

THE HOME
buyer's guide



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Owning a home is more than a financial investment; it's an investment in living your best life. You can decorate or renovate however you like, customize your landscape, make it your own.

This guide provides a detailed look at the home buying process.





GET TO KNOW YOUR REAL ESTATE AGENT

Hi! I'm Stephanie Poulos, and I am honored to be working with you! Buying a home is one of the biggest decisions you will make in life, and I'm going to be here with you every step of the way to make sure that you are comfortable, taken care of, and that your home buying experience is as easy and fun as it can possibly be!

For 16 years, I've worked with buyers and sellers in various markets and price ranges. No two clients, properties, or deals are alike. Every buyer and seller is different, with different wants, needs and goals. It is my job to navigate each situation with my experience and expertise to create winning results, and help you manifest your dreams.

I'm excited to get to know you and help you find your perfect home!

Stephanie Poulos

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Bunzer

QUESTIONNAIRE

DESIRED LOCATION

Neighborhoods, needs, look and feel of preferred area.

PRICING & FINANCING

Price range? If you need financing, are you pre-approved yet?

TIMEFRAME

Do you need to sell a current home? Are you leasing? When does your current lease end? Ideal move-in time?

INTERIOR

Number of Bedrooms/Bathrooms? Total square feet? Other interior requirements?

EXTERIOR

Lot size? Garage? Amenities? Pet needs? Other exterior requirements?

Financing Tips



GET YOUR CREDIT IN CHECK

Make sure you're financially prepared for homeownership. Do you have a lot of debt? Plenty saved for a down payment? What about closing costs? Ask yourself "how much house can I afford?" before you go further. Additionally, know that lenders look closely at your credit score when determining your eligibility for a mortgage loan. Check your credit score and do anything you can to improve it, such as lowering outstanding debt, disputing any errors and holding off on applying for any other loans or credit cards.



FIND THE RIGHT LENDER

Just like you want to get the home that best suits your needs, you'll want to find a lender that best suits you. It is important to work with a seasoned lender for a smooth transaction. I am happy to offer you a referral for a trusted mortgage broker.



GET ORGANIZED

A lender will need information from you in order to get you pre-approved for a mortgage loan. Here are few things to have ready for them:

- W-2 forms from the past two years
- Pay stubs from the past 30 days
- Tax returns from the past two years
- Proof of other sources of income
- Recent bank statements
- Details on long-term debts such as car or student loans
- ID and Social Security number

*If you're self-employed, you may have to provide proof of your financial stability, including reasonable credit score, profit & loss statement, Year-to-date revenue, and possibly providing business tax returns.

When an offer is submitted, sellers will require proof of pre-approval. This document is crucial to a successful offer! Make sure to get a pre-approved letter from your lender before we start viewing homes.

THE INITIAL PROCESS

1. CONSULTATION

This is where we discuss what type of home best suits your needs.

- How long have you been looking for a new home?
- What areas and neighborhoods are you considering?
- What is your Plan B, if you can't find the home you have in mind?
- What are some of your must haves?
- What are deal breaker items?



2. PRE-APPROVAL

This is a quick necessary process that helps narrow down and determine how much you can afford!

Lenders typically recommend a home that costs no more than three to five times your annual household income, with a 20% down payment. However, there are MANY different financing structures that they can make work for you!

Did you know? 88% of all Buyers work with Realtors!

HOUSE HUNTING

3. FINDING "THE ONE"

I will tailor listings based on your criteria. I funnel all properties and pick the best to view, and will filter out the homes that will not work.

Most buyers look at approximately 10 properties and are then ready to make an offer. At that time, if you have not found a home you are looking for - it's HIGHLY recommended that we sit down and review your criteria to make sure that we are looking at the right listings for you.

Once you find one you love... it's time to determine the market value of that property. I will analyze market data and consider other relevant homes that have sold and provide recommendations for an offer strategy.

4. MAKING AN OFFER

Now is the exciting time! When you are ready to write an offer, I will walk you through the contract. It is important to write a fair offer or you can run the risk of the seller not responding or even losing the property to another buyer. In today's market, there are many multiple offer situations, and I specialize in providing winning strategies. Here is what you need to consider primarily when making an offer:

Price

Earnest Money amount

Mortgage terms

Closing Date

Contingencies to include or waive



INSPECTIONS AND MORE

5. HOME INSPECTIONS

The immediate step after your offer is accepted is to schedule a home inspection. You will have a certain number of days to complete this inspection after the offer was accepted.

Your home inspection report will list all items considered defective or problems relating to the safety of the home corrected prior to closing. You have the opportunity within a specified period of time to request that the seller remedy issues as appropriate.



6. ATTORNEY REVIEW & LOAN APPROVAL

The attorney review contingency gives a buyer the opportunity to have a legal review of their contract after securing the property. The contract can be reviewed and modified on your behalf. All necessary documents pertaining to the homeowner's association will be provided & reviewed. Before closing, a title search is done to ensure there are no liens, or problems that might prevent a clean title for you to close on the home.

An appraisal is an estimate of the property value. The appraisal not only serves to justify the lender's investment, but to help keep the buyer from overpaying on a property. Your lender will typically hire an appraiser and charge you the fee at closing.

Final commitment lender's letter approves your home loan! Once this is issued, your mortgage contingency can be cleared.



CLOSING TIME

7. THE CLOSING

The closing process finalizes your home purchase.

A FEW THINGS TO BRING

- A valid government issued photo ID
- Cashier's check payable for the total amount due
- Any outstanding documents for the title company or loan officer

CLOSING COSTS

Fees typically total 4% - 9% of the total purchase price and can include:

- Escrow Fees
- Recording fees
- Application and underwriting fees
- SIDs and/or LIDs
- Appraisal Fees
- Local Transfer Taxes
- Homeowners Insurance
- Homeowners Association Fees

Bigger Mistakes

AVOID THESE MISTAKES WHEN BUYING YOUR HOME

GETTING TOO EMOTIONAL

Think it's impossible? It's actually not. Once you decide to buy a home, start thinking of yourself as a businessperson and investor rather than just a future homeowner. In fact, forget that you're the "Buyer" altogether. By looking at the transaction from a purely financial perspective, you'll distance yourself from the emotional aspects of buying the property. While it is important to factor in certain emotional aspects, don't let it cloud your judgment. Real estate is an investment. Don't let emotions distract you from that.

HOME SHOPPING BEFORE GETTING PRE-APPROVED

It's more fun to look at homes than it is to talk about your finances with a lender. So that's what a lot of first-time home buyers do: They visit properties before finding out how much they are able to borrow. Then, they are disappointed when they discover they were looking in the wrong price range (either too high or too low) or when they find the right home, but aren't able to make a serious offer. How to avoid this mistake: Talk to a mortgage specialist about getting pre-qualified or even pre-approved for a home loan before you start to seriously shop for a place. The pre-qualification or pre-approval process involves a review of your income and expenses, and it can make your bid more competitive because you'll be able to show sellers that you can back up your offer.

EMPTYING YOUR SAVINGS

If you buy a previously owned home, it almost inevitably will need an unexpected repairs not long after. Maybe you'll need to replace a water heater or pay a homeowner's insurance deductible after bad weather. How to avoid this mistake: Save enough money to make a down payment, pay for closing costs and moving expenses, and take care of repairs that may come up. Lenders will give you estimates of closing costs, and you should call a few moving companies for an estimate to get an idea of your moving expenses.

CHOOSING THE WRONG LENDER

Shopping for a mortgage is like shopping for a car or any other expensive item: It pays to compare offers. Mortgage interest rates vary from lender to lender, and so do fees such as closing costs and discount points. But according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, almost half of borrowers don't shop for a loan. How to avoid this mistake: Apply with multiple mortgage lenders. A typical borrower could save \$430 in interest just in the first year by comparing five lenders. All mortgage applications made within a 45-day window will count as just one credit inquiry.

REAL ESTATE TERMS

Buyers Need to Know

APPRAISAL

A DETERMINATION OF THE VALUE OF SOMETHING, IN THIS CASE, THE HOUSE YOU PLAN TO BUY. A PROFESSIONAL APPRAISER MAKES AN ESTIMATE BY EXAMINING THE PROPERTY, LOOKING AT THE INITIAL PURCHASE PRICE, AND COMPARING IT WITH RECENT SALES OF SIMILAR PROPERTIES.

CLOSING COSTS

ALL SETTLEMENT OR TRANSACTION CHARGES THAT HOME BUYERS NEED TO PAY AT THE CLOSE OF ESCROW WHEN THE PROPERTY IS TRANSFERRED. THESE TYPICALLY INCLUDE LENDER'S FEES AND POINTS OR PREPAID INTEREST, A PRORATED SHARE OF THE PROPERTY TAXES, TRANSFER TAXES, CREDIT CHECK FEES, HOMEOWNERS' AND TITLE INSURANCE PREMIUMS, DEED FILING FEES, REAL ESTATE AGENT COMMISSIONS, INSPECTION AND APPRAISAL FEES, AND ATTORNEYS' FEES.

APPRECIATION

INCREASE IN THE VALUE OR WORTH OF AN ASSET OR PIECE OF PROPERTY THAT'S CAUSED BY EXTERNAL ECONOMIC FACTORS OCCURRING OVER TIME, RATHER THAN BY THE OWNER HAVING MADE IMPROVEMENTS OR ADDITIONS.

MLS

A COMPUTER-BASED SERVICE, COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS MLS, THAT PROVIDES REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS WITH DETAILED LISTINGS OF MOST HOMES CURRENTLY ON THE MARKET. THE PUBLIC CAN NOW ACCESS MUCH OF THIS KIND OF INFORMATION THROUGH WEBSITES LIKE

EARNEST MONEY

THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT A BUYER DEPOSITS IN ESCROW. USUALLY THERE IS AN INITIAL AMOUNT AT CONTRACT ACCEPTANCE (\$1000-5000), AND AN ADDITIONAL AMOUNT AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF ATTORNEY REVIEW (NEGOTIABLE). THIS SHOWS THE SELLER HOW INVESTED IN THE DEAL YOU ARE.

CONTINGENCY

A PROVISION IN A CONTRACT STATING THAT SOME OR ALL OF THE TERMS OF THE CONTRACT WILL BE ALTERED OR VOIDED BY THE OCCURRENCE OF A SPECIFIC EVENT, USUALLY BY SPECIFIC DATES LEADING UP TO THE CLOSING.

ESCROW

THE HOLDING OF FUNDS OR DOCUMENTS BY A NEUTRAL THIRD PARTY PRIOR TO CLOSING YOUR HOME SALE. THIS IS TYPICALLY DONE BY THE LISTING BROKER.

HOME INSPECTION

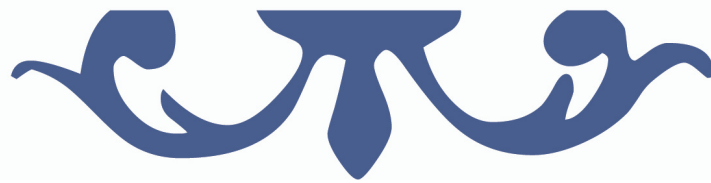
AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONDITION OF A REAL ESTATE PROPERTY. A HOME INSPECTOR ASSESSES THE CONDITION OF A PROPERTY, INCLUDING ITS HEATING / COOLING SYSTEMS, PLUMBING, ELECTRICAL WORK, WATER AND SEWAGE, AS WELL AS SOME FIRE AND SAFETY ISSUES.

UNDER CONTRACT

THE STATUS OF A HOME ONCE A CONTRACT HAS BEEN SIGNED BY BOTH BUYER AND SELLER. EARNEST MONEY HAS BEEN DEPOSITED IN ESCROW, AND THE TRANSACTION IS PROCEEDING THROUGH CONTINGENCIES.



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