

# Must-Know Guide for First-Time Home Buyers in Surrey, BC

Updated for 2025

## 1 Introduction

Purchasing your first home in Surrey, British Columbia, is a significant milestone filled with opportunities and challenges. This guide, crafted from the perspective of a veteran economist and real estate agent, provides actionable insights and lesser-known tips to navigate the Surrey real estate market in 2025. From financial planning to post-purchase strategies, this document equips you with the knowledge to make informed decisions.

## 2 Financial Planning: Building a Strong Foundation

### 2.1 Understanding Your Budget

- **Get Pre-Approved for a Mortgage:** Obtain pre-approval to clarify your budget and strengthen your position as a buyer. This step is crucial in Surrey's competitive market.
- **Debt-to-Income Ratio:** Keep total debt, including your mortgage, below 40% of your gross income to improve approval odds and secure better rates.
- **Closing Costs:** Budget 2–5% of the purchase price for closing costs, including legal fees, home inspection, and potential property transfer tax.

### 2.2 Down Payment Strategies

- **Home Buyers' Plan (HBP):** Withdraw up to \$60,000 tax-free from your RRSP for a down payment, repayable over 15 years.
- **First-Time Home Buyers' Program:** Qualify for a full or partial exemption from property transfer tax for homes valued at \$835,000 or less, saving up to \$8,000.
- **BC Home Owner Grant:** Reduce annual property taxes by up to \$770 for homes valued up to \$2,150,000.

### 2.3 Emergency Fund

Save 3–6 months' worth of mortgage payments to cover unexpected repairs or financial challenges post-purchase.

### 3 Market Insights: Navigating Surrey’s Real Estate Landscape

#### 3.1 Current Market Trends (2025)

- **Buyer’s Market:** Increased inventory (43,608 units in BC, up 21% year-over-year) and a sales-to-active listings ratio of 14.8% create buyer-friendly conditions.
- **Price Stability:** Surrey’s average home price is approximately \$1,193,750, with stabilization expected in 2025.
- **Inventory Growth:** 2,313 new listings in Surrey over the last 28 days provide more options for buyers.

#### 3.2 Neighborhood-Specific Insights

Table 1: Surrey Neighborhoods Overview

Neighborhood	Characteristics	Price Range
South Surrey	Coastal lifestyle, premium amenities	Premium
Fleetwood	Family-friendly, good schools	Moderate
Cloverdale	Growing, investment potential	Affordable
Newton	Emerging, development focus	Affordable
Guildford	Growth potential, infrastructure	Affordable

#### 3.3 Future Growth Areas

- **Investment Potential:** Surrey’s population is projected to reach 800,000 by 2040, driving demand in areas like Cloverdale and Newton.
- **Transit-Oriented Development:** The SkyTrain Surrey-Langley line expansion will boost property values in Guildford and Fleetwood.

### 4 Legal and Tax Considerations: Protecting Your Investment

#### 4.1 Property Transfer Tax

- **Exemption Eligibility:** First-time buyers may be exempt from property transfer tax on the first \$500,000 for homes valued at \$835,000 or less. Partial exemptions apply for homes up to \$860,000.
- **Requirements:** Canadian citizenship or permanent residency, one year of BC residency, and no prior principal residence ownership.

#### 4.2 Homeowner Grant

The BC Home Owner Grant reduces property taxes by up to \$770 annually for eligible homeowners.

### 4.3 Legal Representation

Hire a real estate lawyer to review contracts, ensure compliance, and address zoning or property history issues.

### 4.4 Strata Considerations

For condos or townhouses, review strata financials, bylaws, and potential special levies to avoid unexpected costs.

## 5 The Home Buying Process: From Search to Closing

### 5.1 Finding a Real Estate Agent

- **Experience in Surrey:** Select an agent with local expertise and access to off-market listings.
- **Referrals:** Use platforms like Rate-My-Agent.com for top-rated agents.

### 5.2 Home Inspection

A professional inspection is essential to identify structural, plumbing, or electrical issues that could lead to costly repairs.

### 5.3 Offer and Negotiation

- **Market Value:** Use tools like Zolo.ca to assess comparable sales.
- **Flexibility:** Be prepared to negotiate or walk away if the deal exceeds your budget.

### 5.4 Future Resale Value

Choose properties near schools, parks, or transit hubs for better long-term value retention.

## 6 Post-Purchase Tips: Thriving as a Homeowner

### 6.1 Home Maintenance

- **Annual Inspections:** Check roofing, HVAC, and plumbing yearly to prevent major issues.
- **DIY vs. Professional:** Learn basic tasks but hire experts for complex repairs.

### 6.2 Insurance

Ensure coverage includes flood protection, given Surrey's risk in certain areas.

### 6.3 Community Involvement

Engage with neighbors and local events to build a support network.

## **6.4 Future Planning**

Select a home that accommodates potential family or career changes, such as extra bedrooms or a home office.

## **7 Conclusion**

Buying your first home in Surrey, BC, is a rewarding journey with the right preparation. By leveraging financial programs, understanding market trends, and seeking professional guidance, you can secure a home that meets your needs and budget. Surrey's growth, diverse neighborhoods, and supportive incentives make it an ideal place to start your homeownership journey. Consult professionals for personalized advice to ensure a smooth process.