



2021 HOME BUYER'S GUIDE

Piatt | Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

ROBYN JONES

SEWICKLEY REALTOR®

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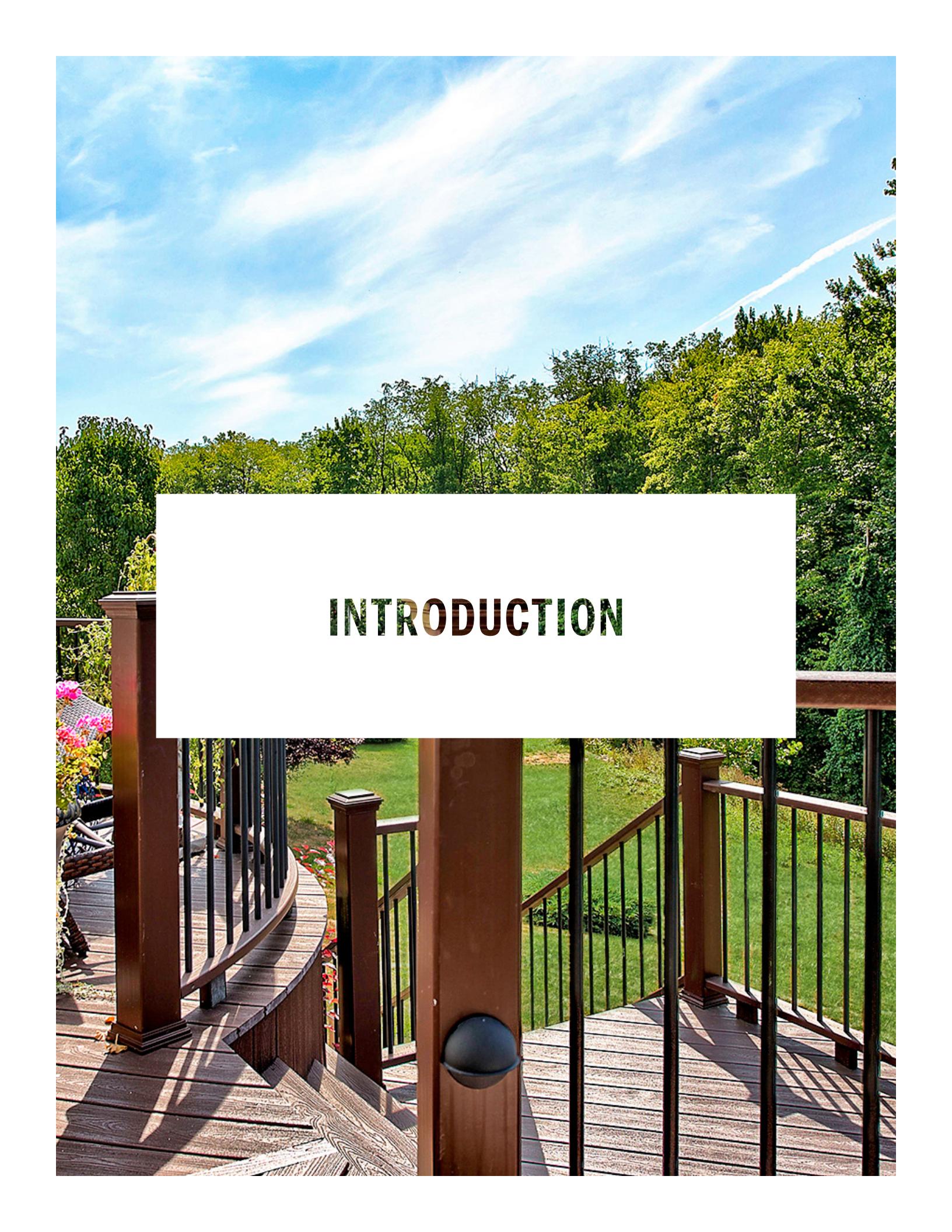
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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT ROBYN JONES



ROBYN JONES



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aren't even on the market. I also work to negotiate the best terms for my buyers to ensure the best value for this major purchase. There's a reason I've been named the Rising Star, the 2016 Best Realtor® in Sewickley, Silver Level and 2018 Best Realtor® in Sewickley, Bronze Level by the Readers of the Tribune Review.

Accolades

- » Lifestory Research 2018 America's Most Trusted Residential Real Estate Brokerage
- » Silver & Bronze Award: Best Real Estate Agent - Sewickley
- » Pittsburgh Magazine: 2019 RAMP Awards - Outstanding Service
- » Realtor® Association of Pittsburgh: Ring of Excellence 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020

When looking for a home, it's vitally important to work with a Realtor® who knows the area. I am a Sewickley native (4th generation) and a graduate of Quaker Valley High School and Ole Miss. I spent my summers working for my family's accounting firm, Carson & Co. located in the heart of Sewickley Village. After college in the South, I returned home to Sewickley where together with my husband Doug, we are raising our three children Jacob, Caroline and Lillian in this great community. Having grown up in Western Pennsylvania and the suburbs of Pittsburgh, I know the area extensively. I can provide insight into the different neighborhoods and school districts and help to connect you with not just the right home, but the right location. I can help to guide you towards the right style of home and lifestyle-whether that's a home in walking distance to shops and restaurants, or something with a little more privacy and space. My participation in different groups, helps me to expand my deep connections and roots in the area. I have served on the board of the Child Health Association of Sewickley, am a member of Neighbors & Newcomers and a founding member of Christ Church at Grove Farms. I recently joined the inaugural board of the Western Pennsylvania chapter of Folds of Honor and returned to the church where I was raised, St. Stephens. I consider myself an ambassador for Sewickley and surrounding communities. I love to connect people not just with the perfect home but with the community, community groups and other families as well. Because I stay on top of the market, I often find homes for my clients that

SELECT YOUR REALTOR®

A Realtor® represents your interests when purchasing a home, one of the most significant financial investments you can make. For this reason, it is essential to select an advisor with in-depth knowledge of your local real estate market and specialized experience in the property types you are interested in.

Assist in finding the right property

- » Identifies properties that suit your needs in a home
- » Finds appropriate available properties
- » Set up an automated e-mail alert system
- » Networks with other agents for properties not yet in the MLS
- » Aids in narrowing your search until you have identified your top choices
- » Assists in analyzing the pros and cons of each property
- » Assists you in evaluating properties for suitability, affordability and resale value

Help arrange financing

- » Assists in locating sources of mortgage loans
- » Assists in comparing different financing options and know how that affects your offer
- » Provides information on purchasing incentives that may be available
- » Educates and discusses the differences between being pre-qualified and pre-approved for a mortgage

Provides information and education on current market conditions

- » Shows statistics on what percent of list price sellers are currently receiving
- » Shows trends, current average days on market, current absorption rate and/or current months of inventory

Guide you through making an offer and represent you and your interests in negotiations

- » Advises you on what comparable properties are selling for and provide pricing recommendations
- » Explains common contract contingencies
- » Obtains appropriate seller disclosures
- » Helps create a negotiating strategy to achieve your goals
- » Educates you on the details of the sales contract
- » Assists you in getting the best property at the best price with the least amount of inconvenience based on current market conditions
- » Prepares you for multiple offer situations and develop negotiation strategies specific to multiple offers

Get you to closing and serve as your trusted real estate resource

- » Recommends inspectors, lenders, attorneys and other professionals as needed
- » Reviews and discusses home inspection concerns
- » Is an advocate and advisor during the closing process
- » Monitors and communicates required contract deadlines to ensure that they are met
- » Assists in coordinating communications between the listing agent, lender, attorneys, title company, appraiser and other professionals
- » Accompanies you on the walk-through prior to closing to ensure the property is in the same condition as when you entered into the contract
- » Remains a life-long trusted advisor regarding real estate questions, needs or concerns

BUYER'S REPRESENTATION AGREEMENT

If you've started looking for a home - and a real estate professional to assist you - your representative may ask you to sign a **Buyer's Representation Agreement**. What is this? Why should you sign it?

A Buyer's Representation Agreement is a legal document that formalizes your working relationship with a particular real estate professional, detailing what services you are entitled to and what your buyer's representative expects from you in return. While the language used in the document is formal, homebuyers should view it as an important and helpful tool for clarifying expectations, developing mutual loyalty and most importantly, elevating the services you will receive.

Receive a higher level of service

If you've formalized an agency relationship with a buyer's representative, you can expect to be treated like a client instead of a customer. What's the difference? Clients are entitled to superior services, relative to customers. While the details vary from state to state and from one buyer's agent to another, you can generally assume that being a client means that you've formed a fiduciary, or agency, relationship with your buyer's representative.

Avoid misunderstandings

A Buyer's Representation Agreement clarifies expectations, helping you understand what you should expect from your sales professional.

Strength as a team

When you and your buyer's agent work together within a formalized agency relationship, you have created a team dedicated to helping you achieve the best possible home-buying experience.

Confidentiality

Agency law requires a buyer's personal and privileged information (any information that is not related to purchasing a property) to remain confidential in order to avoid harm to the buyer. The information that you share as a buyer will remain with your buyer's representative alone as outlined in the Buyer's Representation Agreement.





DEFINING YOUR GOALS, NEEDS & BUDGET



KNOWING YOUR PREFERENCES & BUDGET

Defining Your Goals, Needs & Budget

Finding a new home can be exciting, but deciding what you truly want and need - and can afford - can be challenging. Making these decisions begins with setting priorities among many different preferences.

Most homebuyers invariably face trade-offs. Your buyer's representative can play a key role in helping you sort out your options. He or she can also offer important insights specific to your local market. Here are many of the considerations you'll want to discuss with your buyer's representative:

Basic Home Features

- » Do you prefer a single-family detached home, townhome, condominium or other type of property?
- » Desired number of bedrooms and baths
- » Preferences regarding kitchen, dining, family rooms, etc. and preferred home layout?
- » High-priority home features, such as kitchen appliances, fireplace, etc.?
- » Other types of rooms needed (ex. a home office or a hobby space)?
- » Storage spaces (closets, basement, an outdoor shed, etc.)?
- » Need for a garage or parking space and if so, for how many cars?

Other Home Preferences

- » Ranch, two story, split level, etc.?
- » Age and style of home (Victorian, bungalow, modern, etc.)?
- » How important is energy efficiency or other green home features?

Lot Characteristics

- » Size and shape, including back, front and side yards
- » Landscaping considerations - the need for open play areas, privacy, patio space, decking, etc.
- » Home orientation - is it important for your home to face a particular direction?

Neighborhoods/Locations

- » Commuting considerations (to work, shopping, school, etc.)
- » Proximity to neighborhood and community amenities (such as community centers, exercise facilities, hospitals, etc.)
- » Views - how important is it to find your ideal view (ex. overlooking a park) or avoiding a bad one (a busy highway)?

Related Costs

- » Homeowner Association fees?
- » Property taxes?

Life at Home

- » If you'll be sharing your home with children, pets, live in parents or others, how does this impact your housing preferences? Both now and in the future? (ex. pets may require a fenced-in yard; older parents may dictate one-floor living.)
- » Proximity to neighbors

Trade-Offs

- » How much do you want to invest in a home beyond the purchase price, either financially or in terms of sweat equity, if you can't find exactly what you want?
- » Are you willing to consider other neighborhoods that provide better affordability?

Resale

- » How long do you plan to live in this home? How does this impact the type of home you will buy, how much you'll spend and your choice of location?

KNOWING YOUR PREFERENCES & BUDGET

Defining Your Goals, Needs & Budget

Prior to meeting with your real estate advisor, it's important to clarify your budget, personal property preferences and any anticipated life stage and lifestyle requirements that may impact the purchase of your home.

As a starting point for your consultation, please complete the worksheet and review with your buyer's representative.

Budget Range

Target Budget _____ Maximum Budget _____

Preferred Property Type

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Condo/Apartment | <input type="checkbox"/> Townhouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Single-Family Home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiplex | <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Primary Property Usage

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Family Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation/Secondary Property |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Investment/Revenue Property | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Property Features

	Need	Want
How many bedrooms do you need?	_____	_____
How many bathrooms do you need?	_____	_____
Do you need space for a home office?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What kind of parking do you need? For how many cars?	_____	_____
Do you require air conditioning? If so, what type?	_____	_____
Do you require storage or hobby space?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you require garden/outdoor space?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a fireplace or swimming pool high on your list?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you want special features to save energy, enhance indoor air quality or to reduce environmental impact?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

KNOWING YOUR PREFERENCES & BUDGET

Defining Your Goals, Needs & Budget

What is most important for you to have in your new home?

What are **required** features?

What are **desired** features?

Lifestyle and Life Stage

Most people aim to find a home and neighborhood that will meet their needs for the next five to ten years. I can help you assess how your lifestyle and life stage needs may impact the property or neighborhood that is right for you.

How long do you plan on staying in this home?

Will you need a home that can accommodate different stages of life?

Do you have children or plan to have children?

Do you have children who will be moving away soon?

Do you have family members with special needs?

Are you close to retirement?

Do you have an older relative who might come to live with you?

STEPS TO HOME OWNERSHIP: A BASIC OVERVIEW

Defining Your Goals, Needs & Budget

Finding and purchasing a home involves the general steps outlined in the following section; however, most homebuyers and real estate investors have unique financial, property and personal requirements that demand advice from a real estate advisor with specialized expertise.

PRE-APPROVAL

Review the list of recommended mortgage brokers and reach out to them for a pre-approval. This is generally not a time-consuming process.

HOME SEARCH

As we look at homes together, tell me what you like and don't like. Feel free to ask me any questions you might have.

MAKE AN OFFER

With my knowledge of the market and the agents, I hope you will trust me to guide you to the right offer. I will explain the terms of the agreement and you can sign in person or electronically.

NEGOTIATE ON YOUR BEHALF

Negotiation is an integral step in the process of buying a home. I will be there to negotiate your best interests every step of the way.

OFFER ACCEPTED

HAND MONEY

You will need to provide a hand money check (or deposit). Typically, this is 2% to 4% of the purchase price of the house and is credited to you at closing.

MORTGAGE APPLICATION

The mortgage company will run a credit check and require documentation from you such as W-2's and pay stubs. Generally, the mortgage application must be completed within seven days of the accepted offer.

INSPECTION

Use the wheel of certified inspectors to select an inspector. See my page on home inspections for detailed information.

APPRAISAL

The mortgage company will order an appraisal.

HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE

Shop and select a company to provide homeowners insurance on the property.

HAVE UTILITIES TRANSFERRED

I will provide a list of companies to contact to have utilities transferred into your name as of the day of closing.

PRE-CLOSING PAPERWORK

Prior to closing you will receive a Loan Estimate and a Closing Disclosure. By law, you must accept (electronically) these documents three days prior to closing or the closing date must be moved.

FUNDS FOR CLOSING

Funds for closing can either be wired to the closing company or provided with a cashier's check (please CALL the closing company for instructions, do not accept or send instructions via email). Bring your check book for any minor changes in the numbers.

FINAL WALK-THROUGH

Within two days prior to closing, we will meet at the house to perform a walk-through to ensure the house is in proper condition and items that were contracted to be included in the sales agreement remain in the home, are in fact there.

CLOSING

We will meet for you to sign the required documents for closing, along with the settlement officer. You will need to bring a cashier's check and proper ID.

SECURE FINANCING

Defining Your Goals, Needs & Budget

Before starting your home search, it is important to evaluate your financial situation, confirm your budget, familiarize yourself with mortgage options and secure pre-approval from your lender. This will help you conduct your search with confidence and negotiate your desired home successfully.

Establish Your Budget

As a general guideline, total monthly housing costs for your primary home, including mortgage payments, taxes, maintenance fees, insurance, interest charges and utilities, should not exceed 32% of your gross monthly household income.

Many financial advisors also suggest that total monthly debt, including mortgage payments, credit card and car payments, should not exceed 40% of your gross monthly income.

Those purchasing a real estate investment property should consult their real estate and financial advisor to understand tax and financial implications of their purchase.

Confirm Down Payment

If your down payment amount is less than 20% of the total purchase price, you will need to purchase mortgage loan insurance that guarantees the debt against default. In most cases this will be added to the mortgage loan. This added cost is usually referred to as PMI (Primary Mortgage Insurance).

Check Your Credit Rating

Your credit report plays an important role in your mortgage approval process and in determining the interest rate and other loan terms that a lender offers you. Before meeting with a potential lender, you may wish to confirm your credit rating, so you have time to resolve any issues.

Understand Mortgage Basics

Interest Rates

Mortgage interest rates are fixed, variable or adjustable.

- » **Fixed:** A fixed mortgage interest rate is a locked-in rate that will not change for the term of the mortgage.
- » **Variable:** A variable rate fluctuates pending market conditions while the mortgage payment itself remains unchanged.
- » **Adjustable Mortgage Interest Rate:** With an adjustable rate, both the interest rate and the mortgage payment change based on market conditions.

Open or Closed Mortgage

Closed Mortgage: A closed mortgage cannot be paid off, in whole or in part, before the end of its term. A closed mortgage is a good option if you would prefer a fixed monthly payment and wish to predict your monthly expenses. However, because there are often penalties or restrictive conditions if you pay an additional amount, a closed mortgage may be a poor choice if you decide to move before the end of the term or if a decrease in interest rates is anticipated.

Open Mortgage: An open mortgage is flexible. You can typically pay off part of it or the entire amount at any time without penalty. This may be a good option if you plan to sell your home soon or if you intend to pay off a large sum of your mortgage loan. Most lenders allow open mortgages to be converted to closed mortgages at any time, though often for a small fee.

SECURE FINANCING

Defining Your Goals, Needs & Budget

Understand Mortgage Basics (continued)

Amortization

Amortization is the length of time the entire mortgage debt will be repaid. Many mortgages are amortized over 25 years, but longer periods are available. The longer the amortization, the lower your scheduled mortgage payments, but the more interest you pay in the long run.

Conventional vs. High Ratio Mortgages

Conventional Mortgage: A conventional mortgage is a mortgage loan that is equal to or less than, 80% of the lending value of the property. The lending value is the property's purchase price or market value — whichever is less. For a conventional mortgage, the down payment is at least 20% of the purchase price or market value.

High-ratio Mortgage: If your down payment is less than 20% percent of the home price, you will typically need a high-ratio mortgage. A high-ratio mortgage usually requires mortgage loan insurance. Your lender may add the mortgage loan insurance premium to your mortgage or ask you to pay it in full upon closing.

Mortgage Term

The term is the length of time that the mortgage contract conditions, including interest rate, are fixed. The term can be from six months up to 10 years.

There are generally several term options for a mortgage and it is important to weigh the benefits and costs of each. A longer term (five years, for example) may allow you to plan and protect you from interest rate increases, but may not offer you flexibility, should interest rates fall.

Optimizing Your Mortgage

Work with your lender to optimize your mortgage payment schedule for your unique situation. Many primary homeowners aim to pay off their mortgages as quickly as possible, which can be achieved with more frequent installments. Your mortgage may also be structured to allow an increase in payments as cash flow permits and there may be anniversary lump sum payment opportunities each year to be applied directly to the principal.

If you are purchasing real estate solely for investment purposes, other considerations such as tax implications come into play. Consult your real estate and financial advisor for assistance.

Get Written Pre-Approval

In markets where there is high demand and a low inventory of the type of home you wish to buy, written pre-approval is essential and will give you the competitive edge in securing your desired home. For example, in a scenario where a seller receives two similar offers, one accompanied by a letter that confirms financing pre-approval and another other without supporting documents, the former offer is frequently considered first.



OBTAINING A MORTGAGE IN FIVE STEPS

Defining Your Goals, Needs & Budget

Today's stricter lending environment means that processing a mortgage application is more complex than ever, given the number of steps that lenders, underwriters and mortgage insurers must all complete before home buyers truly have their financing in place.

To help ensure the process goes smoother, you can also take steps of your own. It's a good idea to discuss the process with your real estate agent, even before shopping for homes. By planning ahead, you'll be in a much better position to negotiate and move forward on a purchase and more likely to avoid any unpleasant surprises regarding your mortgage.

1. Evaluate Affordability

Lenders and mortgage insurers look at a variety of factors, but the two most important are your monthly mortgage payment and your total debt load, relative to your gross income. As a home buyer, it's also important to consider additional expenses, beyond your mortgage payment, that can impact how much home you can afford. Depending on your situation, these other expenses could include property taxes, mortgage insurers, homeowners insurance, home maintenance expenses, homeowner association fees, parking expenses and utilities.

2. Discuss Your Options

Deciding what type of mortgage is best for you depends on your personal situation, your financial scenario and your future plans. For example, if your down payment isn't large enough to qualify for a conventional loan, an FHA mortgage can be an excellent option. Alternately, you may qualify for an attractive program offered at the national or local level. Mortgage programs are always changing, so ask your real estate agent about current options.

3. Interview Lenders

Your real estate agent can provide several recommendations, based on past home buyers' experiences. Rates and fees are typically very competitive between lenders, so it's often more important to focus on other factors, including the level of service provided and how well they've executed transactions for other buyers. The type of mortgage you are seeking may also impact your choice of lender, since some are more familiar with certain mortgage programs than others.

4. Get Pre-approved

Completing a loan application with one or more lenders will help confirm whether your intended mortgage financing plans will work out as hoped or if you must modify your plans. It's important to understand since pre-approvals are contingent upon the lender receiving full documentation, your pre-approval does not guarantee that you have a mortgage. Still, it is an important first step that will also put you in a better negotiating position with sellers.

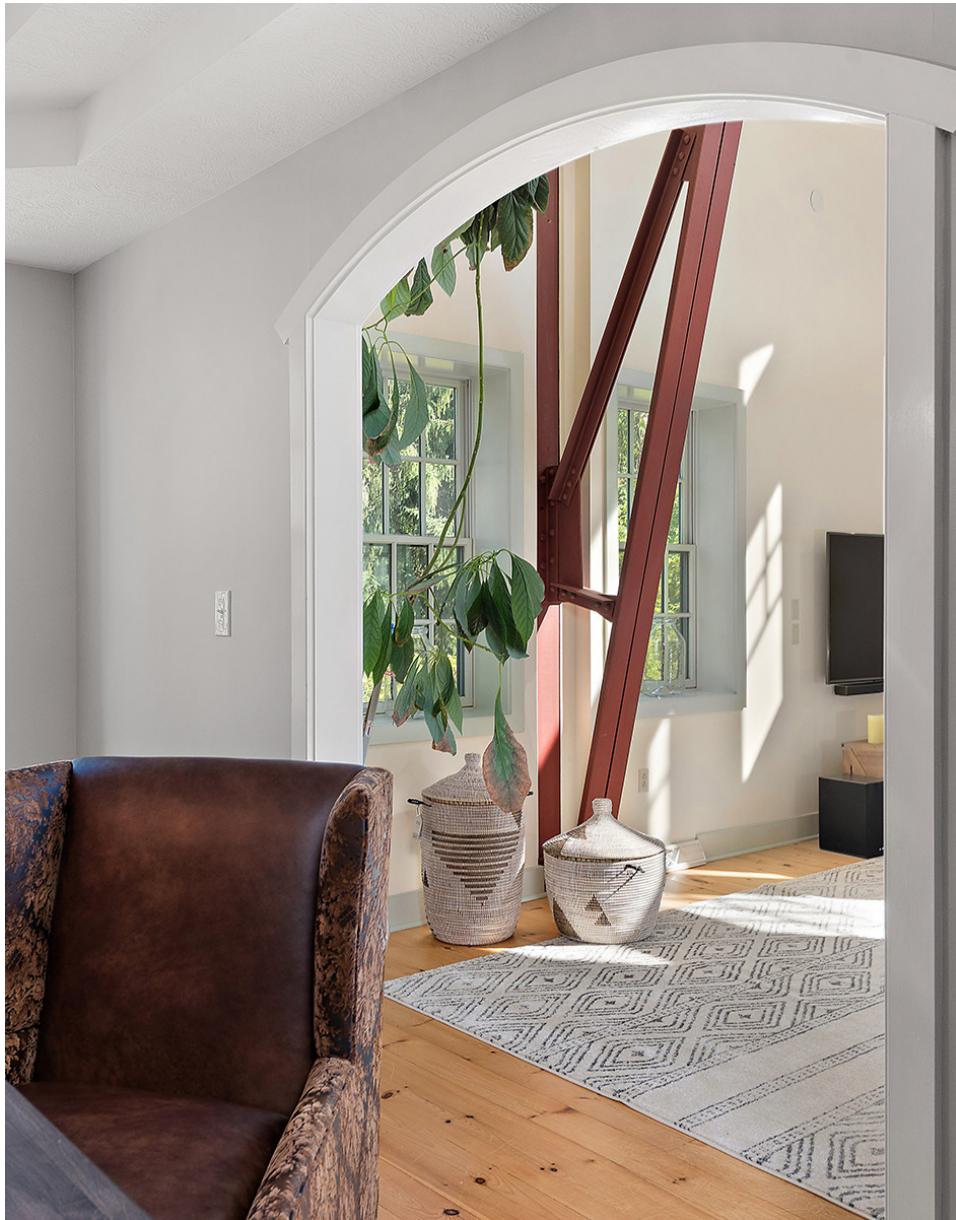
5. Commit to a Lender

As soon as you are under contract to purchase a home, commit to working with one lender to complete your mortgage application. You will probably be charged a fee at this point because this is when the lenders starts incurring processing expenses on your behalf. Show your lender that you are serious about working in partnership with them by submitting all the required documentation as quickly as possible. Following these five steps will greatly improve your results in getting a mortgage. Count on your real estate agent to provide more detailed information on each step in the process and answer any questions you may have.

FINANCE & MORTGAGE: RECOMMENDED LENDERS

Defining Your Goals, Needs & Budget

A pre-approval from a reputable mortgage company can mean all the difference in getting a home, especially in a multiple offer situation. We want the Seller and their Agent to feel confident that the sale will go smoothly because you are working with a quality lender. You don't want the headaches that can come with lenders who don't know our area, use out of town appraisers, or are slow to respond due to being overloaded with clients all over the country. Below are several lenders who I have worked with and highly recommend.



David Holland

Holland Mortgage Advisors
412-325-8810
dholland@hmamortgage.com

Lisa Ann Siranovich

Sail Mortgage
724-934-2800 x210
lisas@sailmc.com

Jerry Pounds

Citizens Bank
412-606-6701
jerry.pounds@citizensbank.com

ESCROW & TAXES

Defining Your Goals, Needs & Budget

What is Escrow?

Escrow is an easy way to manage property taxes and insurance premiums for your home. You don't have to save for them separately because you make one monthly payment where:

- » Part of your mortgage payment goes toward paying your principal and interest.
- » The other part goes into your escrow account for property taxes and insurance premiums (like homeowners insurance, mortgage insurance or flood insurance).

When those bills are due, your mortgage servicer will use the funds in your escrow account to pay them on your behalf.



Taxes in the State of Pennsylvania

In the state of Pennsylvania, homeowners are subject to paying for three types of taxes: County, Local and School.

Each category of taxes is assigned a millage rate. The home you are buying was previously assessed a value by the county. That value can generally be found online via the county's website.

You will pay taxes based on the millage rate and assessed value of the home. The tax liability can also be calculated by multiplying the assessed (taxable) value of the property by the millage rate and then dividing by 1,000.

After purchasing a home, it is possible that your assessed value may increase to roughly 87.5% of the purchase price, causing an increase in the taxes you are required to pay, thus increasing the monthly payment for your mortgage to avoid an escrow shortage.

For more information, go to:

<https://www.realtorspgh.com/Advocacy/Property-Tax-Calculator>



Piatt | INSURANCE ADVISORS

Because Finding Home is What Matters Most

Home insurance should not be a last-minute decision made without looking at the broader picture of your overall needs. Piatt Insurance Advisors, in partnership with HHM Insurors, take the time early in the home buying process to get to know you and understand your specific insurance needs. They meet personally with you, using detailed questionnaires and checklists to determine the proper value of assets and appropriate coverages. They understand the significant coverage differences offered by insurance companies and their policies and will be sure that your policy is designed for you and the proper protection of your assets.

CHUBB®



TRAVELERS®



THE FRONT LINE PROTECTING YOUR BOTTOM LINE

Process

Piatt Insurance Advisors, in partnership with HHM Insurors, take the time to understand individuals and their specific insurance needs. Our team sends you detailed questionnaires and checklists to determine proper value of assets and appropriate coverage.

You will have 24-hour access to your insurance information and service requests with the HHM Insurance mobile app, providing our valued clients with the best in customer service and satisfaction.

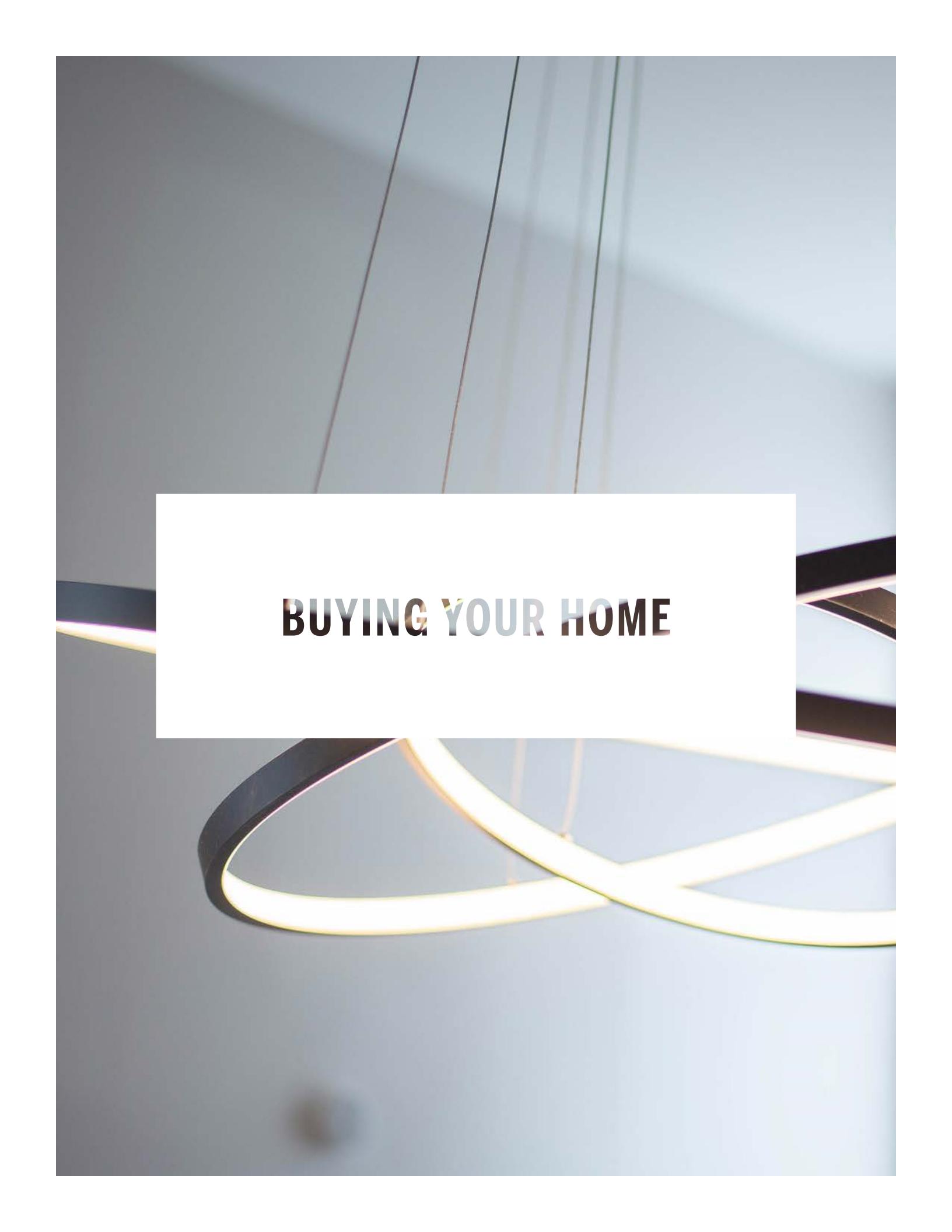
Technology

Piatt Insurance Advisors, in partnership with HHM Insurors, will be sure that your policy is designed for you. We understand the significant coverage differences offered by insurance companies and their policies and are committed to not only getting our clients the best coverage, but helping them understand their coverage.

Piatt | INSURANCE
ADVISORS



Rosella Hutchison, Insurance Consultant
HHM Insurors
500 Commerce Drive
Moon Township, PA 15108
Phone | 412.893.2516
Fax | 412.893.2525
rhutchison@hhminsurance.com



BUYING YOUR HOME

CONDUCT YOUR HOME SEARCH

Buying Your Home

Once your real estate representative understands your budget and property preferences, you can expect them to provide you with:

Automatic Property Updates

As soon as a property that meets your desirable home criteria is posted on the MLS, your real estate associate will send you an email alert to direct you to that listing.

Property Tours

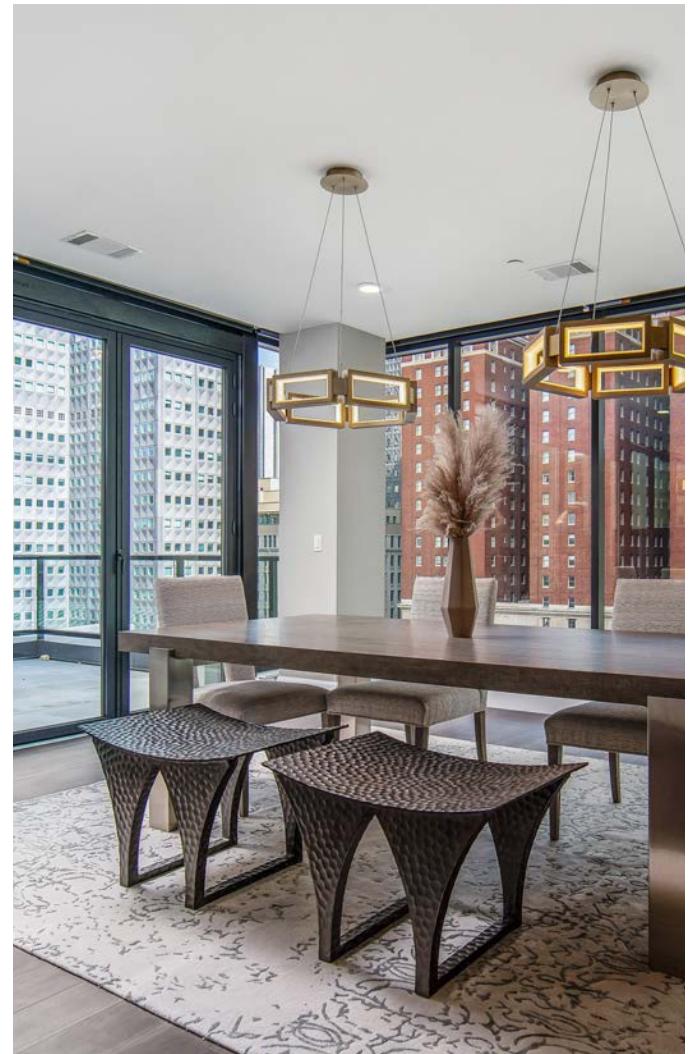
Your real estate agent will schedule walk-throughs (in-person or virtual, depending on the situation) of properties matching your preferences and needs. You may also review properties on piattsir.com, then contact your Realtor® to schedule a private tour, should there be one that matches your needs.

Open Houses

If you wish to visit an open house on your own, please indicate as you enter that I am representing you so that there will be no confusion. In addition, you can give my business card to the listing agent to confirm your representation. If it is a home you wish to consider, do not offer any information to the hosting agent that may jeopardize your best interests.

New Construction

I am able to represent you in the purchase of new construction as well. If at any point you decide that you wish to consider a new constructed home or a home that is not yet built, let me know and I will schedule appointments for us to tour any development you want to see. In the event you stop by a new construction development unexpectedly, simply indicate immediately upon arriving that I am representing you.



I will assist you in assessing the pros and cons of the home(s) you are interested in and provide insight on recent comparable property sales so you have the information you need to place an offer and negotiate effectively.

INDUSTRY-LEADING HOME SEARCH TECHNOLOGY

Piatt | Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY



We enhance the home search process for our buyers using an award-winning listing alert and home comparison platform.



Photo-Centric

Visual information front and center for better and quicker decisions.



Completely Personalized

Customized email property alerts that cater to your wants and needs

Accurate Data from the MLS

Listings sourced directly from the MLS. Accurate and fast!

\$1,040,000 2 Days on Market

9 East College St., Palo Alto, 94306

4 Bd | 2 Ba | 3,266 sqft | 5,266 lot

Perfectly located on a flat block between Duboce Street and Alamo Square, this beautifully remodeled condo is a full floor...

Compare with 2 Other Matches

Room-by-Room Comparisons

Compare properties side-by-side and focus on the details you care about

Always with Your Agent

No ads, no distractions. Just you and your agent - always in sync



Agent Name
REALTOR®
412.999.9999 (M)
412.471.4900 (O)
agent@piattsir.com

Piatt | Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

ASK YOUR PIATT SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY AGENT TO RECEIVE EXCLUSIVE ACCESS

POWERFUL PROPERTY COMPARISON



Easy, No-Hassle Comparisons

Pick any property on the market and automatically compare with a few clicks.

\$2,988,000

\$640 per sqft



9 East College St.

Palo Alto | 94306

Beds: 4 | Baths 2 | Sqft: 3,266

Elegant living in an excellent location. Effectively rebuilt in 1995, the 1st floor is completely remodeled and second floor...

\$950,000

\$480 per sqft



387 Cemetery Rd.

Palo Alto | 94306

Beds: 2.5 | Baths 2.5 | Sqft: 1,350

Perfectly located on a flat block between Duboce Street and Alamo Square, this beautifully remodeled condo is a full floor...

\$1,033,000

\$560 per sqft



255 West Mechanic Drive

Palo Alto | 94306

Beds: 2.5 | Baths 2.5 | Sqft: 1,350

On a quiet, tree-lined street, half a block from Bernali's Village, this 3-level home is the one you've been waiting for.

Kitchen



Kitchen



Kitchen



Living Room



Living Room



Living Room



Compare Rooms

See rooms side-by-side.
No need to flip through
15 pictures to find the kitchen!

Bathroom



Bathroom



Bathroom



Bedroom



Bedroom



Bedroom



Accurate Data from the MLS

We source listings direct from the MLS,
so you get accurate data, fast

NEGOTIATE SUCCESSFULLY

Buying Your Home

You've found a home that's right for you and it's time to make an offer. What steps are involved in negotiating a real estate purchase successfully?

Step 1: Research & Planning

Depending on market conditions, you may have to act quickly, before another buyer steps ahead of you. That said, the best way to approach a home purchase is to arm yourself with facts and to plan a negotiating strategy.

When deciding what to offer for a property, current market prices are the most important factor. I can provide you with valuable assistance in this regard - counseling you on market conditions, price ranges, comparable properties and appropriate negotiating strategies.

Step 2: Submit an Offer

Real estate transactions require a written contract, which conveys an initial written offer. A check for earnest money usually accompanies an offer, but in some cases can be provided within five days.

Your offer will specify price, plus all the terms and conditions of the purchase you want to negotiate. I can help by providing standard forms that are kept up to date with changing real estate laws, which vary from one state to another and by explaining the negotiating impact of including various terms and conditions.

Step 3: The Seller's Response

When your offer is presented, the seller's options are to:

Accept. If, after reviewing your written offer, the sellers sign their unconditional acceptance, then you will have a binding contract as soon as you are notified of the offer's acceptance.

Reject. If the sellers reject your offer, you are released of any obligation. The sellers cannot later change their minds and expect to bind you to a contract based on that offer.

Counteroffer. If the sellers like most aspects of your offer, they may present a written counteroffer that includes the changes the sellers want to make. You are then free to accept their counteroffer, reject it or make your own counteroffer to their counteroffer. This process can repeat itself as many times as it takes for you and the sellers to agree on the sales contract. At this point, negotiations are over and the terms of the sale are final.

It is important to note that the negotiating process always moves forward; buyers cannot decide at a later time to accept a counteroffer that they previously rejected. If the property is still available, buyers must re-initiate negotiations by submitting a new offer.

Withdrawing an Offer

Can you take back an offer? In most cases the answer is yes, right up until the moment your offer is accepted. In some cases, you can withdraw an offer before you've been notified of its acceptance.

HOME INSPECTION

Buying Your Home

A home inspection generally takes two to four hours but may take more time depending on the size of the home. The inspector will ask for access to the lockbox from the listing agent and use the lockbox to enter the home for the appointment.

If you have elected for a radon test, the machine must be in the home for 48 hours. The inspector will arrange for drop off and pick up of the radon testing machine. We recommend you attend the inspection so you can explore your new home in detail and ask questions as you go.

This process can give you much more information than the report alone. Please note that the West Penn Multi List only allows those parties listed on the Agreement of Sale, along with the inspector or contractor to attend the inspection. If anyone else would like to attend (not recommended), they must fill out a waiver and have permission from the inspection company.

Home Inspection Checklist

The more access the inspector has to the home, the more comprehensive the final report will be. Within 24-48 hours you will receive a full report from the inspection company to review. Here's what the inspector will review, according to the America Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI):

- » Heating system
- » Central air conditioning system
- » Interior plumbing and electrical systems
- » Roof
- » Attic, including visible insulation
- » Walls
- » Ceilings
- » Floors
- » Windows and doors
- » Foundation
- » Basement
- » Structural components

What To Do With Home Inspection Results

Most reports list dozens, if not more, of defects. Keep in mind that it is the home inspector's job to provide you with a comprehensive report to outline specific defects he/she has found while inspecting the property.

What should concern you is not the quantity but the seriousness of the homes' issues. It is important to review the report carefully, ask questions of the inspector if you need clarification and to look for issues that could affect the overall structure of the home, ability to resell the home or the safety of those who will live there.

We recommend you look at the defects in terms of general maintenance issues, latent defects, health and safety concerns. Latent defects and safety concerns should be the focus for any requests for remediation or credits.

Keep in mind that as the buyer you have the right to request repairs or credits, but the seller may not agree or may only agree to a portion of the requests. This is one of the many ways it is beneficial to work with a licensed Realtor®, to allow them to assist in this process.



RECOMMENDED SERVICE PROVIDERS

Buying Your Home

When it comes to home inspections or home repairs, it can be frustrating and difficult to find reputable service providers. Below is a list of companies that have been recommended to me over the years by clients and agents. Many I have worked with and had good experiences. Hopefully you have the same positive outcome as I have.

Architects

St. Germain Studios

412-534-4217

studiostgermain.com

Kate Rasmussen

Wade Weissmann Architecture
917-592-3090

Chimney Sweeps

Totally Exhausted

412-741-5485

AI's Chimney Sweep

alschimneysweep.com

Contractors

Aaron D'Augostine, Owner

D'Augostine Contracting

724-355-1901

adaugostine@verizon.net

Shawn Calhoun, Owner

Calhoun Remodeling

412-860-1324

shawn@calhounremodeling.com

Matt Sample, Owner

MKM Properties

Chad Sipes, Owner

Sipes and Son

412-224-2595

info@sipesandson.com

Electricians

Rob Dawson

412-780-9671

electricdawson@gmail.com

JR Warren Electrical

724-657-9912

Estate & Home Clean Out

Richard Weber, Sr.

412-606-3318

Richard Weber, Jr.

412-863-8881

Home Inspection

Jim Pastin

Pastin Home Inspections, LLC

412-770-4682

pastinhomeinspections@comcast.net

Griffin Inspection Services

412-407-2501

James & Kara Shields

Pillar to Post Home Inspectors

412-716-4662

The Mike Watson Team

Pillar to Post Home Inspectors

412-712-7192

mike.watson@pillartopost.com

Keith English

English Inspection Services

info@englishinspectionservice.com

HVAC/R

Davis Mechanical, LLC

412-370-0464

rtdavisj@gmail.com

City Plumbing & Heating

724-266-5225

Lawn Care

Scott Gistic, Owner

Gistic Lawn Care

412-853-0462

James DeGori, Owner

DeGori Lawn Care

412-741-2135

RECOMMENDED SERVICE PROVIDERS

Buying Your Home

Plumbers & Sewer Line Testing

City Plumbing & Heating
724-266-5225

A-1 Sewer
412-664-4212

American Leak Detection of Pittsburgh
412-859-6000

Property Tax Appeals

Noah Fardo, Flaherty Fardo (Megan)
412-802-6666
pghfirm.com

Radon Mitigation

Radon Detection & Control
724-375-1700

Roofing

Kenyon Roofing
412-761-5400

Structural Engineers

Bob Mason
412-770-7590

Jim Cortez
412-889-0623

Tom Scheidler
412-901-3611

Roy Kim
412-931-8416

AE&C
724-224-9590

Charles Church
724-986-0734

Tom Dobis
412-389-0294

Randy Exley
Capstone Engineers
724-933-4622

Sam Sain
724-875-3400

Christopher Kim (Heather)
412-931-8416
chriskim213@gmail.com

Bob Capo
412-262-1430

Survey

MDM Surveyors
724-934-2810

Tree Removal

Wizzer Tree Service (Lee)
412-977-9172

Davey Tree Service

Tall Timbers
724-444-1016
412-734-1016

Waterproofing

Highlander Waterproofing
877-415-0564

Window & Gutter Cleaning

Steve Tumpa
412-766-3781

CLOSE THE DEAL

Buying Your Home

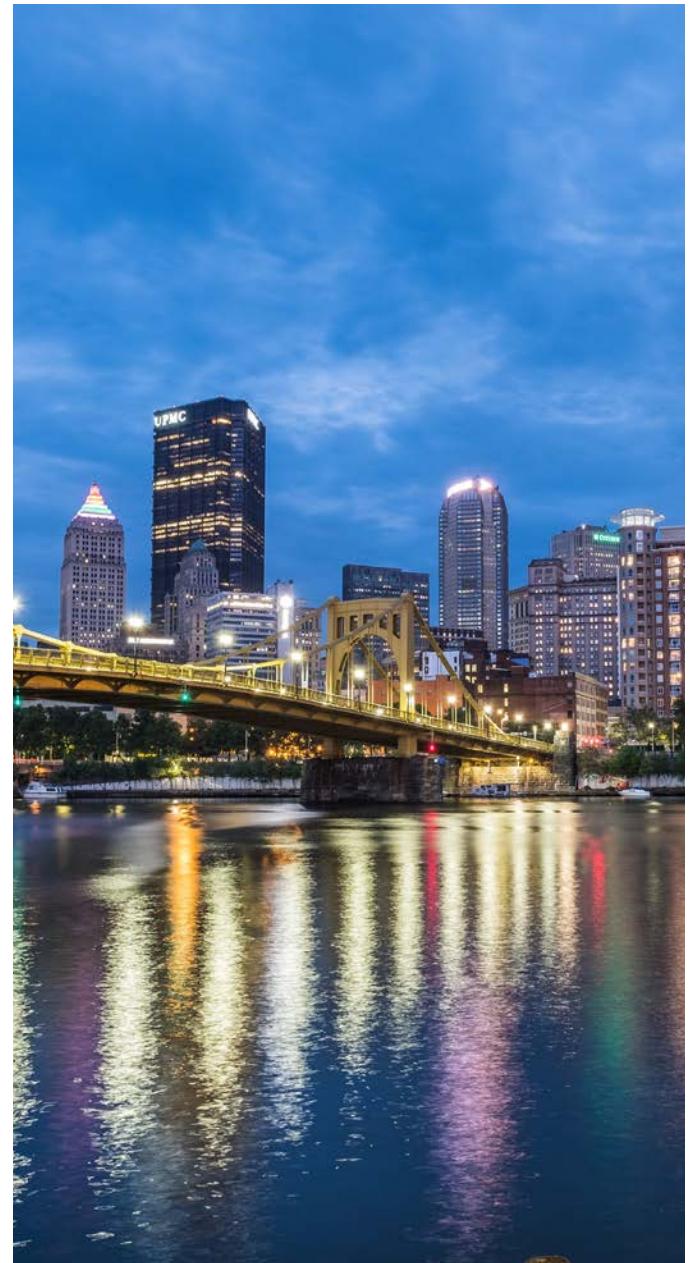
The closing day is the day you take legal possession of your new property.

Preparation

As this day nears, your Realtor® and lender will monitor the progress of your transaction to ensure there are no last-minute issues that need to be dealt with.

Closing Day

On the closing day legal property ownership is transferred to your name. The mortgage amount is provided to your lawyer or notary by your lender and you will receive a Statement of Adjustments with costs payable, including: balance owing, legal fees, property transfer taxes and other closing costs. Your lawyer or notary will pay the seller, complete necessary documents and register your home at the Land Titles Office in your name. On your closing day, your lender provides the mortgage money to your lawyer/notary, you provide the down payment (minus your deposit) to your lawyer/notary as well as remaining closing costs. Your lawyer/notary pays the vendor, registers the home in your name and provides you the deed to your new home.



MOVING CHECKLIST

8 Weeks Before (or More)

- Call moving company for estimates.
- Remove and dispose of unnecessary possessions.
- Start compiling an inventory of your possessions.
- Get a floor plan (with room dimensions) of your new home to help you decide which furnishings you want to keep and which room they will go in.
- Start a file of moving-related papers and receipts.
- Locate schools, healthcare professionals and hospitals in your new location.
- Arrange to transfer your children's school records and family medical records.

6 Weeks Before

- Secure off-site storage.
- Choose a mover and sign contract.
- Contract your homeowner's insurance agent about coverage for moving and secure more.
- Contact insurance companies (auto, homeowner's, medical and life) to arrange for coverage in your new home.
- Start a file of moving-related papers and receipts.

4 Weeks Before

- Notify utility companies of date to discontinue/transfer service and/or establish services at your new home. Also arrange for final readings and bills, including refunds on prepaid services.
 - Electric
 - Heating
 - Internet services
 - Natural gas
 - Telephone
 - Television
 - Trash collection
 - Water/Sewer
- Notify the following of your change of address:
 - Post office
 - Banks
 - Credit card companies
 - Relatives and friends
 - Insurance agent, lawyer, tax/financial advisor
 - Magazine subscriptions

4 Weeks Before (continued)

- Notify your state's department of motor vehicle of your new address.
- If moving from an apartment, arrange for refund of your security deposit.
- Discontinue additional home services (housekeeper, garden/lawn service, snow removal and pool cleaner).
- Start using up things you can't move, such as perishables.
- Create a file of important papers, such as auto license, registration documents and title; any medical, dental and school records; birth certificates; wills, deeds, stock certificates and other financial documents.

3 Weeks Before

- Make travel plans.
- Make arrangements with condo or homeowner's association to reserve elevator usage time if moving into or out of a high-rise building.
- Arrange to close existing bank accounts and open new accounts in new area.
- Arrange for childcare on moving day.

2 Weeks Before

- Arrange special transport for pets and plants.
- Contact your moving company and review arrangements for your move.

1 Week Before

- Pack moving-essential boxes - important documents, travel clothes, personal items and prescription medications.

2-3 Days Before

- Confirm all final arrangements with your mover and other service providers.

REAL ESTATE TERMINOLOGY



REAL ESTATE TERMINOLOGY

(1 OF 4)

Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM)	The interest rate is tied to a financial index making the monthly mortgage payment go up or down over time.
Amortize	To liquidate or extinguish (a mortgage, debt or other obligation), especially by periodic payments to the creditor or to a sinking fund, to write off a cost (an asset) gradually.
Annual Percentage Rate (APR)	The percentage of interest that will be charged on a home loan.
Appraisal	A report highlighting the estimated value of the property completed by a qualified third-party. This is typically done for the benefit of the buyer to ensure the property is worth what they are paying.
Association Fee/HOA Fee	In addition to a mortgage, certain housing communities, such as townhomes, have a monthly fee associated with maintaining the common areas and amenities.
Backup Offer	Secondary offer on a home that is under contract that becomes active if the primary contract falls through.
Balloon Mortgage	A long term mortgage loan that starts small but has a large payment due at maturity.
Closing	This is the final meeting where the buyer and seller sign the necessary paperwork, complete the transaction and release/take possession of the property. Usually the representing agents and attorneys attend.
Closing Costs	The buyer and seller have expenses associated with the transaction other than that of the actual cost of the home. For example, the buyer has a variety of fees due for obtaining a new loan and the seller must pay commission to both agents.
Closing Disclosure	A five-page form that provides final details about the mortgage loan you have selected. It will be sent prior to closing and the initial document must be signed 72 business hours before closing. It includes the loan terms, your projected monthly payments and how much you will pay in fees and other costs to get your mortgage (closing costs).
Collateral	Something of value that is held to ensure repayment of a mortgage or loan.
Commission	A percent of the sale price of the home that is paid to agents. The seller pays commission to both the buyer and the listing agent.
Comparable Market Analysis	An evaluation of similar, recently sold homes (called comparables) that are near a home intended to be bought or sold. It establishes a price estimate based on current market activity that can be used as a guide for pricing a home.
Comparables	Homes in the area of interest that have recently sold that have similar features.

REAL ESTATE TERMINOLOGY

(2 OF 4)

Contingencies	Conditions which must be met in order to close. Contingencies are typically tied to a date, referred to as a deadline. If the contingency is not satisfied the contract may be cancelled.
Conventional Loan	A private sector loan, one that is not guaranteed or insured by the U.S. Government.
Counteroffer	The response from the sellers in regards to an offer.
Debt to Income Ratio	A lender will evaluate whether a borrower's income is large enough to handle their payments on existing debts plus their new mortgage payments.
Deed	A writing or document executed under seal and delivered to effect a conveyance, especially of real estate.
Disclosures	The release of relevant information about a property that may influence the final sale, especially if it represents defects or problems. "Full disclosure" usually refers to the responsibility of the seller to voluntarily provide all known information about the property. A seller found to have knowingly lied about a defect may face legal penalties.
Down Payment	The amount of money paid upfront for the property. Some lenders have a down payment requirement that has to be met, such as 20% of the purchase price for example.
Due Diligence	Refers to the period of time after the seller has accepted a buyer's offer. This is the time when you, as the buyer, can schedule inspections, confirm financing and make sure that buying the home is in your best interest.
Earnest Money (aka Hand Money)	The sum of money that is submitted with an offer as an add-on to prove the buyer is serious and not wasting either party's time.
Easement	A right held by one property owner to make use of the land of another for a limited purpose, as right of passage.
Equity	The financial value above what is owned on the property. As a loan is paid off, equity is built so when the property is sold, all proceeds pay off the remaining loan balance and the leftover money is equity that goes into the owner's pocket.
Escrow	A neutral third-party or attorney that handles the exchange of money and documents between a buyer and seller once a mutual offer has been accepted and the parties move to closing.
Fannie Mae (FNMA)	A federally charted enterprise owned by private stockholders that purchases residential mortgages and converts them into securities for sale to investors; by purchasing mortgages, Fannie Mae supplies funds that lenders may loan to potential home buyers.
Federal Housing Association (FHA)	Government agency that insures loans designed for low-to-moderate income borrowers.

REAL ESTATE TERMINOLOGY

(3 OF 4)

Fixed Rate	The interest rate will remain the same for the entire life of the mortgage.
Fixed-Rate Mortgage	A home mortgage for which equal monthly payments of interest and principal are paid over the life of the loan, usually for a term of 30 years.
Freddie Mac	Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (FHLM); a federally chartered corporation that purchases residential mortgages, secures them and sells them to investors; this provides lenders with funds for new home buyers.
Good Faith Estimate	Provided by a lender to a borrower, GFE was an estimate of fees due at closing.
Home Equity Line of Credit	A loan or line of credit that your lender may offer using the equity in your home as collateral.
Home Inspection	The process in which a professional inspects the seller's home for issues that may not be readily apparent and then creates a report for the buyer to review.
Home Protection Plan	A one-year service that covers the cost of repairs or replacements to items covered in the plan (such as stoves, dishwashers, A/C, heaters, etc.)
Hybrid	A loan that starts with a fixed rate period, then converts to an adjustable rate.
Jumbo Mortgage	Mortgage exceeding the conforming-loan limit, commonly used for luxury home purchases
Key Rate	Interest rate set by the federal government that determines the cost to borrow money, in this case, a mortgage to buy a new home.
Lien	The legal claim of one person upon the property of another person to secure the payment of a debt or the satisfaction of an obligation.
Mortgage Insurance	Insurance written in connection with mortgage loan that protects the lender in the event the borrower cannot repay their loan. This is usually not required if the borrower has 20% or more for the down payment.
Mortgage Note	A promise to pay a sum of money at a standard interest rate during a specific term that is secured by a mortgage.
Multiple Listing Service (MLS)	Database for real estate agents to list and market for-sale homes.
Net Proceeds	Amount received by the seller at closing after all other costs have been deducted.
Origination Fee	A fee charged by a lender for evaluating and processing a loan application, usually a percentage of the face value of the loan.
PITI	Principal, interest taxes and insurance.
Pre-Approval	The process in which a lender makes an initial evaluation of how much money a buyer might be qualified to borrow based on the preliminary financial information provided. This gives the seller more confidence in the buyer's ability to close escrow, but is not a guarantee that the loan will be approved.
Pre-Approval Letter	A letter indicating a lender is willing to loan a specific amount of money for a home purchase, but this does not guarantee a loan.

REAL ESTATE TERMINOLOGY

(4 OF 4)

Principal	The amount borrowed for a mortgage loan. Monthly mortgage payments include both the repayment of the principal and interest owed.
Promissory Note	A written promise to pay a specified sum of money to a designated person or to his or her order or to the bearer of the note, at a fixed time or on demand.
Property Tax	An annual or semi-annual tax paid to one or more government agencies (city, town, county and state government) based on the property value assessment.
Rate Lock	A commitment by a lender to a borrower guaranteeing a specific interest rate over a period of time at a set cost.
Real Estate Owned (REO)	Real estate owned properties or foreclosed properties currently owned by a financial institution such as the bank that made the loan to the previous owner.
Reverse Mortgage	This is specifically for seniors and it allows them to convert the equity in their home to cash.
Seller Disclosure	A document completed by the seller disclosing the property's history and defects.
Short Sale	A situation when the seller's lender is willing to accept an offer and allows the sale to be completed for an amount less than the mortgage amount owed by the seller.
Title	A legal document listing the history of ownership of the home. Buyers get a preliminary title report from an escrow agent or attorney within a week after they reach mutual acceptance on an offer.
Title Insurance	Insurance protecting the owner or mortgage of real estate from lawsuits or claims arising from a defective title.
Under Contract	When a buyer has submitted an offer, but the closing is not yet final.
Underwriting	The process of analyzing a loan application to determine the amount of risk involved in making the loan; it includes a review of the potential borrower's credit history and a judgment of the property value.
Veterans Affairs (VA) Loans	Special no down payment loans that are available to Americans who have served in the Armed Forces. These loans are issued by private lenders and are guaranteed by the Department of Veteran Affairs.
Walk-Through	Final inspection conducted before a home sale is final.

NOTES

NOTES

ROBYN JONES



SEWICKLEY REALTOR®

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