

First Time Home Buyer

Frequently Asked Questions





Buying your first home is exciting - and it can also feel overwhelming. You're navigating new terminology, making major financial decisions, and trying to protect yourself in a process you've never been through before. This guide answers the most common questions I hear from first-time buyers and, more importantly, highlights what you need to know to protect your interests from day one. My goal isn't just to help you buy a house - it's to ensure you feel confident, informed, and represented throughout your journey to finding your perfect place to land.

WELCOME



REPIQUE
REALTY



How Much Do I Need For A Down Payment?

You don't need 20%! While that's a common myth, many first-time buyers put down much less. FHA loans require as little as 3.5% down, and conventional loans can go as low as 3% for qualified buyers. VA loans (if you're a veteran) require \$0 down. The right amount depends on your financial situation, loan type, and comfort level with monthly payments. A larger down payment means lower monthly payments and possibly avoiding private mortgage insurance (PMI), but it's not necessary to get started.

What Costs Should I Budget For Beyond The Down Payment?

Beyond your down payment, expect to pay closing costs (typically up to 3% of the purchase price), which include things like title insurance, appraisal fees, and lender fees. You'll also need earnest money (usually 1-2% of the offer price) when you make an offer - this goes toward your down payment at closing. Budget for a home inspection (\$500-700), moving costs, and immediate needs like changing locks, deep cleaning, or minor repairs.

What Credit Score Do I Need ?

Everyone's situation is unique and these are general guidelines. Most conventional loans require a minimum credit score of 620, though you'll get better interest rates with scores above 740. FHA loans are more forgiving and may accept scores as low as 580 (or even 500 with a larger down payment). It's incredibly important to talk with a lender about your specific situation - I can connect you with trusted professionals who are happy to chat with you well before you're ready to buy to help you create a plan to set yourself up for success. Even small improvements to your credit can open doors you didn't think were possible.



FAQ'S

Do I Have To Pay My Agent?

Buyer agent compensation is now negotiable and must be discussed upfront. In most cases, the seller still agrees to pay the buyer's agent commission as part of the transaction, but it's no longer automatically assumed. We'll discuss compensation clearly in our consultation so you know exactly what to expect. My goal is to ensure you have full representation throughout this process-buying a home is likely the largest investment you'll make, and having an advocate protecting your interests is invaluable regardless of how the compensation is structured.

When should I get pre-approved?

Get pre-approved before you start seriously looking at homes! A pre-approval(different from a pre-qualification) means a lender has verified your income, assets, and credit and committed to lending you a specific amount. This tells you your true budget, makes your offers stronger, and speeds up the closing process. In competitive markets, many sellers won't even consider offers without pre-approval. I can recommend trusted lenders who will take great care of you and explain all your options clearly.

Are there first-time homebuyer programs available in Minnesota and Wisconsin?

Yes!First-time homebuyer programs change frequently, so it's important to knowwhat's currently available as you're thinking about starting your search. Let me connect you with a trusted lender who specializes in knowing these options. Minnesota Housing offers several programs specifically for first-time buyers, including down payment assistance and lower interest rates. Many of these programs have income limits and are designed to help you afford more home than you might think possible. There are also programs for specific professions (teachers, healthcare workers, etc.) and for homes in certain areas. County and city programs may also be available depending on where you're buying.



FAQ'S

Why shouldn't I contact a listing agent directly about a home I like?

The listing agent works for the seller and is legally obligated to get the seller the best price and terms - not to protect your interests. If you contact them directly, anything you share (your budget, timeline, motivation, flexibility) can and will be used to the seller's advantage in negotiations. Even if they seem friendly and helpful, their fiduciary duty is to the seller, not to you. Having your own agent means someone is working solely for YOU - negotiating on your behalf, identifying potential issues, and ensuring you're making an informed decision. Don't give away your negotiating power before you even make an offer.

What should I be careful about at open houses?

Open houses are hosted by the listing agent, so be cautious about what information you share. Don't discuss your budget, how much you love the home, your timeline to buy, or whether you're pre-approved. Be friendly but vague. Listing agents have two goals at open houses: first, to sell the home for their client, and second, to meet unrepresented buyers in hopes of gaining their business. If you want to use open houses as a way to discreetly interview potential agents, that's perfectly fine - it can actually be a great way to meet people and see how they work. Just know that once you indicate you're unrepresented, they'll likely start their pitch. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but go in with awareness. The listing agent may offer to "represent both sides," but remember - they ultimately work for the seller. Keep your cards close and make intentional decisions about your representation.



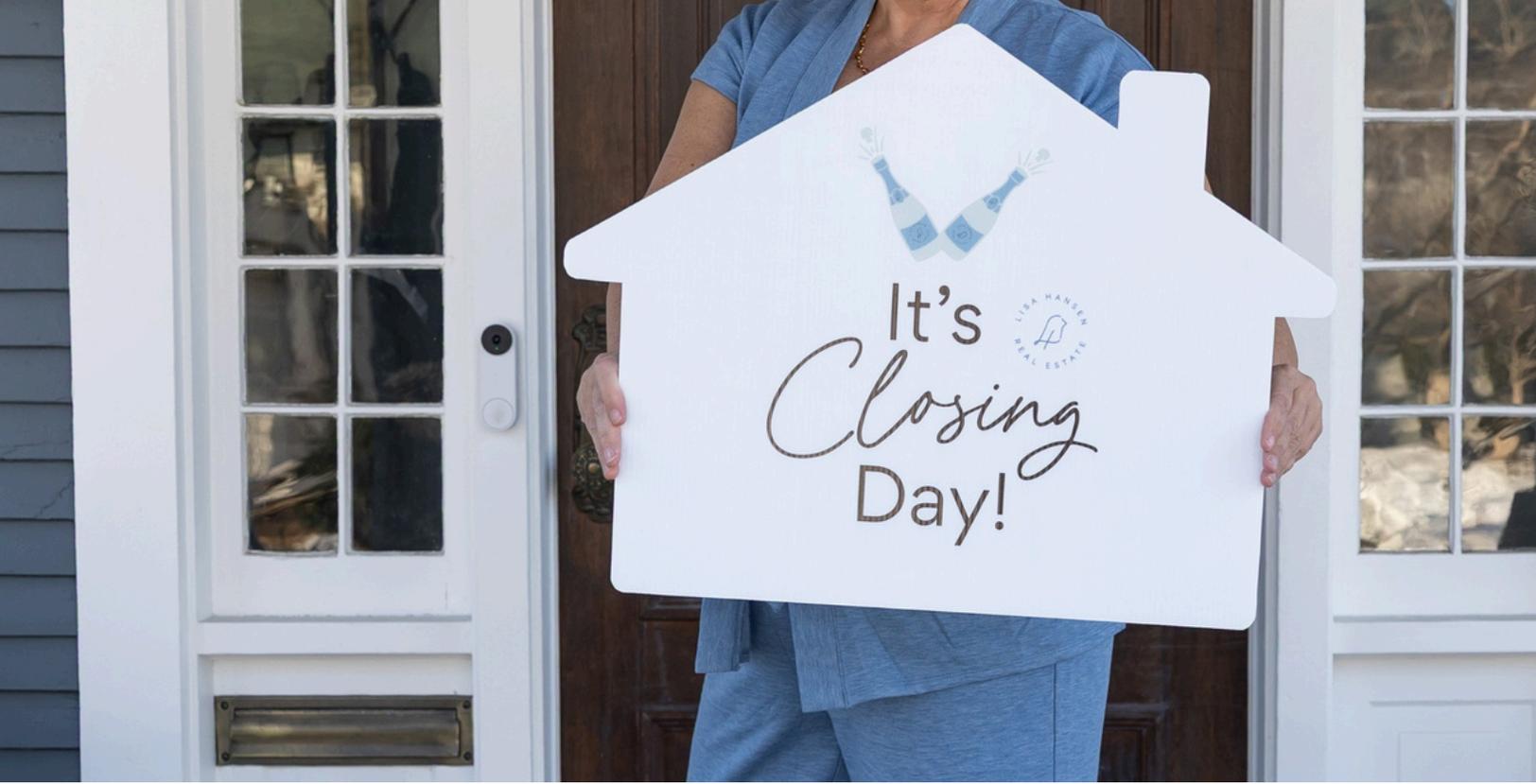
FAQ'S

What do I need to know about visiting new construction models homes?

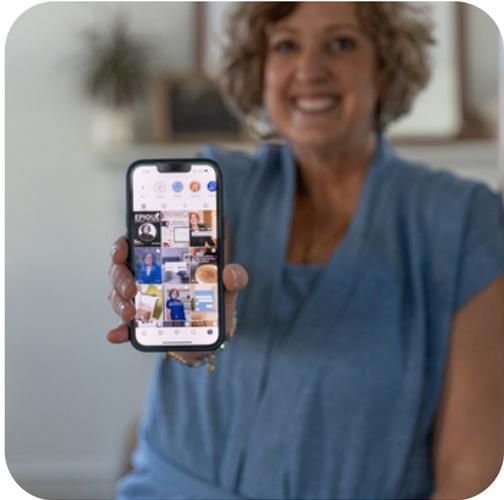
This is critical: if you're interested in new construction, contact me BEFORE you visit any model homes. Builders typically require that your agent accompany you on your first visit to receive compensation for representing you. If you walk in alone first, you may forfeit your right to representation, or you may have to pay your agent out of pocket. Builders have their own agents, and while they're professional and will helpfully provide valuable info about the builder and the process, they are ultimately employees of the builder. Having me with you means you have someone reviewing contracts, negotiating upgrades, understanding timelines, and protecting your investment. Don't accidentally give up this protection by visiting alone first!

Why should I set up a consultation with you before I start looking?

A consultation ensures you're set up for success from day one. We'll discuss your goals, timeline, and what "home" really means for your life right now - not just square footage, but layout and lifestyle fit. I'll explain the entire process, connect you with trusted lenders, help you understand your true budget, and make sure you're protected at every step. This isn't about pressuring you to buy - it's about education and advocacy. My background in counseling means I approach this as a partnership focused on finding your perfect place to land, not just closing a transaction. There's no obligation, just clarity and a plan that puts you in control of one of life's biggest decisions.



next steps



Ready to start your journey to homeownership? Let's schedule a no-pressure consultation to discuss your goals and create a personalized roadmap for your home search.



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Thank you!

