, Madeira Beach, Treasure Island, and St. Pete Beach. A mix of beachfront condominiums, penthouses, and select single-family homes on the sugar-sand coast. Gulf views, beach frontage, and building amenities drive value; condo and coastal insurance diligence are central here.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### The Gulf Beaches

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]



Gulf-front condominiums along the sugar-sand coast

or [browse files](#)

## 06 Belleair

PINELLAS COUNTY

A quiet, established town on the Intracoastal near Clearwater, organized around historic golf and country clubs with tree-lined streets, period estates, and newer construction. Golf-course and water frontage, mature streets, and the town's privacy drive value.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### Belleair

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]

## 07 Dunedin

PINELLAS COUNTY

A walkable Gulf-coast town north of Clearwater with a historic downtown, marina, and the Pinellas Trail, offering bungalows, waterfront homes, and Intracoastal frontage near Honeymoon Island. Walkability, water access, and the town's character drive value.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### Dunedin

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]



Dunedin marina and downtown along the Intracoastal

or [browse files](#)

## 08 Safety Harbor

PINELLAS COUNTY

A small waterfront town on the northwest shore of Old Tampa Bay, known for its historic main street, spa heritage, and a mix of bungalows, waterfront homes, and newer construction. Bayfront access, the walkable downtown, and small-town character drive value.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### Safety Harbor

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]

## 09 Tierra Verde

PINELLAS COUNTY

A gated barrier-island community south of St. Petersburg near Fort De Soto, built around deep-water canals with direct Gulf and bay access, a marina, and newer estate homes. Deep-water frontage, dock and lift potential, and the island setting drive value.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### Tierra Verde

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]



Deep-water canal estate on Tierra Verde

or [browse files](#)

## 10 Largo

PINELLAS COUNTY

A central Pinellas city between Clearwater and St. Petersburg, offering a broad range of homes from mid-century to newer construction, larger lots in places, and proximity to the Gulf beaches and both downtowns. Lot size, relative value, and central location drive pricing.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### Largo

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]

## 11 Westchase & Odessa

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY & PASCO COUNTY

The northwest corridor spanning master-planned Westchase, with its golf course and village town center, and semi-rural Odessa among the Keystone-area lakes with acreage and equestrian estates. Amenities and newer homes drive Westchase; acreage and lakefront drive Odessa. Odessa spans two counties — confirm the parcel's county for taxes and insurance.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### Westchase & Odessa

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]



Lakefront acreage estate near the Keystone lakes

or [browse files](#)

## 12 New Tampa & Lutz

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY & PASCO COUNTY

A northern corridor of gated golf communities such as Tampa Palms and Cory Lake Isles in New Tampa, and semi-rural Lutz among the Lake Park chain of lakes with acreage and lakefront homes. Gated amenities and newer homes drive New Tampa; lot size and lake frontage drive Lutz, which spans two counties.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### New Tampa & Lutz

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]

## 13 Apollo Beach

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

A waterfront community on Tampa Bay south of the city, built around a network of deep-water canals with direct bay access, a marina, and newer estate construction. Deep-water canal frontage, dock and lift potential, and open-bay access are the primary value drivers.

2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

### Apollo Beach

MEDIAN SOLD PRICE

[MEDIAN SOLD PRICE]

AVG PRICE / SQ FT

[AVG PRICE/SQFT]

MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET

[MEDIAN DOM]

SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO

[SALES \$1M+ LAST 12 MO]



Deep-water canal home with a boat lift on Tampa Bay

or [browse files](#)

#### A NOTE ON COMPARING AREAS

Across a region this large, value answers very different briefs — a downtown penthouse, a Gulf-beach condominium, a deep-water canal home, and a lakeside acreage estate each follow their own logic. Use the snapshots as orientation, then look market by market. Explore available homes at [shanevandererson.com](https://shanevandererson.com), or reach Shane directly at 813-205-5430.

# A-rated public high schools

Each county assigns attendance to a home by its address, and the Florida Department of Education issues a school grade each year. Below are established public high schools that have earned an A grade, grouped by county and the areas they commonly serve. Grades and boundaries change annually — confirm the current grade and the exact zoned school for any address before you rely on it.

## HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

|                                                                  |                     |                                                                           |                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Plant High School</b><br>South Tampa · Hyde Park · Palma Ceia | <b>[2026 GRADE]</b> | <b>Steinbrenner High School</b><br>Lutz · Odessa · northwest Hillsborough | <b>[2026 GRADE]</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|

## PINELLAS COUNTY

|                                                                    |                     |                                                                                     |                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Palm Harbor University High</b><br>Palm Harbor · north Pinellas | <b>[2026 GRADE]</b> | <b>Shorecrest / area magnets</b><br>St. Petersburg · confirm zoned & choice options | <b>[2026 GRADE]</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|

## PASCO COUNTY

|                                                           |                     |                                                                   |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Sunlake High School</b><br>Land O' Lakes · south Pasco | <b>[2026 GRADE]</b> | <b>Confirm by address</b><br>Boundaries shift in growth corridors | <b>[2026 GRADE]</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|

### VERIFY BEFORE YOU RELY ON IT

School grades, attendance boundaries, magnet and choice options, and advanced programs change from year to year and differ by county. Confirm the current grade and the exact zoned school for a specific address with the county district — Hillsborough, Pinellas, or Pasco — and consult GreatSchools.org. Provided for factual reference only.

# Property types at the luxury tier

Four kinds of property dominate the South Tampa luxury market. Each carries its own due-diligence priorities — the questions that matter for a waterfront estate are not the ones that matter for a condominium.

## WATERFRONT HOMES

### Water, seawall, and access

Priorities center on flood zone and elevation, seawall condition and age, dock and lift permitting, and whether access is open bay, canal, or bayou. Insurance and elevation shape the true cost of ownership as much as the purchase price.

## CONDOMINIUMS & PENTHOUSES

### Documents and reserves

Florida's milestone inspection and reserve-study laws now sit at the center of condo due diligence. Review the association's budget, reserves, recent assessments, and inspection reports before you remove contingencies.

## NEW CONSTRUCTION

### Builder, permits, warranty

Confirm the builder's track record, that permits and the certificate of occupancy are in order, and what warranty coverage applies. New homes are built to current elevation and wind codes, which can lower insurance costs.

## HISTORIC & CHARACTER HOMES

### Designation and systems

In designated districts, exterior changes may require review. Budget for the systems that age in older homes — plumbing, electrical, roofing — and confirm any prior renovations were permitted.

Explore available homes at [shanevanderson.com](https://shanevanderson.com), or reach Shane directly at 813-205-5430.

# Waterfront essentials

In a waterfront city where water sets the price, the diligence that protects a waterfront purchase is specific and non-negotiable. Work through each of these before you commit — and build the timeline for it into your offer.

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## 01 Flood zones and FEMA maps

Locate the property on the current FEMA flood map and identify its zone. The zone drives insurance requirements and cost, and it influences what you can build or rebuild. Map revisions can move a parcel between zones, so confirm the effective map, not an old one.

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## 02 Elevation certificates

An elevation certificate documents the structure's height relative to the base flood elevation. It can significantly change flood-insurance pricing and is worth obtaining or requesting early. Higher elevation generally means lower premiums.

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## 03 Flood insurance

Obtain quotes during the inspection period, from both the National Flood Insurance Program and the private market. Premiums vary widely with zone, elevation, and construction, and they belong in your cost analysis before contingencies are removed.

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## 04 Seawall inspection and age

A seawall is a major structural asset. Have it inspected for condition, and establish its age and any repair history. Replacement is a substantial expense, so a failing or aging wall is a real factor in negotiation.

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## 05 Dock and lift permitting

Docks, davits, and boat lifts are regulated, and permits transfer with the property. Confirm that existing structures were permitted and that what you intend to add is permissible — reach, water depth, and neighboring structures all affect what is allowed.

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## 06 Open bay vs. canal vs. bayou

Frontage type shapes both value and use. Open-bay lots offer expansive views and direct access but more wind and wave exposure. Canals give protected moorage and calmer water. Bayou frontage is quieter and often shallower. Establish depth at low tide and whether any fixed bridges limit vessel height on the way to open water.

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## 07 Wind mitigation

A wind-mitigation inspection documents roof shape, attachment, and opening protection — features that can lower windstorm premiums. On coastal property this report is a routine part of both insurance and diligence, and newer construction typically scores well.

### THE ORDER THAT SAVES DEALS

Line these up at the start of the inspection period, not the end. Flood quotes, the elevation certificate, and the seawall inspection take time to arrange, and a surprise in any one of them is far easier to negotiate while contingencies are still in place.



Seawall, dock, and boat lift on a South Tampa canal

or [browse files](#)

# Condo due diligence

Florida's condominium laws changed meaningfully after 2021, and diligence at the luxury tier now leans heavily on the association's financial and structural health. Read the numbers before you fall for the view.

## Milestone inspections

Buildings of three stories or more are subject to structural milestone inspections at defined ages. Ask for the most recent report and any resulting repair plan.

## Reserve studies (SIRS)

The Structural Integrity Reserve Study estimates the cost and timing of major component repairs. Review it alongside how those reserves are funded.

## Reserve funding

Associations are increasingly required to fund reserves rather than waive them. A well-funded reserve lowers the risk of a large future assessment landing on you.

## Documents and budgets

Read the declaration, bylaws, rules, current budget, and recent meeting minutes. The minutes often reveal issues the marketing never mentions.

## Special assessments

Ask about assessments levied, pending, or contemplated. On older waterfront buildings these can be significant, and timing matters for who pays.

## Association approval

Some associations require approval of a buyer or a lease. Confirm the process and its timeline so it does not collide with your closing date.

Florida condominium law continues to evolve. Verify the current milestone and reserve requirements with qualified counsel as part of your review, and build the document-review window into your contract. Explore available homes at [shanevanderson.com](https://shanevanderson.com), or reach Shane directly at 813-205-5430.

# The buying process

- Consultation and priorities** 1 DAY  
Define the neighborhoods, property type, water and lot criteria, and budget that will guide the search.
- Financing preparation** 1–2 WEEKS  
Secure pre-approval or assemble proof of funds for a cash purchase, so your offer carries weight from day one.
- Search and showings** VARIES  
Tour on-market homes and, where available, pre-market and off-market opportunities before they surface publicly.
- Offer and negotiation** 1–5 DAYS  
Structure price, contingencies, earnest money, and closing date, then negotiate to an executed contract.
- Inspection and diligence** 10–15 DAYS  
Complete inspections, waterfront and condo diligence, and insurance quotes, and resolve any findings.
- Appraisal and lender review** 2–3 WEEKS  
For financed purchases, the lender orders the appraisal and completes underwriting. Cash purchases skip this stage.
- Closing** DAY 30–45  
Final walkthrough, funds wired through verified instructions, documents signed, and keys transferred.

# Competing at the luxury level

The best homes on the peninsula draw serious interest. Preparation and structure — not just price — decide who a seller chooses.



## Proof of funds

Have current, credible documentation ready. A clean proof of funds or a strong pre-approval signals to a seller that the transaction will close.



## Earnest money

At this tier, a substantial deposit demonstrates commitment. Understand what is customary and be prepared to place it promptly into escrow.



## Contingency strategy

Which contingencies you keep, shorten, or waive is a calculated decision. Tighter terms strengthen an offer, but only waive protection you can genuinely absorb.



## Appraisal gaps

On unique waterfront and new-construction homes, an appraisal may lag the contract price. Decide in advance how you will handle a gap so it does not stall the deal.



## Off-market and pre-market access

A meaningful share of luxury sales here happen quietly. Being connected to what is coming — before it lists — is often the difference between competing and simply being first.

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# Financing and cash purchases

Luxury buyers finance in ways that differ from the conventional market, and many purchase in cash. Choosing the right structure early keeps your offer competitive.

## Jumbo loans

Loans above conforming limits, with their own underwriting standards for reserves, documentation, and down payment. Expect a more thorough review.

## Portfolio lenders

Banks that hold loans in house can offer flexibility on complex income, unique properties, or fast timelines that agency guidelines will not.

## Asset-based lending

Qualification based on assets or a securities-backed line of credit, useful for buyers whose wealth is not reflected in conventional income documents.

## Cash purchase logistics

Cash removes the appraisal and lender stages and shortens the timeline. Line up proof of funds and the wire process well before closing week.



### WIRE FRAUD WARNING

Wire fraud is a real and serious threat in high-value real estate. Criminals impersonate title companies, attorneys, and agents by email to redirect your funds.

**Before sending any funds, call your title company or closing agent at a number you have independently verified — never one from an email — and confirm the wiring instructions by voice.** Treat any last-minute change to those instructions as fraud until you have confirmed otherwise.

# Costs, taxes, and Florida advantages

## Typical buyer closing costs

Expect title insurance, documentary stamp taxes on any financing, recording fees, prorated taxes, inspection fees, and lender charges on a financed purchase. In Florida, custom on who pays which fee varies by county and is negotiable in the contract.

## Title insurance and documentary stamps

Title insurance protects your ownership against defects in the chain of title. Florida also levies documentary stamp taxes — on the deed and, separately, on mortgages and notes — which add up quickly at luxury price points.

## How property taxes reset at purchase

A prior owner's low, capped assessment does not carry over. After a sale, the assessed value is reset toward market value, so your tax bill can differ substantially from the seller's. Estimate your own bill rather than relying on the current one.

### FLORIDA ADVANTAGES

## No state income tax

Florida levies no personal state income tax — a meaningful factor for buyers establishing primary residency here.

## Homestead exemption

A primary-residence exemption reduces the taxable value of a qualifying home.

## Save Our Homes

Once homesteaded, annual increases in assessed value are capped, which moderates tax growth over time.

Explore available homes at [shanevandererson.com](https://shanevandererson.com), or reach Shane directly at 813-205-5430.

# How the counties differ

This region spans three counties, and the line between them matters. Property taxes, insurance profiles, and school districts are all administered at the county level, so two similar homes on opposite sides of the bay can carry different costs and different schools.

|                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <h2>Hillsborough</h2> <p>Tampa, the peninsula, and the east bay. Assessed by Hillsborough County, with Hillsborough County Public Schools.</p> | <h2>Pinellas</h2> <p>St. Petersburg, the Gulf beaches, and the west-bay towns. Its own tax roll, coastal insurance profile, and Pinellas County Schools.</p> | <h2>Pasco</h2> <p>The northern edge, including parts of Lutz and Odessa. Assessed by Pasco County with its own tax roll and school district.</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### CONFIRM THE COUNTY FOR THE PARCEL

In areas that straddle a county line, the parcel — not the mailing address — determines which county governs. Confirm it with the county property appraiser before estimating taxes, insurance, or school assignment.

# Insurance in Florida

Coverage is a defining cost of owning coastal property, and it comes in layers. Understand all three, and price them while you can still act on what you learn.

|                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <h2>Homeowners</h2> <p>The base policy for the structure and contents. In Florida, windstorm may be carved out separately depending on the carrier and location.</p> | <h2>Flood</h2> <p>Separate from homeowners, through the federal program or private carriers. Cost tracks flood zone and elevation — essential on waterfront property.</p> | <h2>Wind</h2> <p>Windstorm coverage may be a separate policy with its own deductible. Wind-mitigation features can reduce the premium.</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### QUOTE DURING THE INSPECTION PERIOD

Get real insurance quotes while your contract contingencies are still in place — not after. Premiums on coastal and waterfront homes can be substantial and vary widely by carrier, and knowing the true annual cost before you commit protects both your budget and your negotiating position.



South Tampa waterfront home exterior, warm daylight

or [browse files](#)

# Storm preparedness and resilience

On the Gulf coast, a home’s resilience is part of its value. Two designations matter, and they are not the same: the flood zone measures water risk from rainfall and surge, while the evacuation zone tells you when local officials may ask you to leave in a storm. Understand both for any address.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <h3>Evacuation zone vs. flood zone</h3> <p>Evacuation zones (A through E) are set by surge risk and drive when you leave; FEMA flood zones drive insurance and construction. A home can sit in a low flood zone yet a high evacuation zone, or the reverse. Check both.</p> | <h3>Building code and age</h3> <p>Homes built or substantially renovated under modern Florida wind codes generally perform better and insure more favorably. Ask when the roof, windows, and openings were last updated.</p> |
| <h3>Impact protection</h3> <p>Impact-rated windows and doors, or tested shutters, protect the building envelope and can lower windstorm premiums. Confirm what is installed and whether it is documented for insurance.</p>                                                 | <h3>Systems and backup</h3> <p>Standby generators, elevated equipment, and sound drainage matter after a storm. On waterfront homes, review the seawall, dock, and lift for storm readiness as part of diligence.</p>        |

#### CHECK IT FOR THE ADDRESS

Evacuation zones, flood maps, and code requirements are specific to a parcel and can change. Verify the current designations with the county emergency-management office and floodplain administrator, and factor resilience upgrades into both your budget and your insurance quotes during the inspection period.

# Relocation checklist

For buyers making Florida home, a handful of steps establish residency and secure the tax benefits that come with it.

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✓ **Establish residency**

File a Declaration of Domicile and take the steps that establish Florida as your primary home, especially if you are moving from a state with income tax.

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✓ **Driver's license and registration**

Obtain a Florida driver's license and register your vehicles within the state's required window after establishing residency.

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✓ **File for homestead by the deadline**

The homestead exemption must be filed with the county property appraiser by the statutory deadline — traditionally March 1 — for the year you claim it. Missing it defers the benefit a full year.

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✓ **Set up utilities and services**

Arrange electric, water, gas, internet, and waste service ahead of your move-in date, and transfer or establish accounts in your name.

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✓ **Local resources**

Register to vote, update banking and mailing addresses, and connect with local medical, financial, and household providers. For schools, consult district websites and GreatSchools.org for your own research.

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# Frequently asked questions

## What actually drives price differences within South Tampa?

Land and water, first and foremost — lot size and dimensions, elevation, and the type and depth of water access. Two similar houses on the same street can differ sharply based on whether one has bridge-free deep water and a larger parcel.

## How much does flood insurance affect the cost of a waterfront home?

Significantly, and it varies widely with flood zone and elevation. Two adjacent homes can carry very different premiums. Always obtain quotes during the inspection period so the real annual cost informs your decision.

## Why is my property tax bill higher than the seller's was?

Because the assessed value resets toward market value after a sale, a prior owner's capped assessment does not transfer. Estimate your own bill rather than relying on the current one.

## Is it better to buy an older home or new construction here?

It depends on your priorities. New construction meets current elevation and wind codes, which can lower insurance. Older and historic homes offer character and established streets but may need systems work and, in designated districts, design review for exterior changes.

## What does off-market access really mean?

A meaningful share of luxury sales here are arranged quietly, before or without a public listing. Access comes from relationships and knowing which homes are quietly available — one reason local representation matters at this tier.

## How long does a purchase take from offer to closing?

A financed purchase commonly closes in about 30 to 45 days; a cash purchase can be faster because it skips the appraisal and lender stages. Waterfront and condo diligence can extend the inspection window, so plan the timeline accordingly.

## Should I be worried about condo assessments?

You should investigate them carefully. Review reserves, the reserve study, recent and pending assessments, and milestone inspection results before removing contingencies. A well-funded association lowers the risk of a large future bill.

## What is the single most important step to avoid wire fraud?

Call your title company or closing agent to confirm wiring instructions by voice, using a number you have verified independently — never a number or link from an email. Treat any last-minute change to instructions as suspect until confirmed.

## How do I qualify for the homestead exemption?

Establish the home as your primary residence and file with the county property appraiser by the statutory deadline. Once homesteaded, Save Our Homes caps annual increases in assessed value, moderating tax growth over time.

## Can Engel & Völkers help with a purchase from out of state or abroad?

Yes. Shane's practice sits within the Engel & Völkers global network across more than 30 countries, which supports relocating and international buyers with a single, coordinated point of contact and discreet, confidential service.

Have a question this guide did not answer? Explore available homes at [shanevanderson.com](https://shanevanderson.com), or reach Shane directly at 813-205-5430.

# Working with Shane

When you're ready to move from reading to looking, here is how the relationship works and what the first conversation covers.

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## 01 The first conversation

We talk through your priorities, timeline, and budget, the areas and property types that fit, and the water, lot, and lifestyle criteria that matter most. No pressure, no obligation.

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## 02 Buyer representation

We put our working relationship in writing through a buyer representation agreement, which defines the scope of service and how compensation is handled. Terms are agreed up front and in the open, so there are no surprises.

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## 03 On-market and off-market access

Alongside everything publicly listed, we work relationships and the Engel & Völkers network to surface pre-market and off-market opportunities before they reach a broad search.

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## 04 Discretion throughout

Sensitive searches, off-market inquiries, and client identities are handled confidentially as a matter of course — with a dedicated advisory for professional athletes and their representatives.

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### Start the conversation

There is no cost to talk, and no obligation to list or buy.

813-205-5430

[shanevanderson.com](http://shanevanderson.com)

# A glossary of terms

The terms that come up most often in a Tampa Bay luxury purchase, in plain language.

## Flood zone

A FEMA designation for a parcel's flood risk. It drives whether flood insurance is required and how much it costs.

## Elevation certificate

A surveyor's document recording a structure's height relative to the base flood elevation; it can substantially affect flood-insurance pricing.

## Evacuation zone

A local designation (A–E) based on storm-surge risk that determines when officials may ask you to evacuate — distinct from the flood zone.

## Seawall

A structure that holds back water at the shoreline. Its age and condition are a major factor on waterfront property.

## Bridge-free / deep water

Water access to open bay with no fixed bridges limiting vessel height, and depth sufficient at low tide — a significant premium.

## Milestone inspection

A required structural inspection for older condominium buildings of three stories or more under Florida law.

## SIRS

Structural Integrity Reserve Study — an estimate of the cost and timing of major condominium component repairs, used to set reserves.

## Special assessment

A one-time charge levied by an association for costs beyond the regular budget, such as major repairs.

## Documentary stamp tax

A Florida tax on the deed and, separately, on mortgages and notes; it adds up at luxury price points.

## Homestead exemption

A reduction in the taxable value of a qualifying primary residence, filed with the county property appraiser.

## Save Our Homes

A cap on annual increases in the assessed value of a homesteaded property, moderating tax growth over time.

## CDD

Community Development District — an assessment in some communities that funds infrastructure and appears on the tax bill.

## Proof of funds

Documentation showing you have the cash available for a purchase; it strengthens an offer, especially without financing.

## Jumbo loan

A mortgage above conforming limits, with its own underwriting standards for reserves, documentation, and down payment.

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# Shane Vanderson

LICENSE PARTNER · BROKER ASSOCIATE

CALL

813-205-5430

VISIT

[shanevanderson.com](http://shanevanderson.com)



SCAN FOR AVAILABLE HOMES

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Engel & Völkers South Tampa. Each brokerage independently owned and operated. Information herein is general and not legal, tax, or insurance advice; verify current Florida condominium, tax, and insurance requirements with qualified professionals. School references are factual only — consult district websites and GreatSchools.org.



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