TEAM CERMAK

REAL ESTATE GROUP

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YOUR NORTHERN MINNESOTA BUYER GUIDE

FIND YOUR BASECAMP: FROM FIRST LOOK TO FRONT DOOR.



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REALTOR®

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PARKER CERMAK

REALTOR® | TEAM CERMAK OWNER









Buying your first home is one of the biggest decisions you'll ever make.

It deserves more than a Zillow scroll at midnight. It deserves someone who actually knows this market and actually gives a damn about where you end up.

I grew up here. I know which neighborhoods are solid, which corners of downtown are worth it, and which "move-in ready" listings will have you calling a contractor by spring. That's not something you find in a search filter.

My job isn't to get you into a house. It's to get you into the right house, at a price that makes sense, with a process that doesn't feel like white-water rapids in April.

Whether you're getting out of a rental, leaving your parents' place, or finally making the move you've been talking about for two years... the fundamentals stay the same.

You'll understand what it actually costs.
You'll know exactly what to expect.
You'll move forward feeling ready.

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ARE YOU READY TO

HIT THE TRAIL?

Every great expedition starts with knowing your gear.
Before you start shopping, let's assess where you stand.

You don't need everything to be perfect. You need to know where you are so we can build the right plan together.

PRE-TRIP CHECKLIST

BUDGET	Do you know what you can actually afford — not just what the internet tells you? A real budget factors in your monthly payment, taxes, insurance, and a little buffer for life.
PRE-APPROVAL	Your pre-approval is your trail permit. Without it, we can't make an offer. With it, sellers know you're serious and we move fast when the right home shows up.
WISH LIST VS. NEED LIST	Knowing the difference between what you want and what you need saves you time, money, and heartbreak. I'll help you sort that out early.
TIMELINE	Are you ready to move in 30 days or 6 months? Your timeline shapes everything — how aggressive we need to be, which price ranges make sense, and how much prep work we do now.

THE TRAIL STARTS WHERE YOU ARE

Readiness isn't about having it all figured out.
It's about being honest with yourself so we can make a real plan.

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HITTING THE TRAIL: PRE-APPROVAL TO CLOSING

THE HOMEBUYER PROCESS

Every trail looks overwhelming when you're standing at the trailhead. Walk it one marker at a time and it's a completely different experience. Here's exactly what the path looks like.

Cast Your Line
[Strategy & Pre-Approval]

We talk through your goals, your budget, and what you're really looking for. I'll connect you with the right lender and make sure your pre-approval is solid before we start looking at homes.

Read The Map
[House Hunting]

Now the fun starts — and the strategy. We search with intention, not just hope. I'll filter out the noise and get you in front of homes that actually fit what you're looking for.

Make Your Move
[Offer & Contract]

Found one? Good. This is where preparation matters. We write an offer that's competitive but protects you — with the right contingencies so you're never stuck in a bad situation.

Hold The Line
[Inspection & Underwriting]

I'll connect you with a thorough, affordable inspector. Meanwhile, your lender is working through underwriting. Stay responsive, stay patient, and don't make any big purchases. Seriously.

Settle In
[Clear to Close & Getting the Keys]

Final documents are signed. Funds are confirmed. And then — keys. Welcome home. Oh, and you won't make your first mortgage payment for 30-60 days after closing. No, I'm not kidding.

The process works best when every step is handled with calm, clear communication. I'm with you at every marker on the trail.

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR FINANCING OPTIONS

CHOOSING YOUR PATH

Before we hit the trail, you need the right gear. Your loan type is part of your strategy — and the right one depends on your financial profile, your goals, and how much you want in your pocket at closing. I'll connect you with a lender who actually walks you through this, not just throws a rate at you.

CONVENTIONAL LOAN

Available for buyers with stable income and strong credit.

- Down payments as low as 3 percent
- Primary, second, and investment properties
- Flexible long term structure

VA LOAN

Available to eligible service members, veterans, and qualifying spouses.

- Often no down payment required
- No private mortgage insurance
- Competitive rates and flexible guidelines

FHA LOAN

Designed for buyers who may benefit from more flexible credit standards.

- Lower minimum down payment
- More lenient credit guidelines
- Higher DTI allowances in some cases

USDA LOAN

Available for eligible properties in designated rural areas.

- May allow no down payment
- Competitive fixed rate options
- Income and geographic eligibility apply

TRAILS LESS TRAVELED

Most buyers only know about the four options above. But depending on your situation, there are additional programs worth knowing about.

- Minnesota Housing Finance Agency down payment assistance
- Start Up and Step Up programs for first time buyers
- Renovation loans for homes that need a little work
- Programs for buyers in eligible rural Minnesota zip codes

These programs exist specifically for buyers like you. The right lender knows them. I'll make sure you're connected to one who does.

NEED RECCOMENDATIONS?
WE HAVE THEM! JUST ASK

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MORE THAN JUST THE PRICE

READING THE TERRAIN

Making an offer isn't just picking a number. The structure of your offer can be just as important as the price — especially in a market where sellers want certainty, not complications.

PRICE STRATEGY

A 30 year loan offers lower monthly payments and greater flexibility.

A 15 year loan reduces total interest and accelerates equity growth.

The right term depends on cash flow and priorities, not speed alone.

CONTINGENCIES

Fixed rates provide predictability and stability.

Adjustable rate options may offer advantages depending on your expected timeline in the home.

Rate decisions should reflect your strategy, not market noise.

TIMELINE

A 30-45 day closing is standard in Northern Minnesota.

Flexibility on your closing date can sometimes be a competitive advantage — especially with sellers who need time to move.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR REAL ESTATE AGENT:

What have comparable homes in this area actually sold for?

Is this home priced right or have they been sitting on it?

Should we ask for closing cost help or price the offer differently?

What does the inspection typically reveal in homes this age?

How do we compete if there are multiple offers?

Strong outcomes come from strategy and preparation — not just enthusiasm.

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SMALL DECISIONS CAN DERAIL YOUR PURCHASE

DON'T BREAK CAMP EARLY

Most deals don't fall apart because of big dramatic problems. They fall apart because of **small, avoidable mistakes** made after the process has started. **You're too close to the finish line to blow it on something preventable.**

FINANCING A BIG PURCHASE

New truck. New furniture. New anything. If it goes on credit before closing, it can kill your deal. Your lender will catch it.

SWITCHING JOBS

A job change mid-process can throw off your timeline entirely. If you're thinking about it, talk to me first.

MAKING LOW-BALL OFFERS ON BAD INTEL

Lowballing without data insults sellers and closes doors. We'll make smart, supported offers.

SKIPPING OR RUSHING THE INSPECTION

Don't skip it to save $400. A good inspector tells you exactly what you're buying before it's too late.

FALLING IN LOVE BEFORE YOU KNOW THE NUMBERS

Stay grounded until the full picture is clear. The numbers matter as much as the feeling.

MISSING DEADLINES

When your lender or I ask for something, fast responses protect your closing date. Slow responses create delays that can effect the deal.

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BUILT ON HONESTY. DRIVEN BY THIS COMMUNITY.

TEAM CERMAK

Real estate isn't just a transaction. It's trust. And trust is built before the paperwork — in the conversations, the honesty, and the willingness to tell you the truth even when it's not what you want to hear.

HONESTY IN EVERY SITUATION

If a home isn't right for you, I'll tell you. If your offer needs to be stronger, I'll tell you that too. Clear guidance means no surprises.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE THAT MATTERS

I know this market — the neighborhoods, the price trends, the contractors worth calling after you close, and the areas worth avoiding. That's not something you Google.

COMMUNICATION YOU CAN COUNT ON

You'll know what's happening at every stage of this process. No radio silence, no wondering where things stand, no chasing me down for answers. You'll hear from me before you have to ask.

IN YOUR CORNER AFTER CLOSING

The relationship doesn't end when you get your keys. Whether you need a contractor recommendation six months later or have questions about your equity down the road, I'm still your resource.

PURPOSE OVER COMMISSION

My job isn't to close deals. It's to get you into the right home at the right price with a process that actually made sense. Those are very different things, and I don't confuse them.

Choosing the right agent is choosing the right partner for one of the biggest decisions of your life. The process doesn't have to feel overwhelming — **it just requires the right guide.**

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READY TO FIND YOUR BASE CAMP?

Whether you're ready to move tomorrow or still figuring it out, reach out. The first conversation costs you nothing and usually answers more than you expected.

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