



# ROADMAP TO KEYS

Your Strategic Calgary Buyer's Guide.



# BUYING A HOME IN CALGARY

**is one of the most important financial decisions you'll ever make.**

Which means it deserves more than a quick Google search, a weekend of open houses, and a realtor who texts you listings.

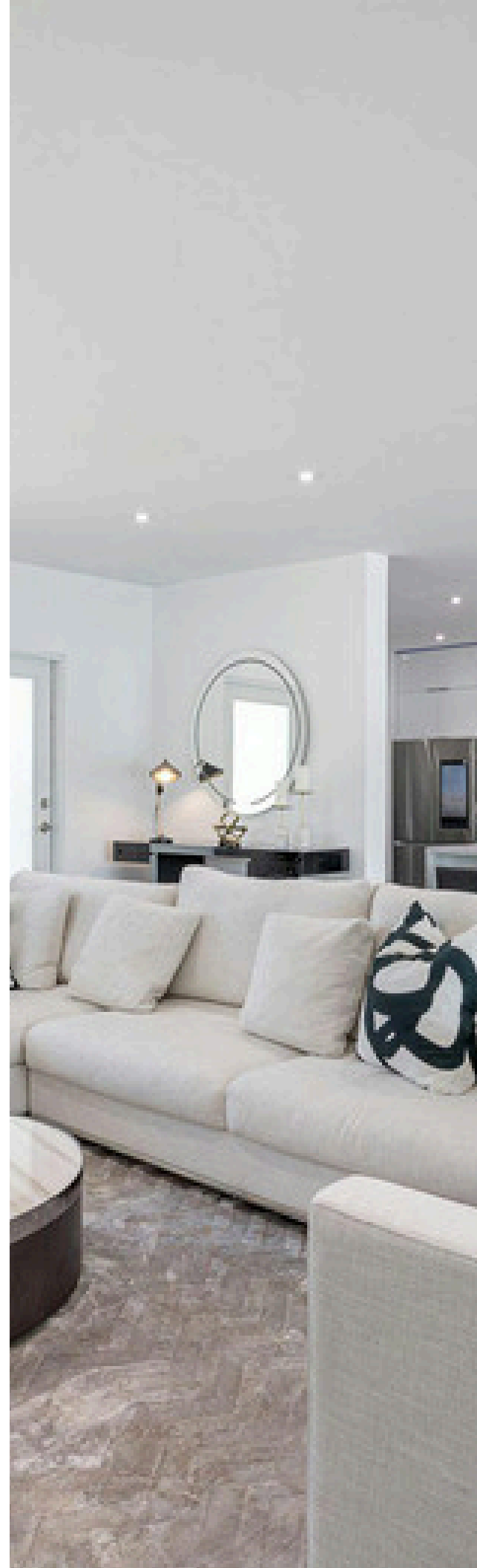
It deserves a clear process, real data, and a partner who knows this market and treats your investment like the serious asset it is.

**That's what this guide is for.**

Inside, you'll find the complete Calgary home buying process: from evaluating your financial readiness to handing over your first set of keys. Every step explained. Every decision demystified. Every cost accounted for.

And throughout each section, you'll see exactly how I approach that step differently through **The KEYS Experience™** 🗝️ — a proprietary methodology built to give my clients an advantage at every stage of the process.

Whether you're buying your first home, upgrading, or investing, this guide is your starting point.



# HOME-BUYING PROCESS

***The Roadmap to Keys - 7 milestones from offer to possession day***

**1**

## **Meet With Your Agent:**

Schedule a meeting with your agent to discuss your preferences and goals.

**2**

## **Get Pre-Approved**

- Meet with a lender to confirm your buying power
- Determine the right mortgage product and rate
- Secure a formal pre-approval letter

**5**

## **Financing Confirmation**

- Lender orders the appraisal
- Lender issues Unconditional Approval
- You receive the Waiver (conditions removed, deal is firm)

**4**

## **Inspections & Review**

- Schedule home inspection immediately after accepted offer
- Complete condo document review if applicable (5 business days)
- Negotiate repair requests or credits based on findings

**3**

## **Offer & Negotiation**

- Review comparable sales to determine true market value
- Submit a strong, strategic offer with the right conditions
- Negotiate price, terms, and possession date

**6**

## **Prepare for Closing**

- Secure home insurance (required for your lawyer)
- Perform final walkthrough before possession
- Funds transfer, keys released,

**7**

## **Get Your Keys**

Finally, celebrate as you receive the keys to your new home and embark on this exciting new chapter!

A modern, bright living room with a white sectional sofa, a round coffee table, and a kitchen area in the background. The room is well-lit with recessed ceiling lights. The text "ARE YOU READY TO BUY?" is overlaid in large, bold, pink letters.

**ARE YOU  
READY TO  
BUY?**

# ARE YOU READY TO BUY?

***The questions to answer before you start the search.***

Before you look at a single listing, your first step is an honest assessment of your financial position. In Canada, buying a home involves several layers of qualification — and understanding them before you start will save you time, frustration, and expensive mistakes.

## **The three readiness questions:**

**1. Can you qualify for a mortgage?** Your income, employment history, existing debts, and credit score all factor into what lenders will offer you. In Canada, even strong earners can be surprised by what the math produces.

**2. Do you have enough saved?** In Canada, the minimum down payment is 5% on the first \$500,000 and 10% on the portion above that. But your total upfront cost is higher — closing costs add another 1.5–4% on top of your down payment.

**3. Is your credit positioned correctly?** Lenders want to see a strong repayment history, low credit utilization, and no recent large credit inquiries. A credit score of 680+ typically unlocks the best rates.

Unlike Ontario and British Columbia, Alberta has NO provincial land transfer tax. This saves most buyers between \$5,000 and \$20,000+ compared to similar purchases in Toronto or Vancouver. Your closing costs in Calgary are significantly lower.



## **THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™**

Before your first call, you complete a brief preparation form that covers your financial situation, timeline, and goals. By the time we speak, I've reviewed your answers, and our conversation starts with strategy, not intake. If I notice you're not quite ready, I tell you directly and connect you with the right professionals to get there.

A modern bedroom interior featuring a white bedside table with two drawers, a bed with a tufted headboard, and a pendant light hanging from the ceiling. The room is brightly lit, and the overall aesthetic is clean and minimalist.

# **FINANCIAL MUST- HAVE'S**

# GETTING PRE-APPROVED

## ***The difference between browsing and being positioned to buy***

Pre-approval is not just a formality. In Calgary's competitive market, it's the difference between making offers and watching other buyers close on homes you wanted.

A formal pre-approval letter from a lender tells you exactly how much you can borrow, locks in your rate for 90–120 days, and signals to sellers that you're a serious buyer.

## **The Canadian Mortgage Stress Test**

In Canada, all federally regulated lenders must qualify buyers at the greater of: (a) 5.25%, or (b) your contracted rate + 2%. This means even if your actual rate is 5%, the bank tests whether you could still make payments at 7%. The stress test is designed to ensure buyers can handle rate increases, and it affects how much you qualify for.

## **What you'll need for pre-approval:**

- Government-issued photo ID
- Proof of income: T4 slips, pay stubs, or NOA (Notice of Assessment) if self-employed
- Employment letter confirming your position and salary
- 3–6 months of bank statements
- Record of existing debts
- Down payment proof: bank statements showing the funds and their source

### **THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™**

If you don't have a mortgage broker, I will connect you with a trusted partner before our Strategy Session, one who understands your scenario and can get you formally approved, not just pre-qualified. You come to our first call with real buying power confirmed, not estimated.

# CANADIAN BUYER PROGRAMS & INCENTIVES

**Government programs that can put thousands of dollars back in your pocket.**

Depending on your situation, you may be eligible for several programs that reduce your upfront costs, boost your down payment, or generate a tax return. Most buyers leave significant money on the table simply because they didn't know to ask.

## Programs available to buyers in Canada:

<b>First Home Savings Account (FHSA)</b>	<b>Up to \$40,000</b>	<i>Tax-deductible contributions + tax-free withdrawals for first-time buyers. The most powerful tool available.</i>
<b>RRSP Home Buyers' Plan</b>	<b>Up to \$35,000</b>	<i>Withdraw from your RRSP tax-free. Repay over 15 years. Available to first-time buyers only.</i>
<b>First-Time Home Buyer Tax Credit</b>	<b>\$1,500 federal credit</b>	<i>A non-refundable \$10,000 tax credit that generates approximately \$1,500 back at tax time.</i>
<b>GST/HST New Housing Rebate</b>	<b>Varies by price</b>	<i>Partial rebate on GST paid on new construction or substantially renovated homes.</i>
<b>CMHC Mortgage Insurance</b>	<b>Required if &lt; 20% down</b>	<i>Protects lenders, not buyers — but enables lower down payments. Premium added to your mortgage.</i>

# CANADIAN BUYER PROGRAMS & INCENTIVES

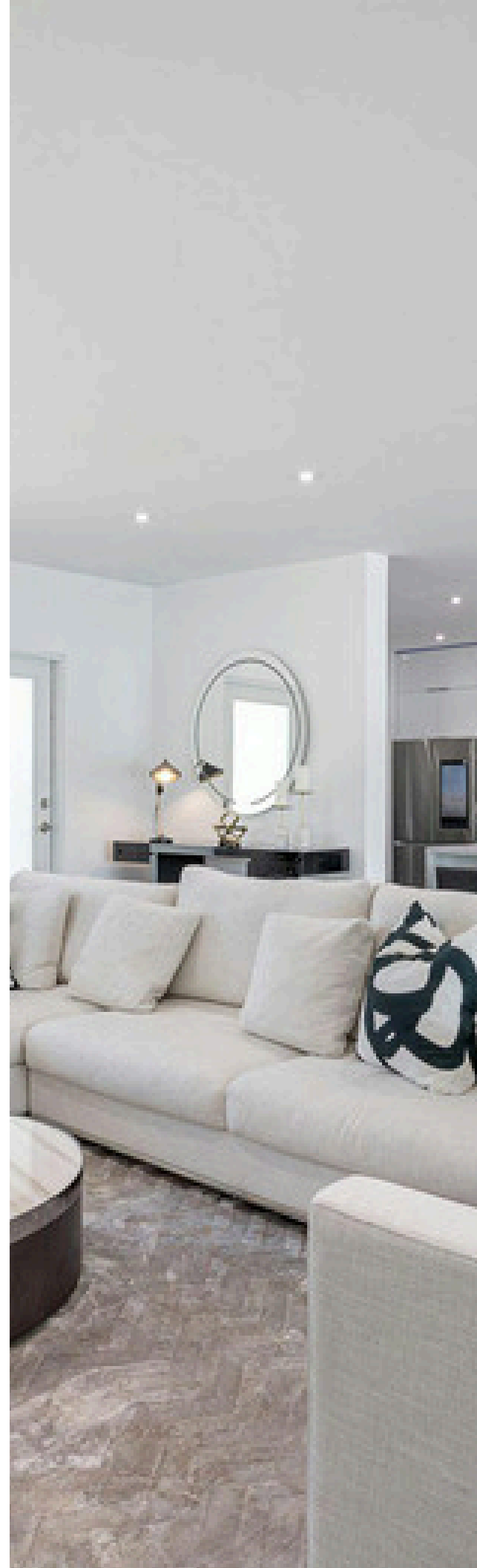
## ALBERTA ONLY

Alberta has NO provincial land transfer tax. In Ontario, a buyer purchasing a \$700,000 home pays approximately \$10,475 in provincial land transfer tax (plus up to \$4,725 more in Toronto's municipal tax). In Calgary, that cost is \$0.

### THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™

During our Strategy Session, we review every program you may qualify for, and I connect you with the right mortgage professional to maximize them.

Most buyers don't fully utilize these programs because nobody walked them through it early enough. We do it before you make a single offer.



# DEFINING WHAT YOU'RE ACTUALLY LOOKING FOR

***Because 'nice kitchen' is not a search strategy.***

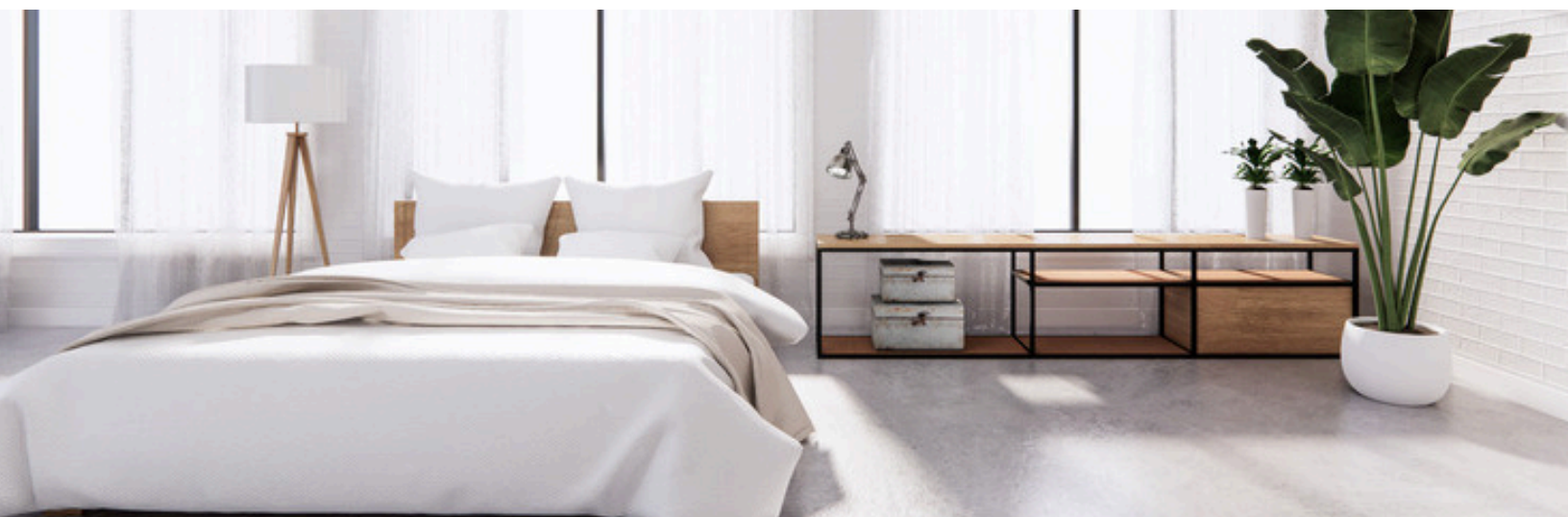
The buyers who find the right home fastest are not the ones who look at the most properties. They're the ones who define their real criteria early and don't waste viewings on homes that can't work.

## **Non-negotiables vs. preferences:**

Non-negotiables are the things you cannot change: the neighbourhood, the school zone, the commute, the minimum number of bedrooms, the lot size. These are your hard filters.

Preferences are the things you want but can live without or add later: the specific flooring, the double vanity, the finished basement. These should never eliminate an otherwise strong property.

***Remember:*** You cannot change the lot, the location, or the price you paid. You can repaint walls, renovate kitchens, and upgrade fixtures. Always evaluate the bones of a property — not the staging.



# PROPERTY TYPES IN ALBERTA

## ***What you really need to know:***

### **Detached (Freehold)**

You own the home and the land. No condo fees. Full control over the property. Generally, the strongest long-term appreciation in Calgary. You're responsible for all maintenance, exterior included.

### **Semi-Detached / Duplex**

Shared one wall with a neighbour. Lower entry price than fully detached. Freehold (no condo fees) in most cases. Common in Calgary's inner-city and newer suburban communities.

### **Townhouse**

Multi-floor attached home. May be freehold or condominium — this matters significantly. Bare land condos have lower condo fees; traditional condo townhouses include exterior maintenance in fees. Always clarify which you're buying.

### **Condominium (Apartment)**

You own the unit; the corporation owns the building and common areas. Monthly condo fees cover shared costs. Before any offer, condo documents must be reviewed: reserve fund status, bylaws, financials, and any special assessments. This is non-negotiable.

## **THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™**

During our Strategy Session, I will walk you through a structured criteria exercise that moves beyond “3 beds, 2 baths.” We map your actual lifestyle requirements, commute realities, and 5-year trajectory so your search is built around what actually matters to you.



# FINDING YOUR HOME

# THE HOME SEARCH

## ***How to tour like a buyer, not a tourist.***

Now that your criteria are defined and your financing is confirmed, it's time to see properties. The goal isn't to see as many homes as possible; it's to see the right ones with the right perspective.

### **What to look for at every showing:**

1

#### **THE FUNDAMENTALS**

*(can't be changed)*

Lot size, location, noise levels, structural integrity, roof condition, and layout flow.

These are your baseline evaluation criteria. They determine long-term value and livability.

2

#### **THE PRACTICAL**

*(evaluate carefully)*

Kitchen functionality, bathroom condition, storage space, room sizes, HVAC condition, windows, and water pressure.

These affect your day-to-day quality of life.

3

#### **THE NOISE**

*(ignore it)*

Paint colors, staging furniture, light fixtures, and decor.

These are temporary or inexpensive to change. Never let staging (or the lack of it) distort your evaluation of a solid property.

#### **THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™**

You receive a curated selection of listings — not a raw MLS dump. My showing agent is fully briefed on your criteria before meeting you. There's no "so, what are you looking for?" on showing day. Every tour is purposeful, and feedback from every showing is captured and reviewed.

# MAKING A STRATEGIC OFFER

***What every element of an Alberta purchase contract actually means.***

When you find the right property, speed and strategy both matter. In a competitive Calgary market, a well-constructed offer is often worth more than a higher number with weak terms. Here's what you're agreeing to and what you can negotiate.

## **The anatomy of an Alberta offer:**

### **PURCHASE PRICE**

The number you offer — informed by a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) of recent comparable sales. Never based on list price alone.

### **DEPOSIT**

Typically 1–5% of purchase price, submitted within 24 hours of acceptance.

Held in trust by the seller's brokerage. Applied to your down payment at closing.

### **CONDITIONS**

Clauses that protect you and allow you to exit without penalty if certain conditions aren't met. In Alberta, the most common are: financing, home inspection, and condo document review.

### **CONDITION PERIOD**

The number of days you have to satisfy your conditions.

Typically 7–14 days in Alberta. Once conditions are met, you issue a waiver and the deal becomes firm.

### **IRREVOCABLE DATE**

The deadline by which the seller must respond to your offer.

Typically 24–48 hours. Expired offers are void.

### **POSSESSION DATE**

The day ownership transfers and you receive the keys.

In Alberta, this is usually 30–90 days after acceptance.

# MAKING A STRATEGIC OFFER

## THE CMA CONVERSATION

Before writing any offer, I lead a Comparative Market Analysis review directly with you.

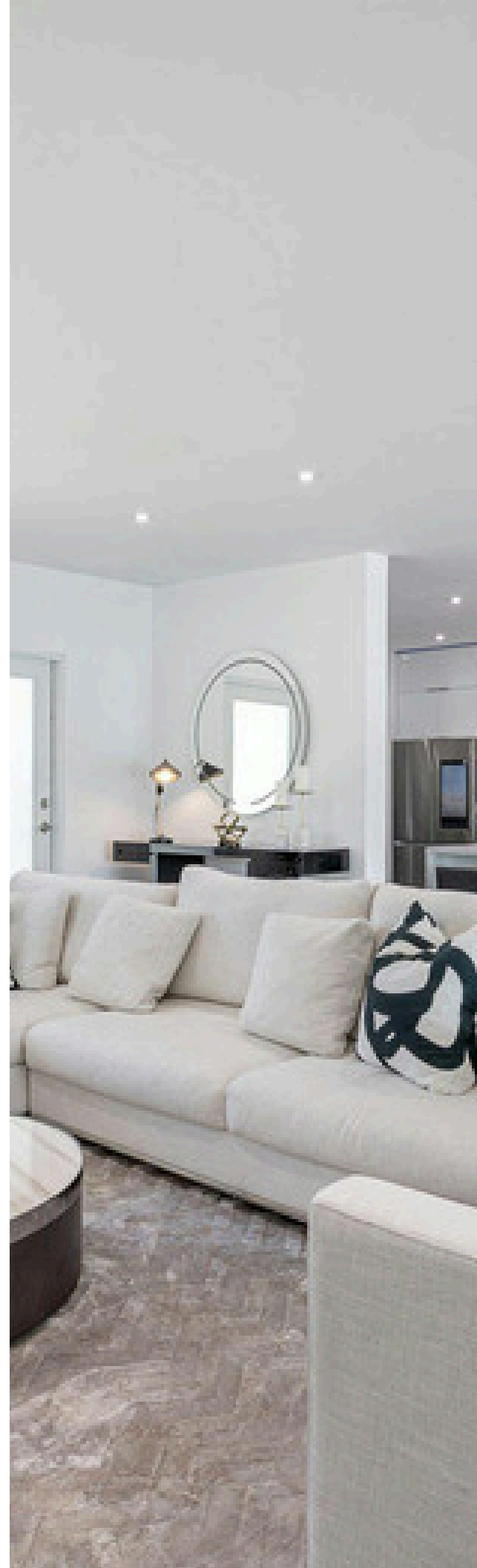
We look at recent comparable sales, days on market, and current buyer competition. Every offer my clients submit is strategic and data-backed, not emotional.

### Without a strategic partner

- ✗ Offering blind.
- ✗ Guessing on conditions.
- ✗ Hoping the deposit is the right amount.

### THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™

- ✓ CMA reviewed before every offer.
- ✓ Conditions structured to protect you.
- ✓ Deposit positioned competitively.





# FINAL STEPS & CLOSING

# INSPECTIONS & DUE DILIGENCE

***Protecting your investment before it becomes your responsibility.***

Once your offer is accepted, the clock starts. Your condition period is your window to verify everything you agreed to buy — and your protection if something material is discovered.

## **The home inspection:**

Schedule your home inspection within 24 hours of offer acceptance. A qualified home inspector examines the structure, mechanical systems, roof, insulation, plumbing, electrical, and more. The inspection report is your negotiating tool, not a reason to panic.

- Critical issues (structural, electrical, roof) are typically negotiated as repair credits or price reductions
- Cosmetic issues are informational; they rarely support renegotiation
- The inspector works for you, not the seller. Their job is to find problems

## **Condo document review**

***(if purchasing a condo or condo townhouse):***

### **What are Condo Documents?**

When you buy a condominium, you're also buying into a corporation. The condo documents include: the reserve fund study (how much money is set aside for future repairs), the financial statements, the meeting minutes, the bylaws, the insurance policy, and any special assessments pending.

In Alberta, you have 5 business days to review these after receiving them from the seller.

# WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN CONDO DOCUMENTS:

- **Reserve fund:** Is it adequately funded? A poorly funded reserve means future special assessments — unexpected costs to owners.
- **Special assessments:** Are any planned or pending? These can range from hundreds to tens of thousands of dollars.
- **Meeting minutes:** Are there unresolved disputes, recurring problems, or major upcoming expenses discussed?
- **Bylaws:** Do they restrict pets, rentals, or renovations in ways that affect your plans?

## THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™

I coordinate your home inspection within hours of offer acceptance, not days. After the report, I will walk you through what's material versus cosmetic, and lead the renegotiation if warranted.

For condos, I request the document package directly from the seller and coordinate submission to a qualified Document Reviewer, so you receive a professional analysis of the reserve fund, bylaws, financials, and any special assessments within your condition period.



# FINANCING CONFIRMATION

***The moment your deal becomes real.***

While your inspection is happening, your lender is working on the financing side: ordering the appraisal, reviewing your complete file, and preparing to issue Unconditional Approval.

## **The appraisal:**

Your lender will order an appraisal to confirm that the property's value supports the purchase price. The appraiser is independent — they're protecting the bank's investment, not yours.

- If the appraisal matches or exceeds the purchase price: financing proceeds normally
- If the appraisal comes in low: you'll need to make up the difference in cash, renegotiate the price, or, in rare cases, exit under your financing condition

## **The Waiver — and what it means:**

The waiver is the document you sign to remove your conditions from the purchase contract. Once signed, the deal is firm; there is no exit without losing your deposit. The waiver is issued after you've satisfied all conditions: inspection, condo review, and financing.

*Never sign the waiver until you're genuinely ready to proceed.*

### **THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™**

I track your condition period and lender timeline in parallel, so nothing falls through the cracks. If your appraisal is delayed or your lender needs something additional, I'm coordinating on your behalf. The waiver only gets signed when every piece is confirmed. Every stage is tracked and explained.

***Waiver signed with full confidence. No surprises.***

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR CLOSING COSTS

***The real number you need to prepare for – beyond your down payment.***

Most buyers focus entirely on the down payment and underestimate – or completely miss – the additional costs required to close. In Alberta, closing costs typically range from 1.5% to 4% of the purchase price, depending on your situation.

Here is a realistic breakdown:

COST ITEM	ESTIMATED COST
Legal / Lawyer Fees	\$1,500 – \$2,500
Title Insurance	\$200 – \$400
Home Inspection	\$450 – \$650
Condo Document Review (if applicable)	\$400 – \$600
Mortgage Appraisal Fee (if applicable)	\$300 – \$500
Property Tax Adjustment (prorated)	Varies
CMHC Insurance Premium (if < 20% down)	2.8% – 4% of mortgage
Home Insurance (first year, often required at closing)	\$1,200 – \$2,000+
Moving Costs	\$800 – \$3,000+
<b>Provincial Land Transfer Tax</b>	<b>\$0 – Alberta has none ✨</b>

## THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™

During our Strategy Session, I will walk you through a realistic total-cost estimate for your purchase scenario. You go into every offer knowing your full financial picture, not just the purchase price.

# CLOSING DAY

***The moment you've planned and prepared for arrives.***

In Alberta, Closing Day is the day ownership transfers, funds move between lawyers, and you receive your keys. You'll typically sign your mortgage documents with your lawyer a few days before this date — but possession happens on the closing date confirmed in your contract.



## **What to expect at your lawyer meeting:**

- Review and sign the mortgage documents
- Review the Statement of Adjustments — confirming the final numbers (purchase price, deposits paid, property tax adjustment)
- Provide a certified cheque or wire transfer for closing funds (down payment balance + closing costs)
- Your lawyer registers the title and coordinates key release with the seller's lawyer

# BEFORE YOU GO TO THE LAWYER

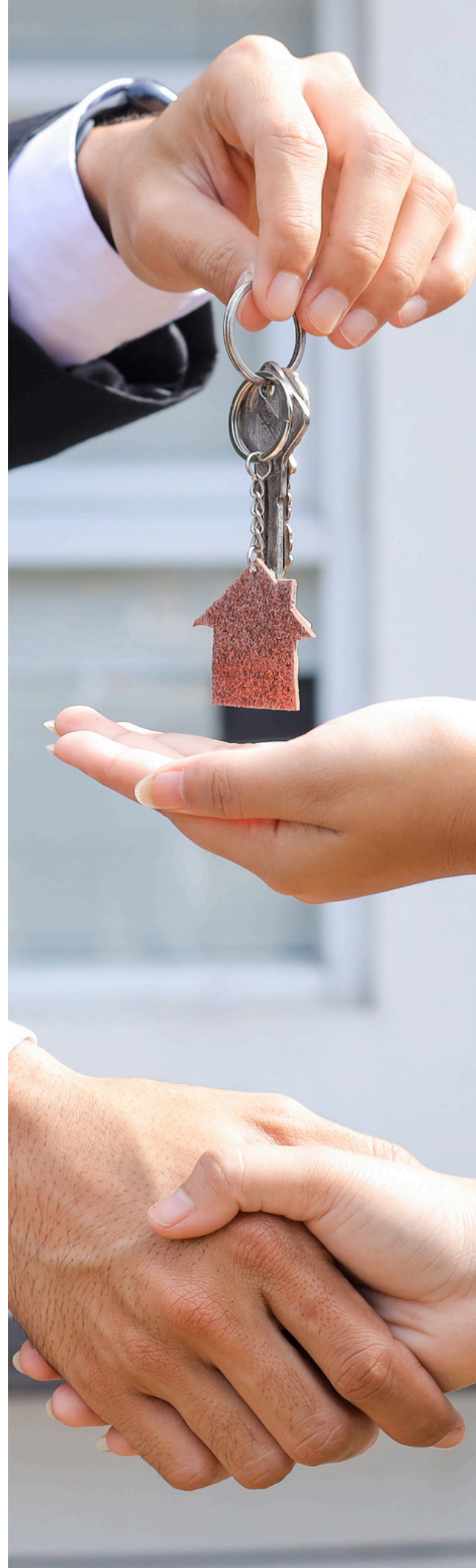
- Confirm your home insurance is in place (your lender requires proof)
- Schedule your final walkthrough within 24 hours before possession
- Have government-issued ID ready
- Know the exact amount of your closing funds — confirmed with your lawyer in advance

## THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™

You receive a final summary email well before possession day covering every step, every contact, every number. Nothing is left for you to figure out on the day.

The final walkthrough is coordinated and confirmed. When you walk into your lawyer's office, you know exactly what to expect.

**Closing day isn't a stressful finish line. It's a planned, protected, celebrated moment; the result of a process done right.**



# THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™



# THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™

***My proprietary 4-step system built around the Calgary buying process, not around shortcuts.***

Every step in this guide has a right way to do it — and a way most buyers and agents settle for. The KEYS Experience™ is the framework I've built to make sure my clients get the right way, every time.

It doesn't depend on my physical presence. It depends on a system that's been designed and tested to protect your time, your investment, and your experience from first conversation to keys in hand.



**EVERY STEP IS INTENTIONAL. EVERY CLIENT KNOWS WHERE THEY ARE AND WHAT'S NEXT. NO CHASING UPDATES. NO WONDERING WHAT'S HAPPENING.**

# WHAT MAKES THE KEYS EXPERIENCE™ DIFFERENT

***7 things that set this process apart from the standard Calgary buyer experience.***

- ✓ Preparation form before your first call — so our Strategy Session starts with strategy, not intake.
- ✓ Pre-qualification built into booking — by the time we talk, your financial picture is already clear.
- ✓ Criteria mapping that goes beyond bedrooms and bathrooms — we build your search around your actual life.
- ✓ Showing agent fully briefed on your file before every tour — no re-explaining what you're looking for.
- ✓ CMA review before every offer — your price is always data-backed, never emotional.
- ✓ Client portal and milestone emails at every stage — offer, inspection, waiver, and closing all confirmed in writing.
- ✓ WhatsApp group for real-time coordination — you, me, and the team. Communication that actually works.

**YOU DON'T GET LEFT GUESSING.  
YOU DON'T GET GENERIC.**

**YOU GET A SYSTEM AND A TEAM THAT RUNS  
YOUR TRANSACTION PROFESSIONALLY.**

# SUCCESS STORIES



I've had the pleasure of working with Karla on a couple of real estate deals, and I can't say enough good things about her! 🏠 She's incredibly professional, attentive, and amazing to work with. Karla truly knows her stuff and always goes the extra mile for her clients. On top of that, she's a wonderful friend and one of the kindest people I know. ❤️😊 Highly recommend working with her!

**LEANE EL HADDAOUI**



Karla Linares is an amazing real estate agent who is knowledgeable not just in the process of buying and selling a property but also when it comes to property management. This makes her an asset when someone is buying a property for the purpose of investing. Whenever I have clients in Calgary and the surrounding areas, she is my go-to agent! When you are with Karla Linares, you are in great hands!!!

**EDWIN Q**



Karla is an absolute gem. Having worked together on numerous deals, I've seen firsthand how deeply she cares about meeting each client's unique needs. She's relentless in her efforts, always going the extra mile to ensure every detail is handled with care and precision.

**DARLENE LOURENCO**

# ABOUT KARLA

I'm Karla Linares — REALTOR® with Real Broker AB Ltd., based between Calgary and El Salvador, and the architect behind **The KEYS Experience™**. I'm bilingual, so you receive full service in *English or Spanish*.

I built this system after watching too many buyers navigate one of the biggest financial decisions of their lives with incomplete information, no clear process, and an agent who was more interested in closing than in protecting them.


## ***That's not how I operate.***

I believe every home buyer deserves a strategic partner who treats their investment like it matters. That's why I lead every transaction from strategy to close. My trained Calgary team handles every in-person detail: showings, coordination, and on-site support, to my exact professional standard. Whether I'm working remotely or face-to-face with you, the process, the quality and the outcome are identical: Professional and stress-free.

Every.Single.Time.



The Real Estate logo, consisting of the word 'real' in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font inside a black square.

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# READY TO BUY STRATEGICALLY?

## YOUR FIRST STEP IS A DISCOVERY CALL

The Discovery Call is a short, focused conversation where we determine if you are ready to buy and if **The KEYS Experience™** is the right fit for your home purchase.

**It's not a sales pitch.** It's an honest conversation about where you are, what you're looking for, and whether I'm positioned to serve you well.

### BEFORE THE CALL:

I'll ask three quick pre-qualification questions:

1. What type of transaction are you planning? (Buying, selling, or both)
2. What's your ideal timeline?
3. Have you started the financing process — or do you need a mortgage broker connection?

Either way, you leave with clarity and the right next step for you.

### BOOK YOUR DISCOVERY CALL

[BOOK HERE](#)

### AFTER THE CALL

One of three things will happen:

1. We decide it's a great fit — and book your Home Buying Strategy Session.
2. I refer you to the right professional if we're not the right match.
3. We agree the timing isn't right and I stay available when it is.



Questions? Email [hello@karlalinares.ca](mailto:hello@karlalinares.ca) | Call 403.966.7705



