
GUIDING YOU HOME

A step-by-step guide of the homebuying process



Presented By Michelle Garcia

WELCOME!

Congratulations!

Buying a home is one of the biggest investments and financial decisions you can make. While it is a major commitment and responsibility, it is also a very exciting time in your life. I'm honored to play a part in it and am excited about soon having the privilege of handing you the keys to your new home!

With that said, it's important to keep in mind that home buying is a complicated process. I want your home buying experience to be a fun adventure resulting in you purchasing the home of your dreams - at least the home of your dreams for this season of your life. The only way this can happen is for me to do my job well, and I take that commitment very seriously.

My job is to take care of a mountain of details behind the scenes so buying your home will be an exciting adventure for you instead of a stressful nightmare. I will be working hard to make sure that everything is as rewarding as possible, guiding you at every step and making sure that your needs and desires are met.

This guide was designed to inform you about all steps of the home buying process so that you can feel confident, make informed decisions and act as an educated buyer. Since every real estate transaction is unique, you will most likely have questions or concerns not presented here. That's why I'm here - to assist you at each step, to answer your questions, and to help you find the home you desire! I am committed to being your trusted advisor. Thank you for your trust. I look forward to serving you!

Before We Dive In

You need to know a few things about the home buying process in order for you to avoid heartache and disappointment because—let's face it—buying a home should be fun. Armed with the right expectations, buying your home will be smooth sailing. That's why I'm making this booklet available to you. It will empower you to go into your home buying experience with your eyes wide open. I want to put you way ahead of the field so you are prepared when others might be scrambling. I recommend you read through this right away, and refer back to it often throughout the weeks ahead.

As you probably know, a real estate agent's fees are contingent on the sale of a home. In other words, if you end up not buying a home, I don't get paid. That's why it's in my best interests to make sure your search for a home is successful. I'm going to do everything I can to remove the obstacles that stand between you and the home you want. I do this for a living, and I work closely with a team of other professionals, so that you and I can leverage their expertise any time we encounter challenges along the way.

You Don't Pay Out Of Pocket For My Fees

When you purchase a home listed with the MLS (Multiple Listings Service), the seller pays my commission. You don't pay any money out of pocket at all to me or to my brokerage.

Important! However, not all homes are in the MLS. If you want to look at a "For Sale By Owner" home (FSBO), then it's very important that you let me make the first contact. That way I can work to negotiate an agreement so that you don't need to pay any money out of pocket.

"Agency" And What It Means

Each state has its own unique set of laws governing how the real estate business works. Those laws determine what role I am and am not allowed to have in your home buying process. As an agent, I am by law tasked with the responsibility of looking out for the interests of certain parties in a real estate transaction. I also have legal responsibilities to all parties in the transaction. Since it's important that you understand this, we will be taking some time together during our first meeting to discuss what we real estate professionals call "agency."

Bottom line: I need to make sure everybody's rights are protected.

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STEP 1: MORTGAGE PRE-APPROVAL

Mortgage pre-approval is the first step in buying your home. It helps us and it helps you to know what homes to look for, and it empowers us to write a credible offer that your seller is much more likely to say yes to.

Why do you need to get pre-approved for a mortgage? Three reasons:

1. You need to understand how much home you can afford. There's no point looking at homes that are not in your price range. Doing so would be a frustrating waste of time for both you and the seller. Neither do you want to limit yourself to homes that would be disappointingly inadequate for your needs if you have the ability to purchase a home that would better work for you.
2. You need to understand what your house payments would look like depending on the purchase price of the home.
3. Sellers need to know that when they clean and vacate their home so it can be shown, it's being shown to someone who has not only a serious interest, but also the ability to buy the home.

Once you have your pre-approval, you can shop with confidence knowing what you can afford and what budget you are comfortable with. Getting pre-approved shows you are a serious buyer, and it gives you an advantage in competitive bidding. Since financing is secured, it reduces stress by letting you focus on finding the right home.

Not Just A Recommendation, But A Requirement!

In the code of ethics all real estate agents are bound by, we have a duty to the seller only to show their home to buyers who are pre-approved for a mortgage or who have demonstrated ability to purchase the house for cash. So this is a step we cannot skip. It needs to be completed before we start looking at homes. In addition, when we write an offer, we will need that pre-approval to go with the offer.

If you're planning to pay cash, let me know, and I'll let you know what kind of documentation we'll need from your bank.

You'll Be Pleasantly Surprised

Many buyers are pleasantly surprised when they sit down to talk with a lender, and find the process to go better than they expected. You are welcome to work with your own bank or mortgage lender. However, be aware that different lenders have access to different lending options, so a no from one lender might be a yes from a different one. If you run into roadblocks, let me help you find the right lender for you. I've worked with several lenders, and here are three that I recommend:

Robert Page, NMLS# 839839
New American Funding
949-748-4959
Robert.Page@Nafinc.com

Christopher Kim, NMLS# 1596384
New American Funding
949-313-1890
Christopher.Kim@Nafinc.com

Tim Wright, NMLS# 996228
Princeton Mortgage
704-582-2626
TWright@PrincetonMortgage.com

Mortgage Mistakes To Avoid During The Home Buying Process

Even once you are pre-approved for a mortgage, your ability to obtain that mortgage can quickly disappear if you make any of these simple mistakes. You want your financial situation to stay the same. Any changes can be deadly.

In other words, this is NOT the time to buy a car, go on a vacation, change jobs, rack up credit card debt, miss payments, or do anything that could adversely affect your credit. You don't want to be a week away from the closing only to find out that you can't get a loan anywhere.

The following "Ten Commandments" For Home Buyers sums it up:

1. Thou shalt not change jobs, become self-employed, or quit your job.
2. Thou shalt not buy a car, truck or van (or you may be living in it!).
3. Thou shalt not use credit cards excessively or let current accounts fall behind.
4. Thou shalt not spend money you have set aside for closing.
5. Thou shalt not omit debts or liabilities from your loan application.
6. Thou shalt not buy furniture on credit.
7. Thou shalt not originate any inquiries into your credit.
8. Thou shalt not make large deposits without checking with your loan officer.
9. Thou shalt not change bank accounts.
10. Thou shalt not co-sign a loan for anyone.

On top of this, before you pay off a large debt or make a large deposit or do anything unusual, check with your lender. Better safe than sorry!

STEP 2: IDENTIFYING THE PERFECT HOME FOR YOU

One of the first things we'll do as we begin working together is identify the perfect home for you for your search. That way I can focus on finding your ideal properties, and we won't waste your time looking at homes you would never want to buy.

We'll sit down and discuss your wants and needs as they pertain to:

- Type Of Property (Single Family, Ranch, Two-story Condo, Etc.)
- Location Desires Including Schools, Commuting, And Other Considerations
- Lifestyle Desires Including Entertaining, Special Needs, Pets, Hobbies
- Desired Features Such As Master Suite, Deck, Age Of Home
- Condition Requirements (Move-in Ready Or Fix-it-up Opportunity)
- Size Of Home (Square Footage, Size Of Lot, Number Of Bedrooms & Bathrooms)
- Floor Plan (Open Or More Compartmental)
- Kitchen And Dining Features
- Living/Family Room Features
- Finishes (Interior And Exterior)
- Other Needs (E.G., Home Office)

Our goal is to get you all of your "must-haves" together with as many items from your wish list as possible, all the while making your home as affordable as possible.

STEP 3: HOW THE MARKET AFFECTS YOUR BUYING EXPERIENCE

Buying a home is different from buying groceries or even buying a car because how we buy and how much we spend depends heavily on current market conditions. It's my job to stay on top of the market conditions that affect your home search.

What You Hear On The News Can Be Misleading

This is different than just listening to the evening news. Here's why:

1. The news is reporting yesterday's market. We need to make buying decisions based on today's market.
2. The news usually reports national trends. We need to make buying decisions based on local (neighborhood) trends.
3. The news is reporting overall conditions. We need to make buying decisions based on what's happening in the market in the specific price range and location your dream home is in.

Understand "Months Of Inventory"

When professional real estate agents look at the market, one important indicator we look at is "months of inventory." Here's how that works: If we stopped adding new homes to the market, and continued selling homes at the current rate, how soon would all homes on the market be sold? The answer to that question is what we call "months of inventory."

Here's what months of inventory tells us:

1. If we have six months of inventory, then we have a balanced market. Neither the buyer nor the seller has an advantage.
2. If we have less than six months of inventory, then we have a seller's market. That means we will need to be a bit more aggressive to get you the home you want in the price range you want.
3. If we have more than six months of inventory, then a buyer's market. That may allow us to be a little more relaxed in our approach.

STEP 4: FINDING POSSIBILITIES

The Game Changer

The Internet is a game changer. Years ago, finding homes for sale meant driving around and looking for yard signs or calling your real estate agent. Now almost every home for sale is advertised online. And, like so many other things, that can be good or that can be bad.

Let's start with the good. You will out research me, and that's okay. You will talk to neighbors. You will Google the owner. I'm here to help you sift and sort and interpret all that research. I'm here to negotiate price and terms. I'm here to protect you throughout this process. There are many ways for a real estate deal to go south; we've seen it all, and I'm here to steer you out of those murky waters.

Online Listings Are Often Inaccurate

The first thing you need to understand about online real estate listings is this: Don't trust them to be accurate or up to date. Here's why: Many popular real estate sites and apps are in business to generate leads they can sell to agents. That's how they make their money. If they delete their listings, they generate fewer leads and make less money. Thus, it's not in their business interests to close out listings after homes have sold or have accepted offers - it's actually in their interest to keep outdated listings on their site.

In addition, there's no real accountability for real estate sites and apps to provide you with accurate information. They don't have the same legal responsibility to you that I have. That's why pricing and other information can be way off.

To help you with your research, I will set you up with an MLS (Multiple Listing Service) portal that will be sent via email with the most accurate, up-to-date information available about homes for sale that meet your search criteria. Your notifications may be set up on an immediate (as soon as a new home is listed on the market or has any price adjustment), daily, or monthly basis - you just let me know your preference.

Make All Your Contacts Through Me

If you see a home for sale, take down the information and pass it on to me. Do not call or contact the listing real estate agent. Do not contact the owner. I'm trained to approach the opportunity correctly so your interests are protected. Buyers who ignore this advice can get themselves into a great deal of trouble, and I don't want that to happen to you.

Open Houses

Yes, you may attend open houses (and I am happy to join you!). However, should you attend an open house without me, be sure to include my name and my phone number in the sign in sheet. If the listing agent asks, explain that you are represented by me. This protects your interests, this protects our relationship, and this is also a courtesy to the listing agent. Little known fact: Many listing agents hold open houses not just to help sell the property but also as a way to generate leads for buyers they can work with. That sign-in sheet is a sheet of prospects for many real estate agents.

For Sale By Owner

Some homes are sold directly by their owners. We call these “FSBOs” (pronounced fizz-bo), which means, “For Sale By Owner.” The important thing to remember about FSBOs is this: Let me contact the owner for you. I’m trained to know what to say—and, more importantly, what NOT to say.

Owners sell their own homes because they think they can cut out the middleman and get more money for their home. Are they a good deal? Once in a while, yes. Many times, no. That’s why I’m in your court with you. I’m trained to evaluate what they’re offering and help you decide whether it’s in your best interests to pursue it. And, if it is, I’m trained to negotiate the right kind of deal.

Furthermore, it’s important for me to make that contact (even if the sign says “No Realtors”), because otherwise, depending on our agreement, you could end up paying my fee out of pocket. I don’t want that to happen. Let me negotiate a better deal for you!

Foreclosures & Short Sales

Depending on market conditions, you may find foreclosed properties for sale online. If you see something of interest, bring it to me.

Why? Many of these so-called “foreclosures” are not on the market at all. They are pre-foreclosures. They’re not for sale, and they never will be. And, even if they are, some properties can only be bought at auction. If a property is only available at auction and you want to buy it, I cannot represent you in that transaction. With that said, understand that buying properties at auction requires a great deal of real estate savvy. Many times, you’re not even allowed to inspect the property—you buy it as is, and you could end up buying a big, fat lemon.

Some foreclosed properties do end up on the market, and I can represent you if you are interested in buying one of those. Let me help you sift through this. I want you to end up in your dream home, not in a money pit that will drain your time, money, and resources away.

STEP 5: FINDING “THE ONE”

Making A Decision

Everyone has their own process for making a decision, and I want to work with yours. This is an important decision, and you're not going to get pressure from me to decide one way or another.

If you're in a buyer's market, you will probably have ample time to make up your mind whether or not to draft an offer. In a seller's market, you may need to be a little more aggressive. In either case, I want you to be confident and comfortable with your decision.

If you're buying a home with a significant other, then it's important that you both feel comfortable moving forward. Sometimes one partner sees issues that the other partner doesn't, and it's important that everyone is on the same page.

Making An Offer

Once you find the home you want, and all feels good, then of course, we will draft an offer immediately. However, if you have hesitations, then sleep on it. If it's the right decision, it will be there tomorrow. Some agents say, "If you sleep on it, you may not sleep in it," but I like to believe that all good things that are supposed to happen WILL happen. I never want you to make your decision out of fear. As soon as you're sure, we'll act promptly.

An offer, sometimes called a purchase agreement or purchase contract, is a legal document drafted by me on your behalf. Once it is signed by both you and the seller, it becomes a binding contract that all parties are required to abide by. This is why it's important to pay close attention to the details of the offer and to read it over carefully before signing it.

Be aware that sellers are not required to accept or even acknowledge an offer to purchase. Sellers can and often do reply with a counteroffer changing one or more of the terms of the offer. You will then have a limited amount of time to decide whether you wish to accept the counteroffer, or reply with a counteroffer of your own.

STEP 6: DRAFTING AN OFFER

Our Process

When you are ready to make an offer, I will send you an email with a list of questions. Once you've sent me the answers to those questions, I will draft the offer, and then call you. At that point, we can meet in person or there on the phone to go over any questions and make any final changes.

Why do I do it that way? Here's the reason: If I sit down with you to draft the offer, it's easy to get talking, to start skipping around, to get distracted, and to overlook one or more important details. I don't want to let that happen with a legally binding contract. I want to make sure that we get this right.

Deciding How Much To Offer

What is a home worth? Ultimately, a home is worth whatever a buyer is willing and able to pay as long as it matches what a seller is willing and able to accept. So ultimately you decide how much to offer.

With that in mind, I will be providing expert guidance so your offer isn't just a shot in the dark. I will look at market data which will tell us what similar homes in that area have recently sold for. We'll consider market conditions, the owner's motivation, competing offers (if any), and your own unique situation. We'll also look at what terms besides money you can offer the seller that might allow you to adjust the price.

You don't want to offer too much - that's a given, but at the same time, you don't want to offer too little. A "low ball" offer can get the negotiations off to a bad start, and actually weaken your position as a buyer. I'll help you avoid these extremes while at the same time respecting your right to offer whatever amount you want to offer.

Earnest Money / Escrow Deposit

Earnest money, also known as an escrow deposit, is a good faith deposit paid by a buyer to show the seller that the buyer is serious. It is normally paid soon after the offer is accepted. At the closing, the earnest money is applied to your down payment.

One percent of the purchase price is a rule of thumb, but oftentimes this is negotiable. It is usually paid within 3 days of acceptance (the date when all parties have signed the purchase agreement), but again, all of this is negotiable. Once paid, this money is held in a trust account, usually set up by the listing (seller's) real estate broker or the title company.

If the buyer decides to not buy the property or does not make a serious, good faith effort to close the transaction, the seller may be able to keep the buyer's earnest money. If the buyer's contingencies cannot be met (for example, the buyer can't get the financing described in the financing contingency and proper notice is delivered), the buyer may be legally entitled to get the earnest money back.

If you and the seller get into a dispute over the earnest money, you and the seller must work it out or go to small claims court. The broker cannot and will not decide who is entitled to the earnest money.

Included In The Purchase Price

Depending on the home, the seller may have already indicated that certain items such as the refrigerator, range/oven, dishwasher, microwave, washer, dryer, water softener, and window coverings are included. But then I will ask, "Besides those items, would you like anything else to be included in the offer?"

The offer describes the real estate being purchased. Real estate includes the land, the buildings and fixtures. "Fixtures" are improvements that are attached to buildings or land. If there is something the buyer wants included but it is not clear that it is a fixture, it should be listed in the offer.

Binding Acceptance

What date and time would you like to give the seller to accept your offer? I usually suggest midnight the next day after the offer is submitted, but every situation is different. I would not recommend any more than 2 days, weekends and national legal holidays included. However, please note that any specified time period or date that ends or occurs on a Saturday, Sunday or national legal holiday will extend to 5:00 PM of the next business day.

This date and time you indicate for binding acceptance is established only if the seller wants to accept your offer as written. If the seller wishes to change any of the terms of your offer instead of accepting the offer as it was written, the seller will ordinarily give a counter-offer to the buyer. A counteroffer serves as a rejection of an initial offer. Therefore, the initial offer is no longer on the table.

The seller may submit a counter-offer before or after the deadline of binding acceptance. Two more things to keep in mind during negotiations:

1. There is no law that requires a buyer or seller to communicate in writing his or her decision to reject the other's offer.
2. There is also no Florida law that requires the seller to negotiate with each buyer in the order in which the offers were received.

Closing Date

The offer must include a date for closing. I normally recommend a date 30–45 days from the date of the offer. It needs to be an exact date, and it needs to be on a weekday (Monday through Friday), and not on a holiday. But, again, every situation is different.

The transaction must close no later than a stated date unless both parties agree to close on a different date. If the buyer and seller agree to change the closing, this agreement should be put in writing as an amendment to the offer. In some cases, selecting a closing date presents challenges because the buyer and the seller often have very different needs. For example, buyers may wish to put the closing off for a couple months to give them time to obtain proper financing or the seller may be looking for a quick sale because of a job transfer. If you have questions or concerns, we'll discuss them.

Financing Contingency

We'll need to include a financing contingency unless you are paying cash. We'll need to include the type of loan you are obtaining (e.g., conventional, FHA, Rural Housing, etc.), how much money you are putting down (down payment—different than the earnest money), your pre-approval letter, time frame (usually 30 days) for your lender to provide a loan commitment.

Obtaining a loan is probably the key event in most successful residential real estate transactions. Most buyers include a financing contingency providing that they legally do not have to close if they cannot obtain a loan commitment. A loan commitment is an agreement by a lender to lend money. In practice, the loan commitment itself has many conditions and requirements that you must meet before the lender is obligated to make the loan. Once you receive a loan commitment, you should review the commitment and decide if the terms are acceptable. If they are, you can give written directions to deliver it to the seller.

Inspection Contingency

In the vast majority of cases, you will want to have the home inspected as a contingency for the purchase. Unless you're purchasing the home in cash, some inspections are required (your lender will set these requirements). Either way, I would never recommend purchasing a home without a home inspection.

The seller is required to provide a Seller's Disclosure. This document reflects the seller's good faith knowledge of any defects in the property. The statements made in the Seller's Disclosure are not warranties; they are statements of things of which the seller has notice or knowledge. The Seller's Disclosure is helpful, but it is no substitute for an inspection.

In addition to the typical home inspection, you may want to have the home tested for radon or termites. If the home has a fireplace, you may want to have the chimney inspected (or cleaned first and then inspected). If the home has a well and septic system, you'll want those inspected also, and you will want to have the water tested. Sometimes a single inspector can do all of these different inspections. In some cases, you may need to hire more than one inspector. Normally, you will pay the costs of these inspections.

You will need to set a deadline for these inspections to be completed—normally 10 to 15 days from acceptance.

I will provide recommendations for inspectors, but you are free to work with the inspector of your choice as long as they are licensed. Most but not all inspectors are available with a 2 or 3 day notice.

Closing Of Buyer's Property Contingency

Do you have a house that you must sell before you can buy this house? If so, we NEED to include this contingency in the offer.

Closing Cost Credit

Would you like to ask the seller for a closing cost credit?

Lenders will allow you to ask the seller to pay for your closing costs. Most sellers will agree to do this if your offer price compensates them for these increased expenses. But, be aware that this increases your purchase price, therefore increasing your loan amount. As a result, you will be borrowing more money and paying more interest. If you have the cash, I suggest NOT asking for the credit. In addition, if you ask the seller for a closing cost credit, the seller may discount the credibility of your offer.

On the contrary, sometimes the listing can be in need of certain repairs or the seller may be particularly motivated for one reason or another. If this situation arises, and oftentimes it does, I will be sure to let you know. With your permission, I will negotiate a seller credit based on the situation we are facing and ensure you are getting the best deal!

Home Warranty

The seller may or may not be offering a one year home warranty. If the seller is not offering a home warranty, I usually recommend asking the seller to provide one. I'll provide more information when we get ready to draft the offer.

Agency Or Broker Disclosure

The offer may include language that describes my legal obligations to you and to the seller. We'll discuss this, and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

What If You Lose The Home You Hoped Would Be Yours?

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, the home you want slips through your fingers. Maybe someone else beat you to the punch, and submitted an offer before you did, or maybe you and the seller couldn't come to terms and hammer out an agreement that worked for both of you.

The home you wanted is lost. and that is disappointing, but it's not the end of the world. I know it may seem that way, but I assure you, it really isn't. Don't let the frustration that may come from this experience overwhelm you!

Here's the good news: In my experience, every time this happens, the buyer finds a better home. Somehow, it always works out this way. Just trust me on that. Remind yourself to believe, as I have told you I do, that all good things that are supposed to happen will happen.

STEP 7: NAVIGATING FROM CONTRACT TO CLOSING

Once we have an accepted offer, I will be sending you an email with detailed instructions on what to do next. I may or may not be working with a transaction coordinator who will help all of us make sure that we meet all the deadlines detailed in the purchase agreement. Additionally, I will be sending you a Buyer Transaction Timeline / Checklist that clearly outlines all the deadlines according to the purchase agreement. Usually those requirements will include the following:

Earnest Money / Escrow Deposit

I will let you know how to make out your earnest money payment, where to send it, how to deliver it, and how to document that.

Inspection(s)

You'll need to schedule an inspection with a licensed home inspector right away. Good inspectors are fantastic, "in demand," and can be hard to book. I suggest reaching out to the inspector you'd like to use ASAP and try to get the inspection(s) scheduled within the next 3-5 days. If you need or want a radon test, please note they take 48 hours to process.

Home inspections usually take about three hours, and normally you'll want to be present when the inspection is being conducted, or at the very least, be there at the end of the inspection to get an overview of the findings. I am happy to accompany you, and also to be present for you in the event you are not able to be there.

I am happy to make these arrangements for you if you'd like! However, I cannot choose your home inspector for you, but I will make recommendations based on the inspections you need and/or want when that time comes.

Home inspection reports often find flaws and blemishes in the most pristine of properties. We'll go through the report together to determine what, if anything, is worth bringing up to the seller. If there are serious red flags, then we'll address them. If the offer allows us to back out and you want to back out, we'll cancel the contract and not buy the home. If the offer gives the seller the option to remedy the defects, then we'll explore that route together. In some cases, an adjustment in price may be called for and agreed upon. Bottom line: Your interests need to be protected in this transaction, and that's why we do a home inspection.

Loan Commitment

You'll want to begin working with your lender right away to get the loan commitment finished by the deadline. Even though you are pre-approved, the lender will typically require additional information and paperwork from you in order to provide the loan commitment needed to meet the financing contingency. The better you are at responding to those requests, the more smoothly this process will go. Lenders have a process they are legally required to go through in order to supply that loan commitment you need. You want to do everything you can to make it easy for them to complete that process. Along the way, I will do everything I can to assist and help things move along.

The Appraisal

Since the home you are purchasing is collateral for the mortgage loan, the lender will order an appraisal to ensure that the home has enough value to serve as adequate collateral for the loan. By law, the lender works with a third party service who chooses the appraiser.

Typically, the appraisal isn't a problem. We've studied the market, and we have a good idea of what the home is worth. Our offer should be in line with that value. However, at the end of the day an appraisal is an opinion, and once in a while, that opinion may be different than ours. If that happens, then we'll navigate through that exploring whatever options might be available to us at that time.

Homeowners Insurance / Hazard Insurance

Homeowner's insurance, also known as hazard insurance, will also be required prior to closing. The lender will usually want you to have the first year of homeowner's insurance coverage paid before you get to the closing.

You will want to start getting quotes soon so that you have adequate time to get the insurance binder to the lender. Please let me know if you need a referral for your insurance needs.

After the first year, homeowner's insurance is typically paid from escrowed funds from your mortgage payment. Ask your lender if you have any questions about this, as I am not permitted to advise on this by law.

Transfer Utilities In Your Name

At least a week before closing, you'll want to make sure that you get all utilities transferred into your name. You don't want to move into your new home only to discover that the power or the water has been disconnected!

About three weeks before closing, I will provide you with a full service moving concierge app called Updater that will keep you organized throughout the moving process and help you obtain quotes for various services such as movers, moving materials, cable and internet, and even homeowners insurance!

The Final Walk-Through

You and I will have a final opportunity to visit the property and do a walk-through prior to closing. This usually happens a day or two before closing, or sometimes on the morning of closing.

Here's why the final walk-through is important:

1. To make sure the seller has moved out.
2. To make sure the property is in essentially the same condition as it was when you agreed to purchase it.
3. To make sure that all the appliances and other items the seller agreed to leave are still there and operational.
4. To make sure that the home is reasonably clean—not spotless, but then not filled with 100 bags of trash either.

Walk-throughs usually go well. Most sellers are conscientious and will leave the property just as promised. If there are any problems, I'll help you deal with them.

List Of Out-of-Pocket Expenses

Common out-of-pocket expenses when you are buying a home include:

1. Earnest Money/Escrow Deposit: Typically about 1-2% of the purchase price; 10% for cash transactions.
2. Inspections: Typically \$300-\$800, sometimes more, depending on what you want/need done.
3. Down Payment: Usually 3-20% of the purchase price of the home, depending on your loan.
4. Closing Costs: Check with your lender, who will provide you with a closing cost worksheet.
5. Homeowners Insurance: One year's worth can vary, \$500-\$2,500, and sometimes more.

STEP 8: COMPLETING YOUR PURCHASE

The Closing Statement

Several days prior to the closing, we will receive from the title company a closing statement, which I will review with you. Based on the purchase agreement, the closing statement will contain the purchase price, the amount of the loan, and the amount of money you will need to bring to the closing (usually either in the form of a wire transfer or a cashier's check).

Don't be surprised if this amount is a little different than what you expect. The closing statement may contain prorated credits or debits for property taxes, title insurance, title company fees, transaction taxes, appraisal, loan origination fees, other closing costs, and more. Some of these fees will be charged to the seller, some to the buyer.

The Closing

Closings are typically held at the offices of a title company. Be prepared to sign many documents. You will need to bring your driver's license or other identification. Bring the down payment or verify ahead of time that it has been transferred to the title company.

I will be with you at the closing to answer any questions you have, and to hopefully make sure there are no surprises.

The deed to the home will be signed over to you, and you will receive keys to your new home.

Behind the scenes, after the closing, the title company and/or others will take care of getting the deed, the mortgage, and any other legal documents recorded. When that's complete, a copy of the final documents will be mailed to you.

After The Closing

Congratulations - You're officially a homeowner!

For your safety, you might want to consider this: Hire a locksmith to rekey all the exterior entrances to your home, and, if applicable, change the access code to your garage door opener or any other entry panels. Here's why: You have no idea who may have obtained copies of keys and codes while the previous owner owned the home. Even the seller may not be aware of others who may have access to your new home.

I consider it a privilege and an honor to work with you to make your dream of owning your home a reality. I hope we can stay in touch. When you, your family, and your friends need help with any of your real estate needs, I'm just a phone call away. Thank you for your business and your trust!

Happy New Home! Enjoy!

About REALTOR® Michelle Garcia



Michelle is a licensed Florida Real Estate Sales Associate with Charles Rutenberg Realty Orlando. She discovered her passion for the real estate industry when she accepted a position as an Operations Manager of a startup, boutique real estate brokerage. After gaining a year of unique and valuable brokerage management experience, Michelle elected to turn her newfound skill set into a career by obtaining her Real Estate Sales Associate license.

Prior to real estate, Michelle completed her education at University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management. She graduated from the world-renowned program in 2017 with a B.S. in Hospitality Management. In addition to completing her degree, Michelle also acquired just under a decade of professional experience, holding a variety of positions including roles in Retail Sales, Travel Sales, Customer and Client Services, HR Management, and Accounting.

Michelle is a well-rounded business professional equipped with an unparalleled work ethic characterized by integrity, positivity, and a willingness to go above and beyond. Her mission is to be a trusted advisor and genuine asset to home buyers and sellers while guiding and educating them through the transaction process.

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My mission is to create an extraordinary experience through exceptional service, excellence, and real estate market expertise. I am committed to acting in the best interest of my clients; to being mindful that behind every transaction is a person or a family entrusting me to assist them with what is possibly the most important investment they will make and/or the largest asset they have. I believe in setting an expectation of exemplary service and communication, indisputable ethics, and the highest level of satisfaction for all those who allow me the honor and privilege of representing them.

My goal is to empower all buyers and sellers to make informed decisions; to assist my clients in both discovering and understanding all options available to them so they are equipped with all the knowledge necessary to make the best possible decision for themselves and their families. And finally, to consistently inspire joy, happiness, and excitement over the course of the transaction, building long-term relationships and creating customers for life. That is what a trusted advisor, with the heart of a teacher, does.