

# **FIRST-TIME HOME BUYER HANDBOOK**

**Prepared for Clients of:**

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## **1. Understanding Your Budget**

- Monthly payment includes mortgage, taxes, insurance, HOA (if any), and maintenance.
- Keep emergency savings for unexpected repairs.
- Review your credit score early; it affects your loan options and interest rate.

## **2. Loan Options Explained**

- Conventional: Strong credit, flexible property types.
- FHA: Lower down payment, more lenient credit.
- VA: 0% down for eligible veterans.
- USDA: 0% down for qualified rural areas.
- Get fully pre-approved before shopping.

## **3. Reading the Market**

- Low inventory favors sellers; higher inventory gives buyers leverage.
- Interest rates directly affect how much home you can afford.
- Ask your agent for recent comps and trend updates.

## **4. Home Search Essentials**

- Identify must-haves vs. nice-to-haves.
- Evaluate commute, schools, taxes, and neighborhood growth.
- Understand disclosures (roof age, HVAC, foundation notes).

## 5. Making a Strong Offer

- Earnest money shows seriousness.
- Key contingencies: inspection, appraisal, financing.
- Your agent will help negotiate price, repairs, or seller concessions.

## 6. Inspections & Appraisal

- Inspection reveals condition; negotiate repairs or credits if needed.
- Appraisal confirms value for the lender.
- Final loan approval depends on appraisal and underwriting.

## 7. Closing Timeline

- Title research checks ownership + liens.
- Lender finalizes documents.
- At closing: sign paperwork, pay closing costs, receive keys.

## 8. After You Move In

- Budget for annual maintenance (1–3% of home value).
- Track property tax changes.
- Build equity and explore refinancing when rates improve.

Your agent is your guide and advocate from start to finish.