

Buyer Guide

How Smart Buyers Navigate the Market



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Thinking About Buying a Home?

If you're reading this right now, there's a good chance you've at least thought about what it might look like to own a home someday.

For many people, the biggest challenge isn't deciding if they want to buy — it's understanding how the process actually works and whether it makes sense for their situation.

That's exactly why I put this together.

Inside, you'll find a simple breakdown of what's consistently happening in the market and what the homebuying process typically looks like from start to finish.

Whether you're considering buying this year or just starting to explore your options, my goal is to give you clarity, not pressure.

If you ever have questions or just want to talk through what this could look like for you, I'm always happy to be a resource.

— Chad

What the Home Buying Process Looks Like

A simple look at how most buyers move from renting to owning

1. Understand Your Numbers & Consult with A Real Estate Professional

Get a clear picture of your budget, monthly payment range, and what feels comfortable for you.

2. Connect with a Lender

A lender helps you get pre-approved so you know exactly what you can afford.

3. Start Your Home Search

Explore available homes and get a feel for what fits your needs and lifestyle.

4. Find the Right Home

When the right one comes along, timing and preparation matter.

5. Make an Offer

We structure an offer based on the market, the home, and your goals.

6. Inspections & Due Diligence

You'll have time to fully understand the home before moving forward.

7. Closing & Keys

Final paperwork is completed – and you officially become a homeowner.

Where most people start:

Getting pre-approved with a lender

This step gives you clarity and confidence before you begin your search.



Table of Content

- Buyer Core Principles
- Buyer Seasonal Behavior Map
- Buyer Topic Modules

A high-angle photograph of a cityscape. In the center, a tall, dark church steeple with a cross on top rises above the rooftops. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. In the foreground, there are several buildings: a red brick building on the left with white window frames, a yellow building in the middle with arched windows, and a grey brick building on the right. Numerous air conditioning units are visible on the rooftops. The overall tone is somewhat somber due to the cloudy sky.

Buyer Core Principles

Buyer Core Principles

1. Financial readiness drives leverage and confidence



What it really means

Money isn't just about affording the home—it's about negotiating power, speed, and emotional control.

Example

Two buyers want the same house:

- Buyer A is fully underwritten, has reserves, and can close in 21 days.
- Buyer B “needs to talk to a lender” and hopes their bonus comes through.

Seller chooses Buyer A—even at a slightly lower price—because certainty beats hope.

Common mistakes

- Getting pre-qualified instead of pre-approved (huge difference).
- Stretching to the top of their budget with no cash buffer.
- Falling in love with homes before knowing their real numbers.
- Ignoring how reserves affect stress and decision-making.

What smart buyers do differently

- Get fully underwritten approvals before shopping.
- Keep 3–6+ months of reserves after closing.
- Know their walk-away number in advance.
- Use confidence to negotiate instead of rushing or panicking.



Buyer Core Principles

2. Monthly cost matters more than purchase price

What it really means

Your life is paid for monthly, not in headline prices.

Example

- Home A: \$750k, low taxes, efficient, reasonable insurance → \$4,200/month
- Home B: \$700k, high taxes, HOA, poor insulation → \$4,900/month

Home B looks cheaper but costs \$8,400 more per year.

Common mistakes

- Fixating on sale price instead of total monthly outlay.
- Forgetting taxes, insurance, HOA, utilities, and maintenance.
- Assuming rates or taxes “won’t change much.”
- Budgeting only for the mortgage payment.

What smart buyers do differently

- Calculate all-in monthly cost before making offers.
- Stress-test payments for higher taxes, insurance, and maintenance.
- Compare homes by monthly burn, not sticker price.
- Choose homes that preserve lifestyle flexibility.

Buyer Core Principles

3. Inspections are leverage tools, not deal killers

What it really means

Inspections are information and negotiating power—not a reason to panic.

Example

Inspection finds:

- Aging roof (5 years left)
- Minor electrical issues
- Old water heater

Smart buyer asks for:

- Seller credit or price reduction
- Or specific repairs
- Deal survives—and buyer wins.



Common mistakes

- Expecting a “perfect” house.
- Walking away over normal wear-and-tear.
- Using emotional language instead of dollar-based requests.
- Waiving inspections blindly to “win” the deal.

What smart buyers do differently

- Focus on big-ticket, safety, and system issues.
- Translate findings into cost estimates.
- Ask for credits instead of nitpicky repairs.
- Use inspections to rebalance risk—not to torpedo deals.

Buyer Core Principles

4. Neighborhood quality impacts resale more than finishes



What it really means

You can change the house. You can't change the location.

Example

- Modest home in a great school district → multiple offers at resale.
- Beautiful flip in a declining area → price cuts and long days on market.

Buyers forgive outdated kitchens. They don't forgive bad locations.

Common mistakes

- Overpaying for finishes in weak neighborhoods.
- Assuming "up-and-coming" always comes.
- Ignoring schools, walkability, noise, and long-term demand.
- Buying the nicest house on the block.

What smart buyers do differently

- Buy the worst house in the best neighborhood they can afford.
- Study resale comps, not just current listings.
- Value boring consistency over flashy upgrades.
- Prioritize schools, safety, and access over countertops.



Buyer Core Principles

5. Bad renovations are more expensive than no renovations

What it really means

Poor work costs twice: once to buy it, and again to fix it.

Example

A “renovated” kitchen:

- No permits
- Cheap materials
- Bad electrical behind walls

Buyer pays a premium—then has to rip it out later.

Common mistakes

- Falling for cosmetic upgrades with no substance.
- Assuming recent renovations = quality work.
- Ignoring permits, workmanship, and systems.
- Underestimating how hard it is to undo bad work.

What smart buyers do differently

- Prefer original-but-solid over flashy-but-questionable.
- Verify permits and contractors.
- Inspect renovations more closely than old systems.
- Budget heavily to fix bad work—or avoid it entirely.

Buyer Seasonal Behavior Map



Buyer Seasonal Behavior Map

Season	Buyer Behavior Focus	Strategic Mindset
Winter	Planning, pre-approval, research	Preparation reduces urgency
Spring	Clear criteria, quick evaluations	Clarity + discipline. Competition rewards decisiveness
Summer	Inventory evaluation, inspection diligence, price sensitivity	Patience + verification. Inventory increases, but quality varies
Fall	Negotiation, value assessment	Leverage improves + selectivity. Motivation shifts

There is no “wrong” time to buy.
 Timing affects strategy, not whether you should buy.



Buyer Topic Modules



Buyer Topic Modules

Financing & Readiness

How money shapes confidence and negotiating power.

Financing affects more than what you can afford—it influences how competitive your offer is and how confident you feel throughout the process.

Pre-Approval vs. Pre-Qualification

Pre-qualification is an estimate based on unverified information. Pre-approval is a lender-reviewed confirmation of what you can borrow. Sellers take pre-approval seriously because it reduces the risk of the deal falling apart.

Takeaway: Pre-qualification helps you plan. Pre-approval helps you compete.

Questions Buyers Should Ask Lenders

Buyers should understand:

- Their total monthly payment, not just the loan amount
- Cash needed at closing and remaining afterward
- How taxes, insurance, and rates could change payments
- How quickly the lender can close

A good lender explains tradeoffs clearly and doesn't push buyers to the maximum number.

Buyer Topic Modules

Financing & Readiness



How Financing Impacts Offer Strength

Strong financing can matter as much as price. Sellers prefer buyers who are fully approved, have cash reserves, and can close on time. Clean, confident financing reduces seller risk.

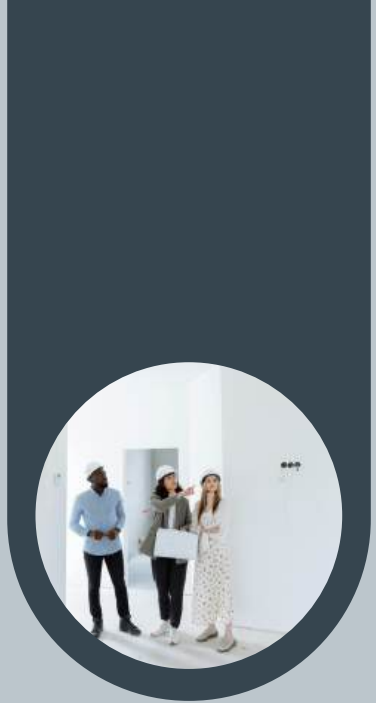
Understanding True Buying Power

The highest approved loan is rarely the best choice. True buying power reflects monthly comfort, maintenance costs, and lifestyle flexibility. Buyers who leave margin make better long-term decisions.

Buyer Topic Modules

Evaluating Homes

Objectively



Separating facts from emotions

Homes trigger emotion, but good decisions rely on clear evaluation of condition, value, and long-term costs.

Reading Days on Market

Short market time may signal strong demand. Longer market time may indicate overpricing or condition issues—but it can also create negotiation opportunity. Context matters more than the number itself.

Spotting Poor Renovations and Flips

Warning signs include rushed finishes, lack of permits, and surface upgrades that don't address major systems. Cosmetic updates are easy; quality work shows in the details.

Buyer Topic Modules

Evaluating Homes Objectively



Cosmetic vs. Structural Issues

Cosmetic issues affect appearance and are usually manageable. Structural and system issues affect safety and function and can be expensive. Smart buyers don't panic over cosmetics but investigate major systems carefully.

Cost to Buy vs. Cost to Own

Purchase price is only part of ownership. Monthly payments, taxes, insurance, utilities, and maintenance shape real affordability. Comparing homes by total monthly cost prevents surprises.

Avoiding Emotional Overbidding

Competitive situations create pressure. Buyers who decide their limit in advance and rely on comparable sales avoid regret. Overpaying rarely feels justified later.

Buyer Topic Modules

Inspections & Due Diligence

Using information to protect your position

Inspections exist to inform buyers, not to scare them. Almost every home has issues.



Why Inspections Protect Leverage

Inspections provide documented facts. Those facts allow buyers to renegotiate price, request credits, or walk away if risks are too high.

Common Inspection Myths

A “bad” inspection doesn’t mean the deal is dead. New homes still need inspections. Reasonable repair requests are normal and often expected.



Buyer Topic Modules

Inspections & Due Diligence

Using Findings Strategically

Effective buyers focus on safety, structure, and expensive systems. They convert issues into estimated costs and request credits rather than perfect repairs.



When to Walk vs. Renegotiate

Walking makes sense when risks are major or costs exceed comfort.

Renegotiating works when issues are manageable and the home still fits long-term goals.





Buyer Topic Modules

Long-Term

Value Thinking

Buying with resale in mind—even if you plan to stay

Resale matters because life changes. Homes that are easy to sell are usually easier to own.

Predicting Resale Value

Homes with functional layouts, reasonable pricing, and broad appeal tend to hold value better than highly personalized properties.

Neighborhood Fundamentals

Location drives value more than finishes. Schools, safety, access, and long-term demand shape resale far more than upgrades inside the home.

Renovations That Help vs. Hurt

Neutral, well-done improvements to kitchens, baths, efficiency, and maintenance usually help. Trend-driven or poorly executed renovations often hurt value—especially if they over-improve for the neighborhood.