The Luxury Home Buyer Guide

BUYING A HOME IN HOUSTON AND ACROSS TEXAS, STEP BY STEP

This guide walks you through a Texas home purchase in the order it actually happens: how to get financially ready, how the contract and option period work, what the title commitment and survey tell you, what money is due and when, and what to do in the first week after closing. It is written the way I explain it to my own clients, without shorthand and without pressure.

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A Note From Patricia



I spent twelve years in the legal field before real estate, and it taught me that most bad outcomes are not bad luck. They are deadlines nobody explained and paperwork nobody read out loud. My promise to you is plain language, honest numbers, and complete privacy. Read this at your own pace, mark it up, and bring me your questions.

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Step One: Get Your Money Organized Before You Tour

Touring first and financing second is the most common way buyers lose a home they wanted. In a competitive situation the seller compares certainty, not enthusiasm. Full underwritten pre approval, or proof of funds if you are paying cash, is what makes your offer credible on day one.

- Ask your lender for a full pre approval, not a pre qualification. Pre qualification is a conversation; pre approval means your income, assets, and credit have been reviewed.
- Interview two or three lenders and compare the written loan estimates side by side: rate, points, lender fees, and whether escrows are included.
- If you are paying cash, get a current bank letter or brokerage statement. Seasoned funds in one account are simpler than funds spread across five.
- Confirm how much you want at closing versus how much you want to keep liquid. Cash reserves after closing matter more than most buyers expect.
- Do not open new credit, change jobs, or move large sums between accounts while under contract. Every one of those can reset underwriting.

Step Two: Define the Home Before You Look at Homes

We build a written requirement together so that when the right property appears we are not debating basics. Clarity here is also what lets me screen quietly on your behalf, including properties that are not publicly marketed.

- Separate the true non negotiables from preferences: location, school access, lot size, privacy, single story, garage capacity, and finish level.
- Decide your realistic renovation appetite. Cosmetic updates are very different from moving plumbing or structural work.
- Consider drainage and flood history at the same weight as finishes. In the Houston area this affects insurance cost, resale, and peace of mind.
- Look at commute at the hour you will actually drive it, not at midday.
- Name your timeline honestly, including lease end dates, school calendars, and any home you have to sell first.

Step Three: How Showings and Off Market Access Work

Not every quality home reaches the public market. Some owners will sell but do not want a sign, public photographs, or neighbors asking questions. Those conversations happen agent to agent, and they happen for buyers who are already prepared. That is one reason I ask for financing and criteria first.

- I keep a written record of every property we see with notes on condition, so week four decisions are not made on memory.
- Photographs are marketing. We evaluate roof, foundation, drainage, mechanical age, windows, and layout in person.
- I never disclose your budget ceiling, motivation, or flexibility to a listing agent without your explicit direction.
- If a property is wrong for you, I will say so plainly. A commission is never worth your regret.

Step Four: The Offer and the Contract

Most Texas residential purchases use the promulgated One to Four Family Residential Contract, with addenda for financing, HOA, and other specifics. Price is only one of the terms a seller weighs. Closing date, financing type, option period length, amount of earnest money, how appraisal risk is handled, and whether you need a leaseback all shape how your offer reads.

- Earnest money shows commitment and is credited to you at closing. It is delivered to the title company, never to the seller directly.
- The option fee buys you a named number of days to terminate for any reason. It is the most valuable protection in the contract and I will always explain exactly when it expires.
- A financing contingency and an appraisal position are separate decisions. Waiving protections can win a bid and can also cost you real money, so we make that choice with numbers in front of us.
- Ask for the Seller's Disclosure Notice, HOA documents, prior survey, and any inspection reports the seller already has before writing when possible.
- Every agreed change goes in writing as an amendment. Verbal promises from any party are not enforceable terms.

Step Five: The Option Period, Where the Real Work Happens

This short window is your investigation period. My job is to keep the calendar visible, get the right professionals in the door quickly, and turn findings into either a negotiation or an informed decision to walk away.

- General inspection first, then specialists as the report warrants: foundation or structural engineer, roof, HVAC, plumbing hydrostatic test, sewer scope, pool, and pest.
- Read the inspection report as three lists: safety, function, and cosmetic. Negotiate the first two and stop arguing about the third.
- Ask for repairs, a price reduction, or closing cost credit. Sellers often prefer credit because it is one line at closing instead of coordinating trades.
- Get an insurance quote during this window, including flood, and confirm any prior claims history for the address.
- Order the survey question early. Whether an existing survey can be reused with an affidavit affects both timing and cost.

Step Six: Title, Survey, and What They Protect

The title commitment is not a formality. It tells you who legally owns the property, what is owed on it, and every recorded restriction that will follow you after closing. I read it with you, section by section, and I flag anything I would not accept myself.

- Schedule B lists exceptions to your coverage: easements, mineral reservations, building lines, and restrictions.
- Schedule C lists what has to be cured before closing, such as liens, judgments, or missing releases.
- Compare the survey against Schedule B. Fences, driveways, sheds, and pools crossing a line or an easement are best solved before closing.
- Read deed restrictions for real life items: parking, fencing, exterior changes, short term rentals, home businesses, and boats or trailers.
- Verify HOA dues, transfer fees, special assessments, and the resale certificate before your option period ends.

Step Seven: Costs You Should Expect, So Nothing Surprises You

You will spend money before closing, at closing, and after closing. I would rather you see all three now. Exact figures depend on price, lender, and property, and I will get you real quoted numbers rather than estimates you cannot rely on.

- Before closing: option fee, earnest money, inspections, appraisal, and sometimes the survey.
- At closing: down payment, lender fees, title fees, recording, prepaid interest, and the first year of insurance and tax escrow.
- You will receive a Closing Disclosure ahead of signing. We compare it line by line against your original loan estimate.
- After closing: utility deposits, immediate repairs, keys and locks, and moving costs.
- Ongoing: property taxes, insurance, HOA dues, and a maintenance reserve. Texas property tax is a meaningful part of the monthly payment and deserves a careful look at the current and projected assessed value.

Step Eight: Closing Day and the First Week After

Closing itself should be quiet. Everything that could go wrong has already been addressed if the preceding weeks were handled well.

- Do a final walkthrough after the seller has moved out and confirm agreed repairs are complete and systems still run.
- Bring a government issued photo identification and send funds by wire only after verifying instructions by phone with a number you looked up yourself. Wire fraud is real and it is aimed at buyers.
- Confirm you receive the deed recording information and your title policy.
- First week: change locks and garage codes, transfer utilities, test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and locate the main water shutoff and electrical panel.
- File your homestead exemption with the county appraisal district for the year you occupy. It is free, it lowers your taxable value, and buyers forget it every year.

How I Work: Transparency, Integrity, and Privacy

I represent you, and that comes with duties I take literally. I will tell you what I know, tell you when I do not know, and get you an answer from the right professional rather than guessing. Your finances, your reasons for moving, and your family situation are not conversation with anyone. If I ever believe a deal is wrong for you, I will say so even when saying nothing would be easier.

Questions Worth Asking

Bring these to me, to your lender, or to your attorney. If I do not know an answer, I will tell you and get it from the right professional. Use the space to write down what you learn.

- ☐ What is the full monthly payment at this price, including taxes, insurance, and HOA?
- ☐ What has the assessed value done over the last several years for this address?
- ☐ What is the flood designation and what does insurance actually quote?
- ☐ How old are the roof, HVAC, water heater, and major appliances?
- ☐ What are the deed restrictions I will have to live with?
- ☐ What repairs are safety and function items versus cosmetic?
- ☐ What are my exact option period and financing deadlines?

Speak With Patricia

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