Guide to Buying a Home in The Villages, Florida

A comprehensive overview for future residents of America's premier active adult community

1. A Brief History of The Villages

The Villages began in the early 1970s as a modest mobile home community called Orange Blossom Gardens. Over time, developer Harold Schwartz and his son Gary Morse transformed it into a master planned, lifestyle driven retirement community. Through the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, The Villages expanded rapidly, adding golf courses, recreation centers, town squares, and dozens of unique neighborhoods ('villages'). Today, The Villages spans three counties, includes over 140,000 residents, and is known for its unmatched amenities, golf cart lifestyle, and vibrant social scene.

2. The Main Entertainment Squares

The Villages features four iconic town squares, each with its own theme, restaurants, shops, and nightly live music:

Lake Sumter Landing Market Square

- Coastal Key West theme
- Waterfront boardwalk
- Popular restaurants and boutique shops
- Central to many mid Villages neighborhoods

Spanish Springs Town Square

- Spanish mission architecture
- The original town square
- Restaurants, retail, and entertainment
- Close to the historic side and early Villages development

Brownwood Paddock Square

- Western ranch theme
- Surrounded by newer villages in the southern region
- Home to the Barnstorm Theater and modern dining options

Eastport Town Square

- Built around a large, scenic lake
- Walking trails, boardwalks, and nature views
- Outdoor recreation woven into the design

These squares are the heartbeat of The Villages, offering free nightly entertainment, festivals, and community events. Sawgrass Grove, not a Town Square, also offers nightly entertainment.

3. Community Development Districts (CDDs)

The Villages is organized into Community Development Districts, which function similarly to local government entities. Key points:

- CDDs manage infrastructure, roads, utilities, and amenities.
- Each homeowner pays a CDD annual maintenance fee.
- CDDs also manage bond assessments, which fund initial infrastructure.
- CDDs vary by area, but the structure ensures consistent quality and maintenance across the community.

4. Understanding Bonds

A bond is a one time assessment attached to a property to cover the cost of infrastructure such as roads, utilities, and neighborhood development.

- Bonds can range widely depending on the village and home type.
- Buyers can pay the bond off or continue paying it annually with interest.
- Newer areas typically have higher bonds; older areas may have bonds already paid.

This is a major financial factor buyers should understand before choosing a home.

5. Home Styles in The Villages

The Villages offers a wide variety of home types to fit different lifestyles and budgets:

Patio Villas

- Most affordable
- Low maintenance
- Great for seasonal residents

Courtyard Villas

- Walled in private yards
- Popular with pet owners
- Mix of block and frame construction

Ranch Homes

- Mid range pricing
- Open floor plans
- Very popular for full time residents

Designer Homes

- Larger floor plans
- Premium lots and finishes
- Many golf front and water view options

Premier Homes

- Luxury category
- Custom features and expansive layouts
- Limited availability

Manufactured Homes (Historic Side)

- Located near Spanish Springs
- Affordable entry point into The Villages lifestyle

6. Homestead vs. Non Homestead

Florida offers significant property tax benefits for primary residents.

Homestead Property

- Must be your primary residence
- Provides a Homestead Exemption (reduces taxable value)
- Caps annual tax increases
- Offers creditor protection

Non Homestead Property

- Seasonal or investment homes
- No homestead exemption
- Higher tax variability year to year

This distinction can significantly affect long term costs.

7. Realtor Representation: Single Agent vs. Transaction Broker

Florida allows two primary forms of representation:

Single Agent

- Fiduciary relationship
- Full loyalty, confidentiality, obedience, and accountability
- Highest level of representation

Transaction Broker

- Most common in Florida
- Provides limited representation to both parties
- Facilitates the transaction without full fiduciary duties

Buyers should understand which relationship they are entering before signing any agreement.

8. VLS vs. MLS

The Villages uses two listing systems:

VLS (Villages Listing Service)

- Exclusive to The Villages' in house sales team
- Contains new construction and resale homes listed directly with The Villages
- Not syndicated to outside brokerages

MLS (Multiple Listing Service)

- Used by all outside real estate brokerages
- Contains resale homes listed by independent Realtors
- Syndicates to Zillow, Realtor.com, etc.

To see all available homes, buyers must work with both systems or with a Realtor who can guide them through the MLS side while coordinating with VLS when needed.

9. 'As Is' vs. FAR/BAR Contracts

Florida uses two primary residential purchase contracts:

As Is Contract

- Buyer purchases the home in its current condition
- Buyer retains the right to inspect and cancel
- Seller is not obligated to make repairs

FAR/BAR Standard Contract

- Includes repair limits and obligations
- Seller may be required to fix certain issues
- More structured repair process

Both are widely used; the choice depends on negotiation strategy and property condition.

10. The Process: Showing Agreement, Representation Agreement, and Purchase Contract

Showing Agreement

- Required by some brokerages before touring homes
- Confirms the agent's right to represent the buyer for specific properties
- Protects the agent's compensation if the buyer purchases a shown home

Representation Agreement (Buyer Broker Agreement)

- Establishes the relationship (single agent or transaction broker)

- Defines duties, compensation, and exclusivity

- Ensures the buyer has professional guidance throughout the process

Purchase Contract

- Formal offer to purchase

- Includes price, terms, contingencies, inspection periods, and closing details

- Becomes binding once both parties sign

- Escrow deposit is typically required shortly after acceptance

A skilled Realtor ensures the buyer understands every step and avoids costly mistakes.

Final Thoughts

Buying a home in The Villages is not just a real estate transaction it's a lifestyle decision. With unique districts, bonds, home types, and representation rules, having a knowledgeable local expert makes the process smoother and more enjoyable.