



THE ROAD
TO
Home

A HOME BUYER'S GUIDE

PRESENTED BY:

*Kirsten Kelley &
David Kelley*
REALTOR®

Smith &
Associates **Real Estate**





I AM KIRSTEN

YOUR LOCAL REAL ESTATE EXPERT

"Details are the difference."

That's something I live by—not just in real estate, but in everything I do.

I'm Kirsten, a proud Tarpon Springs native and part of a retired Coast Guard family. This community is home for me, and helping people find the right property here is more than just a job—it's personal.

After years of running my own successful short-term rentals right here in Pinellas County, I now help buyers do the same. Whether you're looking for an Airbnb investment or your next beachside escape, I know how to spot the right home—and avoid the wrong ones. I've helped many buyers launch profitable STRs, and I guide each one through local regulations, setup, and everything in between.

Real estate runs in my blood—I'm a second-generation investment pro. I've learned how to walk through a home and really see it, inside and out. I teach my clients how to do the same, because smart investing starts with understanding the details.

If you're ready to invest in Florida's Gulf Coast, I'd love to help you find the perfect place—and make sure every detail works in your favor.

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Associates **Real Estate**



I AM DAVID

YOUR LOCAL REAL ESTATE EXPERT

With a strong foundation in service and sales, I bring a unique blend of discipline, dedication, and approachability to Tampa Bay real estate. A proud 25-year U.S. Coast Guard veteran and seasoned sales leader with over a decade in outside sales and sales management, I know how to navigate complex situations with calm confidence – skills that directly benefit my clients in today's fast-moving market.

I am passionate about helping buyers find the right home with ease and clarity. I especially enjoy guiding first-time homebuyers and those relocating to the Tampa Bay area, taking the time to understand their needs and make the process smooth, straightforward, and even fun.

My clients appreciate my attentive communication, strong negotiation skills, and grounded, no-pressure approach. Whether you're moving across the country or across the street, I am the kind of agent who shows up, follows through, and keeps your best interests front and center.

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Smith &
Associates Real Estate

meet THE TEAM



Andrea Windsor- Transaction Coordinator

As a dedicated Transaction Coordinator based in Wesley Chapel (Tampa), Florida, I specialize in taking the stress out of Real Estate transactions. With expertise in residential contract-to-close services, land contracts, and new construction contracts, I've had the privilege of closing over 2,000 contracts in the last four years and with 10 years of experience as a Transaction Coordinator.

MODERN EDGE
TITLE

Modern Edge Title

TITLE AFFILIATE

Modern Edge Title, LLC is a full-service title and real estate settlement provider that operates in Florida.

At Modern Edge Title, LLC, the client is always our first priority. Our goal is to make the closing process a smooth one. It should be as easy as possible for all parties involved.

Our experienced staff has handled thousands of closings. If you're buying, selling, or refinancing, we can help. Whether it's a residential home, investment property, commercial building, or vacant land, our staff has you covered.

10 *steps* TO BUYING A HOME

- 1 FIND THE RIGHT AGENT
- 2 PREPARE FINANCES
- 3 GET PRE-APPROVED
- 4 START HOME SHOPPING
- 5 MAKE AN OFFER
- 6 ORDER AN INSPECTION
- 7 NEGOTIATE FINAL OFFER
- 8 APPRAISAL ORDERED
- 9 SCHEDULE THE MOVE
- 1 CLOSING DAY



1 FINDING THE RIGHT *agent*

Buying a home is one of the most significant purchases in a lifetime. It is essential to have an experienced agent in your corner, always looking out for your best interest. A buyer agent's fiduciary responsibility is to represent the buyer and to ensure that they are protected.

After all, a seller has someone in their corner. A listing agent has an allegiance to the seller. Their goal is to get the seller top dollar for their home. There is incredible value in having someone working for YOUR best interests when buying a home.



GETTING YOU IN THE DOOR

We will narrow down the homes that fit your unique wants and needs and get you in the door! I look at dozens of homes every week, and I can help you identify potential problems within a home.

When repairs or changes in price need to be made, I will be your guide and handle requesting any repairs or changes in price to the sellers.

STAYING ON TOP OF THE PAPERWORK

Buying a home involves many types of documentation. I have the experience and knowledge to navigate real estate contracts. Ensuring that nothing is overlooked, and that you truly understand what a paper means before ever signing on the dotted line.

ON YOUR SIDE

A buyer's agent will represent your best interests. With a pulse on the local market and a sound understanding of how various amenities effect the value of a home, we will make sure we submit a competitive offer on the right house for you.

NEIGHBORHOOD EXPERT

I work daily in neighborhoods with inspectors, contractors, and negotiating with sellers. I have the market knowledge you need to get you the home of your dreams at the best price! Understanding the local real estate market is essential when it comes time to make an offer on a house.

PROBLEM SOLVER

I will work hard to protect all of your interests and take on any issues that may arise throughout the entire process. I work tirelessly to make sure buying a home is a fun and stress-free process.

AFFORDABILITY

The seller typically pays the commission for both the seller's agent and the buyer's agent.

UNDERSTANDING THE

Exclusive Buyer Agreement

The Exclusive Buyer Brokerage agreement is the contract that you sign when you begin your house hunt and start looking at properties. This form establishes what is known as an exclusive agency relationship between you and your Smith Associate.

This means that:

- Your Smith Associate is committed to putting your needs first as a client and doing whatever it takes to get you your ideal home with the best possible pricing and terms.
- You are selecting the associate to represent you in the negotiation and full contract process.
- Terms of payment between you and your associate are understood by both parties and exchanged only at the time of successful closing.

The terms of the agreement are negotiable, typically last for 12 months and are cancelable at any time in writing from either party. As of August 17th, 2024, all real estate brokers providing home buying services to a buyer will be required to have the buyer execute an Exclusive Buyer Brokerage Agreement before touring any homes.

2 *prepare* FINANCING

HOW MUCH HOUSE CAN YOU AFFORD?

Mortgage lenders recommend you do not buy a home that is more than 3 to 5 times your annual household income. If you are not purchasing a home with cash, you will need a mortgage pre-approval provided by your mortgage lender. A lender will work with you to get a loan that meets your needs. Some buyers are concerned with keeping their monthly payments as low as possible, others want to make sure that their monthly payments never increase.

CHECK YOUR CREDIT

A mortgage requires a good credit score. You can improve your score by:

- Paying down credit card balances
- Continuing to make payments on time
- Avoid applying for a new credit card or car loan until you have been approved
- Avoid making big purchases until you have been approved
- If possible, avoid job changes until you have been approved

SAVE CASH FOR A DOWN PAYMENT & OTHER EXPENSES

In order to make your dream of buying a home a reality, you will need to save cash for your down payment, earnest money, closing costs & home inspector.

- A Down Payment is typically between 3.5% & 20% of the purchase price
- Earnest Money is money you put down to show you're serious about purchasing a home. It's also known as a good faith deposit.
- Closing Costs for the buyer run between 2% & 5% of the loan amount
- A Home Inspection costs \$300 to \$500



3 *get* PRE-APPROVED

Being pre-approved, unlike being pre-qualified, means you've actually been approved by a lender for a specific loan amount. You will need to provide documented financial information (income, statements, assets, debt & credit reports, etc.) to be reviewed & verified by the lender.

GET *qualified*



INCOME QUALIFICATIONS

QUALIFYING INCOME

- W-2 Income/Salary
- Income from part-time jobs
- Income from a second Job
- Overtime & Bonuses
- Seasonal jobs
- Self-employed Income
- Alimony & child support (Documentation required)

NON-QUALIFYING INCOME

- Income from the lottery
- Gambling
- Unemployment pay
- Single bonuses
- Non-occupying co-signer income
- Unverifiable income
- Income from rental properties

NEEDED *documents*

- W2'S FROM THE PAST 2 YEARS
- 3 MONTHS WORTH OF PAY-STUBS
- BANK STATEMENTS (PAST 3 MONTHS)
- PREVIOUS 2 YEARS OF TAX RETURNS
- LIST OF YOUR DEBTS & ASSETS
- DIVORCE DECREE
- ADDITIONAL INCOME DOCUMENTS

TYPES OF *mortgage loans*

	WHO QUALIFIES	DOWN PAYMENT	UPFRONT MORTGAGE INSURANCE	MONTHLY MORTGAGE INSURANCE	MINIMUM CREDIT SCORE
VA Department of Veteran Affairs	Veterans Personnel with honorable discharge Reservists & National Guard Surviving Spouses	NONE	NONE	NONE	580
USDA Department of Agriculture	Someone who is buying a home in a USDA -designated rural area.	NONE	2% of the loan amount. Can be rolled into loan amount.	REQUIRED	640
FHA Federal Housing Administration	Anyone who meets the minimum credit and income levels.	At least 3.5% of purchase price	1.75% of loan amount	REQUIRED	580-640
203K Federal Housing Administration	Anyone who plans to purchase a fixer-upper or needs to renovate their home and meets credit & income requirements	At least 3.5% of purchase price	1.75% of loan amount	REQUIRED	580-640
CONVENTIONAL 97	Depending on the program, available first time home buyers (a buyer who hasn't owned in the last three years) can put 3% down with a Conventional 97 program.	Varies from 3%-20% of purchase price	NONE	REQUIRED	620
SELECT SMART PLUS	Anyone who meets lenders credit, income & debt level requirements	Varies from 3% -20%, but typically ranges from 5-20%	NONE	REQUIRED	620



4

start HOME SHOPPING

START TOURING HOMES IN YOUR PRICE RANGE

Time to start shopping! We will take notes on all the homes we visit. It can be hard to remember all the details of each home, so take pictures or videos to help you remember each home, and review the notes you have written. Once we have found THE house for you, we will present an appropriate offer based on recent sales and current buyer activity in the area, as well as the value of the property in its current condition. Negotiations may take place after the offer is presented.



tip

We will make sure to check every little detail of each house

- Test the plumbing
- Test the electrical system
- Open and close the windows & doors to make sure they work properly

Evaluate the neighborhood and surrounding areas

- Are the surrounding homes well maintained?
- How much traffic is on the street?
- Is it conveniently located to schools, shopping, restaurants, & parks

make AN OFFER

WHEN TO MAKE AN OFFER:

So you have found THE house! Congrats! In today's market when the demand is higher than the amount of homes available it is important to act fast!

HOW MUCH TO OFFER:

We will sit down and look at recent sales and current buyer activity in the area, as well as the value of the property in its present condition. Putting all this information together, we will determine the price that you would like to offer.

SUBMITTING AN OFFER

There are some components to an offer that makes it more appealing to the sellers.

- **Put Your Best Foot Forward**

We will work together to discuss your options and create your very best offer. Depending on the circumstances, you may have only one chance to make a good impression.

- **Put Down a Healthy Earnest Deposit**

A large earnest money deposit shows the seller you are serious

- **Cash Talks**

A transaction that is not dependent on receiving loan approval is more attractive to a seller

- **Shorter Inspection Periods**

Try shortening the inspection period to 10 days

- **Write the Seller a Letter**

We will make your offer stand out by writing a personal letter to the seller, explaining why you fell in love with their home.

- **Offer to Close Quickly**

Many sellers prefer to close within 30 days.



AFTER YOU SUBMIT AN OFFER

THE SELLER COULD

- **ACCEPT THE OFFER**

- **DECLINE THE OFFER**

This happens if the seller thinks your offer isn't close enough to their expectations to further negotiate.

- **COUNTER-OFFER**

A counter-offer is when the seller offers you different terms. If this happens, you can:

- **ACCEPT THE SELLER'S COUNTER-OFFER**

- **DECLINE THE SELLER'S COUNTER-OFFER**

- **COUNTER THE SELLER'S COUNTER-OFFER**

You can negotiate back and forth as many times as needed until you reach an agreement or someone chooses to walk away.

OFFER IS ACCEPTED - CONGRATS!

You will sign the purchase agreement and you are now officially under contract! This period of time is called the contingency period. Now inspections, appraisals, or anything else built into your purchase agreement will take place.





6 *order* AN INSPECTION

During the inspection period, we will schedule an inspection with a reputable home inspector to do a thorough investigation of the home. Once this is complete, the inspector will provide us with a list of their findings. You can take the issues as-is or request the seller to address some or all of the findings. We will be mindful and reasonable on smaller items while being very cautious and vigilant of potentially significant issues.

7 *negotiate* FINAL OFFER

Issues typically arise after the home inspection, and those issues tend to result in another round of negotiations for credits or fixes.

1. Ask for credit for the work that needs to be done.

Likely, the last thing the seller wants to do is repair work.

2. Think “big picture” and don’t sweat the small stuff.

A tile that needs some caulking or a leaky faucet can easily be fixed. Repairs are still up for negotiation and perhaps a small credit would help with closing costs.

3. Keep your poker face.

The listing agent will be present during inspections and revealing your comfort level with the home could come back to haunt you in further discussions or negotiations.

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APPRAISAL

ordered

Your lender will arrange for a third party appraiser to provide an independent estimate of the value of the house you are buying. The appraisal lets all parties involved know that the price is fair. The loan file then moves on to the mortgage underwriter.

If approved you will receive your final commitment letter that includes the final loan terms & percentage rates.

PROPERTY TITLE SEARCH

This ensures that the seller truly owns the property and that all existing liens, loans or judgments are disclosed.

HOME OWNERS INSURANCE

You'll need insurance for the new home before closing. This will protect against things like fire, storms, and flooding



scheduling YOUR MOVE

AFTER SIGNING

- Finalize Home Mortgage
- Schedule Home Inspection
- Declutter! Sort through every drawer, closet, cupboard & shelf, removing items you no longer need or like. Donate or sell items that are in good condition
- Get copies of medical records and store them with your other important documents
- Create an inventory of anything valuable that you plan to move
- Get estimates from moving companies

4 WEEKS TO MOVE

- Give 30 days notice if you are currently renting
- Schedule movers/moving truck
- Buy/find packing materials
- START PACKING

3 WEEKS TO MOVE

- Arrange appraisal
- Complete title search (Title company will do this)

2 WEEKS TO MOVE

- Secure Home Warranty
- Get quotes for home insurance
- Schedule time for closing
- Contact utility companies (water, electric, cable)
- Change address: mailing, subscriptions, etc.
- Minimize grocery shopping
- Keep on packing

1 WEEK TO MOVE

- Obtain certified checks for closing
- Schedule and attend a final walkthrough
- Finish packing
- Clean
- Pack essentials for a few nights in new home
- Confirm delivery date with the moving company. Write directions to the new home, along with your cell phone number



10

closing DAY

✓ CLOSING DAY

Closing is when you sign ownership and insurance paperwork and you receive your new home's keys! Typically, closing takes four to six weeks. During this time, purchase funds are held in escrow, where your money is held safe until the transaction is complete.

✓ CLOSING DISCLOSURE

Lenders are required to provide you with a closing disclosure, at least three days before closing. This will show you what your final loan terms and closing costs will be. You will have three days to review the statement. This is done to ensure that there are no surprises at the closing table. If there is a significant discrepancy between the loan estimate and the closing disclosure, we must notify your lender and title company immediately.

✓ FINAL WALKTHROUGH

We will do a final walk through the home within 24 hours of closing to check the property's condition. This final inspection takes about an hour. We will make sure any repair work that the seller agreed to make has been done. We will be sure to:

- Make sure all appliances are working properly
- Run the water in all the faucets and check for any possible leaks
- Open and close garage doors with opener
- Flush toilets
- Run the garbage disposal and exhaust fans

✓ CLOSING TABLE

Who will be there:

- Your agent
- The seller
- The seller's agent
- A title company representative
- Your loan officer
- Any real estate attorneys involved in the transaction

The closing typically happens at the title company. You will be signing lots of paperwork so get your writing hand warmed up! Some of the papers you will be signing include: the deed of trust, promissory note, and other documents

✓ CLOSING COSTS

Closing costs can vary depending on your home's purchase price and where you are located. You can generally expect your closing costs to be around 3% to 4% of the home's sales price. These closing costs can sometimes be shared with the seller.

✓ BRING TO CLOSING

- Government-issued photo ID
- Copy of the sales contract
- Homeowner's insurance certificate
- Proof of funds to cover the remainder of the costs

✓ RECEIVE YOUR KEYS

Congratulations! It was a lot of hard work but you are now officially homeowners!! Time to throw a party and get to know your new neighbors!



WHAT TO EXPECT

HONESTY & TRANSPARENCY

INTEGRITY

RESPECT

TIMELY & REACHABLE

ACTING IN YOUR BEST INTEREST





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