



# YOUR HOME GUIDE

LET'S GUIDE YOU INTO YOUR DREAM HOME

CHOOSING THE  
RIGHT LOAN

BUYING VS. RENT

FINDING THE RIGHT  
REAL ESTATE AGENT

2024 COLLECTION





# UNDERSTANDING HOMEOWNERSHIP

Homeownership is a significant milestone and a long-term commitment that comes with numerous responsibilities and financial obligations. Before setting off on your home-buying journey, it's essential to evaluate your readiness.

Consider factors like your financial stability, creditworthiness, job security, and lifestyle needs. Be clear on why you want to buy a house. Whether it's for investment, stability, freedom, or a sense of community, your motivations will guide your home buying process.

Also, assess your financial readiness. Do you have a steady income source? Have you saved enough for a down payment, closing costs, moving expenses, and possible renovations? Are you prepared to handle ongoing expenses such as property taxes, insurance, HOA fees, and maintenance costs?

Lastly, consider the non-financial aspects. Are you ready to settle in one place for an extended period?

Homeownership may limit your mobility compared to renting. Additionally, as a homeowner, you will be responsible for all home repairs and maintenance. Understanding these aspects can help you decide if you're truly ready for homeownership.

# OPTIONS FOR HOME FINANCING

When it comes to financing your home, there are various mortgage options available, each with its own advantages, disadvantages, and unique terms. Some common types of home loans include:

- **Conventional Mortgages:** These are standard loans not insured by any government agency. They come in two types: conforming (meets the guidelines set by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac) and non-conforming (jumbo loans).
- **FHA Loans:** Backed by the Federal Housing Administration, these loans often have lower down payment requirements and are more accessible to individuals with lower credit scores.
- **VA Loans:** These loans, backed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, are available to veterans, service members, and their families. They often require no down payment or mortgage insurance.
- **USDA Loans:** Backed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, these loans are designed for rural homebuyers and often require no down payment.

Understanding the different loan options will help you choose one that fits your financial situation and long-term goals. It's advisable to consult with a mortgage broker or lender to help determine the best fit.







# IMPORTANCE OF CREDIT SCORES AND PRE-APPROVAL

Credit scores are a critical factor in determining your mortgage eligibility, interest rates, and terms. Lenders use credit scores to evaluate your creditworthiness, or how likely you are to repay your loan. A high credit score can lead to more favorable mortgage terms, while a low score can limit your options.

Pre-approval is an essential step in the home buying process. It involves a lender assessing your financial situation and determining how much they're willing to lend you. This not only helps you understand your budget but also signals to sellers that you're a serious buyer.

To get pre-approved, you'll need to provide the lender with financial documents such as pay stubs, W-2s, tax returns, bank statements, and information about your debts.

# DETERMINING YOUR NEEDS

When you start your home search, it's crucial to have a clear idea of what you're looking for in a house. Consider factors like location, home size, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, yard size, proximity to schools and amenities, neighborhood safety, and potential for home appreciation.

Also, consider your lifestyle and future plans. If you plan to grow your family, you might want an extra bedroom. If you work from home, a home office might be essential. Keep in mind that your dream home should not only meet your current needs but also accommodate your future plans.





# THE ROLE OF YOUR REAL ESTATE AGENT

A real estate agent is more than just a middleman between buyers and sellers. They are professionals equipped with comprehensive market knowledge, negotiation skills, and the expertise to guide you through the complex journey of home buying. Let's break down their essential functions:

- 1. Market Insight:** Agents provide valuable insights into the local market, including pricing trends and neighborhood conditions, helping you make informed decisions about potential homes.
- 2. Property Search:** Through their access to extensive real estate databases, agents save you time by filtering out unsuitable properties and arranging viewings that align with your preferences.
- 3. Negotiation:** Perhaps one of the most valuable roles of an agent is their ability to negotiate the best price and terms on your behalf, taking the stress out of this critical step.
- 4. Paperwork and Closing:** Real estate transactions involve substantial paperwork and strict deadlines. Your agent manages this process, guiding you through each step towards a successful closing.
- 5. Continued Support:** A good agent doesn't end their service at closing. They remain a valuable resource, providing recommendations for home improvement professionals and offering guidance on home maintenance and more.
- 6.** In choosing a real estate agent, look for someone who understands your needs, communicates effectively, and has a firm grasp of the local market. Your agent should not just help you buy a house, but assist you in finding a home that truly suits your lifestyle and long-term goals.



# SEARCHING FOR PROPERTIES

Once you have a clear understanding of what you're looking for in a home and the amount you can afford, you can start searching for properties. Online platforms are excellent resources, offering a variety of filters such as price, location, size, and features that allow you to narrow down your choices.

However, online search is only the first step. Nothing replaces the value of an in-person visit. Schedule viewings with your real estate agent, and take the opportunity to explore the neighborhood, check the condition of the house, and visualize living in the space.

During these visits, take notes of things you like and dislike, any repairs needed, the quality of natural light, the functionality of the layout, and the noise levels in the neighborhood. These observations will help you compare different properties and make an informed decision.

# MAKING AN OFFER

Once you've found a home you're interested in, the next step is to make an offer. The offering process involves several steps:

- 1. Home Valuation:** Before making an offer, it's important to determine the home's market value. Your real estate agent can help with a comparative market analysis (CMA), which examines recent sales of similar homes in the area.
- 2. Offer Preparation:** Your agent will help you prepare an offer letter, including your offering price, contingencies (conditions that must be met), and desired closing date.
- 3. Negotiation:** The seller may accept your offer, reject it, or make a counteroffer. Be prepared for some back-and-forth negotiations on price, closing date, contingencies, and which items are included in the sale (like appliances or furniture).
- 4. Contract:** Once both parties agree, the contract is signed. It includes the final sale price and terms of the purchase. It's recommended to have a lawyer review this document.







# HOME INSPECTIONS AND APPRAISALS

After your offer is accepted, you'll move forward to two critical procedures - home inspection and appraisal. These steps reveal essential details about the condition and the value of the home you're about to purchase.

## **Home Inspection:**

A home inspection is a comprehensive evaluation carried out by a professional home inspector. This process is critical as it uncovers any potential issues hidden beneath the home's surface, such as structural problems, faulty wiring, plumbing issues, or a worn-out roof.

The inspector will provide you with a detailed report outlining any existing or potential issues, enabling you to understand the home's current condition. If major problems are discovered, you may choose to renegotiate the deal, request the seller to carry out repairs, or in extreme cases, rescind your offer.

## **Home Appraisal:**

A home appraisal, on the other hand, is a professional estimate of the home's market value. This process is typically required by the lender to ensure the amount of money they're lending aligns with the home's true value.

If the appraisal value comes in lower than the sale price, you may need to renegotiate the terms with the seller, or potentially pay the difference out of pocket to secure your mortgage. In contrast, if the appraisal is higher than the sale price, you've gained instant equity in your new home.

Both home inspections and appraisals play crucial roles in the home buying process, safeguarding your investment and ensuring you're making a sound financial decision.

# CLOSING THE DEAL

Closing is the final step in the home buying process. It involves signing a lot of legal paperwork, paying closing costs, and receiving the keys to your new home. Closing costs typically range from 2% to 5% of the loan amount and include fees for mortgage origination, appraisal, title search, title insurance, surveys, taxes, and recording fees.

After the closing, the home is officially yours. But keep in mind, your responsibility doesn't end here. You'll need to plan your move, set up your utilities, change your address, and maintain your new home.







## MOVE IN DAY

Congratulations, you're now a homeowner! As you settle in, take the time to understand the details of your mortgage payments, set aside a budget for ongoing home maintenance, and familiarize yourself with your property.

Take the time to celebrate this achievement, but remember that homeownership is an ongoing journey. Whether it's planning home improvements, staying on top of maintenance, or keeping an eye on your home's value, you're now in the driver's seat.

Remember to engage professionals when needed, stay informed about your local real estate market, and most importantly, enjoy your new home!



Raised in Metairie, Jamie Magee drove carriages in the French Quarter for 14 years before earning her real estate license in 2017. The new job quickly became a calling. Fueled by her faith, she strives to support her clients with integrity, knowledge, and compassion, like a cherished neighbor offering realty wisdom across a backyard fence.

Active in her church and the horse community, Jamie understands Greater New Orleans through and through. She has a knack for taking on the more unusual or quirky properties. In 2019, the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans certified her as a Historic House Specialist. At Athena, she's consistently been a top producer.

She sees a home as a refuge where faith and comfort coincide. The relationships she's built show the satisfaction her clients have with her work. Many times she's been invited to see homeowners' new decorations and family photographs. Such heart-warming moments keep her passion for real estate kindled.

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# YOUR DREAM HOME

Write everything you dream about your future home having.  
We'll use this as a reference point during our house touring!

Cities You'd Like To Buy In: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Bedrooms: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Bathrooms: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Sqft: \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum Price: \_\_\_\_\_

School District: \_\_\_\_\_

When Do You Want To Purchase By: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Most Important Home Features:

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# MOVING DAY

When your move in date is near, you'll want to make sure to collect the proper information for the home to make your transition as smooth as possible.

- Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_
- Electricity Company: \_\_\_\_\_
- Trash Company: \_\_\_\_\_
- Trash Pick-Up Dates: \_\_\_\_\_
- Water Company: \_\_\_\_\_
- Sewage Company: \_\_\_\_\_
- Gas Company: \_\_\_\_\_
- Elementary School: \_\_\_\_\_
- Middle School: \_\_\_\_\_
- High School: \_\_\_\_\_
- Alarm System: \_\_\_\_\_

- Extra Notes:

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