A Fresh Start: Buying on the Kitsap Peninsula in 2026

BUYERS GUIDE



FROM MOUNTAINS TO WATERFRONT, WITH MICHELLE FOSS

MICHELLE FOSS
REALTOR®

YOUR JOURNEY TO HOME OWNERSHIP STARTS NOW

Welcome to an exciting chapter in your life – the journey to homeownership on the Kitsap Peninsula! I'm Michelle Foss, a Poulsbo native and Managing Broker with Real Broker, LLC. I understand that the real estate landscape is evolving, and recent changes might have you feeling a bit uncertain. That's precisely why I've created this guide: to provide you with clarity, confidence, and the expert guidance you need to make your home buying dreams a reality.

In today's market, transparency and informed decision-making are more crucial than ever. This guide will walk you through the entire process, from understanding the new rules and regulations to finding your perfect home and closing the deal. We'll demystify the complexities, address your concerns, and empower you to navigate each step with ease.

Consider this your comprehensive resource, a roadmap to your future home. As your trusted real estate advisor, I'm committed to being your advocate and partner, ensuring your best interests are always at the forefront. Let's embark on this journey together and turn your homeownership aspirations into a successful reality.

I'm here to answer any questions you may have, and I look forward to helping you find your perfect place to call home.

The Next Move Is Yours!

Michelle Foss

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MICHELLE FOSS REALTOR®

Managing Broker · Real Broker, LLC





Understanding the New Real Estate Landscape

The real estate market is always evolving, and recent changes stemming from the National Association of Realtors (NAR) settlement are bringing increased transparency and empowering buyers like you. Let's break down what this means for your home buying journey:

Key Takeaways from the NAR Settlement

Increased Transparency in Agent Compensation	Previously, the details of how buyer's agents were compensated weren't always clear. Now, there's a greater emphasis on upfront and transparent discussions about agent fees.
Buyer Control Over Agent Compensation	You, as the buyer, have more say in how your agent is compensated. This could involve a percentage of the purchase price, a fixed fee, or a combination of both. This will be documented in the Buyer Representation Agreement.
Clearer Buyer Representation Agreements	These agreements will outline the services your agent provides, their responsibilities to you (known as fiduciary duties), and how they will be compensated. It's a crucial document that ensures everyone is on the same page.
Focus on Value	These changes highlight the importance of understanding the value your agent brings to the table – their expertise in negotiation, market knowledge, and guidance throughout the process.

What This Means for You

Written Agreement	We'll have a transparent conversation about how I'm compensated and what services I provide. There will be no surprises.
Open Communication	All details regarding our relationship, including compensation, will be clearly outlined in our Buyer Representation Agreement.

YOUR BUYER REPRESENTATION AGREEMENT

What is a Buyer Representation Agreement?

This is a legally binding contract that outlines:

Agency Relationship



It establishes that I am your exclusive representative, acting in your best interests as your fiduciary. This means I have a legal and ethical obligation to put your needs before my own.

Services Provided

- Property searches and showings
- Market analysis and comparable sales data
- Offer preparation and negotiation
- Coordination of inspections and appraisals
- Guidance through the closing process

Compensation

- A percentage of the purchase price
- A fixed fee
- A combination of both
- How and when payment will be made.

Why is this Agreement Important?

- Transparency: It ensures that all terms are clearly understood and agreed upon.
- Protection: It protects your rights and interests throughout the transaction.
- Clarity: It eliminates any ambiguity about our roles and responsibilities.
- Accountability: It holds me accountable for providing the agreed-upon services.

My goal is to create a transparent and trusting relationship, empowering you to make informed decisions throughout your home buying journey.

Fiduciary Duties

- Loyalty: I will always act in your best interests.
- Confidentiality: I will keep your information confidential.
- Disclosure: I will disclose all material facts that could affect your decision.
- Obedience: I will follow your lawful instructions.
- Reasonable Care: I will exercise reasonable care and diligence.
- Accounting: I will account for all funds entrusted to me.

Finding Your Dream Home



Defining Your Needs and Wants:

- We'll start by having a detailed conversation to understand your priorities.
- This includes factors like:
- Location and neighborhood preferences
- Property type (single-family, condo, etc.)
- Number of bedrooms and bathrooms
- Desired features (yard, garage, etc.)
- School districts and amenities

Leveraging Search Tools and Resources

- Online Portals: We'll utilize leading real estate websites to access up-to-date listings.
- My Network: I have access to a vast network of real estate professionals and off-market opportunities.
- Local Expertise: As a local expert, I have in-depth knowledge of neighborhoods, market trends, and hidden gems.
- Im not scared to hit the pavement and go door to door until you find the perfect home!

Evaluating Properties and Neighborhoods

- Property Showings: We'll schedule showings of properties that meet your criteria.
- Virtual Tours: We'll explore virtual tours
- Neighborhood Analysis: I can send you links to check out
- Safety and crime rates
- Schools and parks
- Commute times
- Local amenities and businesses

The search for your dream home is one of the most exciting parts of the home buying journey. It's where your vision starts to become a reality. Here's how we'll work together to find the perfect place for you

FINANCING YOUR DREAM HOME

Choosing the Right Lender: Your Partner in Financing Your Dream Home

Securing the right financing is a crucial step in your home buying journey. The lender you choose will play a significant role in your overall experience, influencing your interest rate, loan terms, and closing process.





QUESTIONS TO ASK A LENDER:

- What are your current interest rates for my credit score and loan type?
- What loan programs do you offer?
- What are the fees associated with your loans?
- How long does the pre-approval process take?
- How long does the closing process typically take?
- Do you offer any first-time homebuyer programs?
- Can you provide references from past clients?

Need a place to start? I work with Julie Herrmann, Mortgage Broker, NMLS #1563583, Edge Home Finance NMLS #891464 · (509) 359-1056. You're always free to choose any lender.



ONCE WE'VE FOUND THE PERFECT HOME, IT'S TIME TO MAKE AN OFFER. THIS IS A CRITICAL STEP, AND I'LL GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS TO ENSURE YOUR OFFER IS COMPETITIVE AND REFLECTS YOUR BEST INTERESTS.

MAKING AN OFFER & NEGOTIATING YOUR DREAM HOME

But First...

Market Analysis: I'll conduct a thorough market analysis to determine a fair and competitive offer price based on recent comparable sales in the area. This will help you make an informed decision and avoid overpaying.

Down Payment Comfort: We'll review your financial situation and ensure you're comfortable with the down payment required for the property. We'll discuss various down payment options and help you choose the best approach for your budget.

Setting Your Limit: It's crucial to know your "walk-away" number – the highest price you're willing to pay for the home. This will help you stay focused during negotiations and avoid emotional decisions.

1. PREPARING THE OFFER

We'll prepare a comprehensive purchase agreement that outlines the terms of your offer. This includes:

- Your offered price
- Earnest money deposit
- Closing date
- Contingencies (financing, inspection, appraisal)
- Any requested personal property (appliances, etc.)

2. UNDERSTANDING CONTINGENCIES

- Financing Contingency: This protects you if you're unable to secure financing.
- Inspection Contingency: This allows you to have the property inspected and potentially negotiate repairs.
- Appraisal Contingency: This ensures the property appraises for at least the purchase price.

3. PRESENTING THE OFFER

- I'll present your offer to the seller's agent in a professional and timely manner.
- We'll communicate your interest and highlight the strengths of your offer.
- While “LOVE” letters are not often accepted, we do like to present reviews and an email from the lender.

4. NAVIGATING NEGOTIATIONS

- Counteroffers: The seller may counter your offer, and we'll discuss your options.
- Multiple Offers: In a competitive market, there may be multiple offers. I'll advise you on how to make your offer stand out.
- Negotiation Strategies: I'll use my negotiation skills to advocate for your best interests.
- Clear Communication: I'll keep you informed throughout the negotiation process and provide objective advice.

5. REACHING AN AGREEMENT

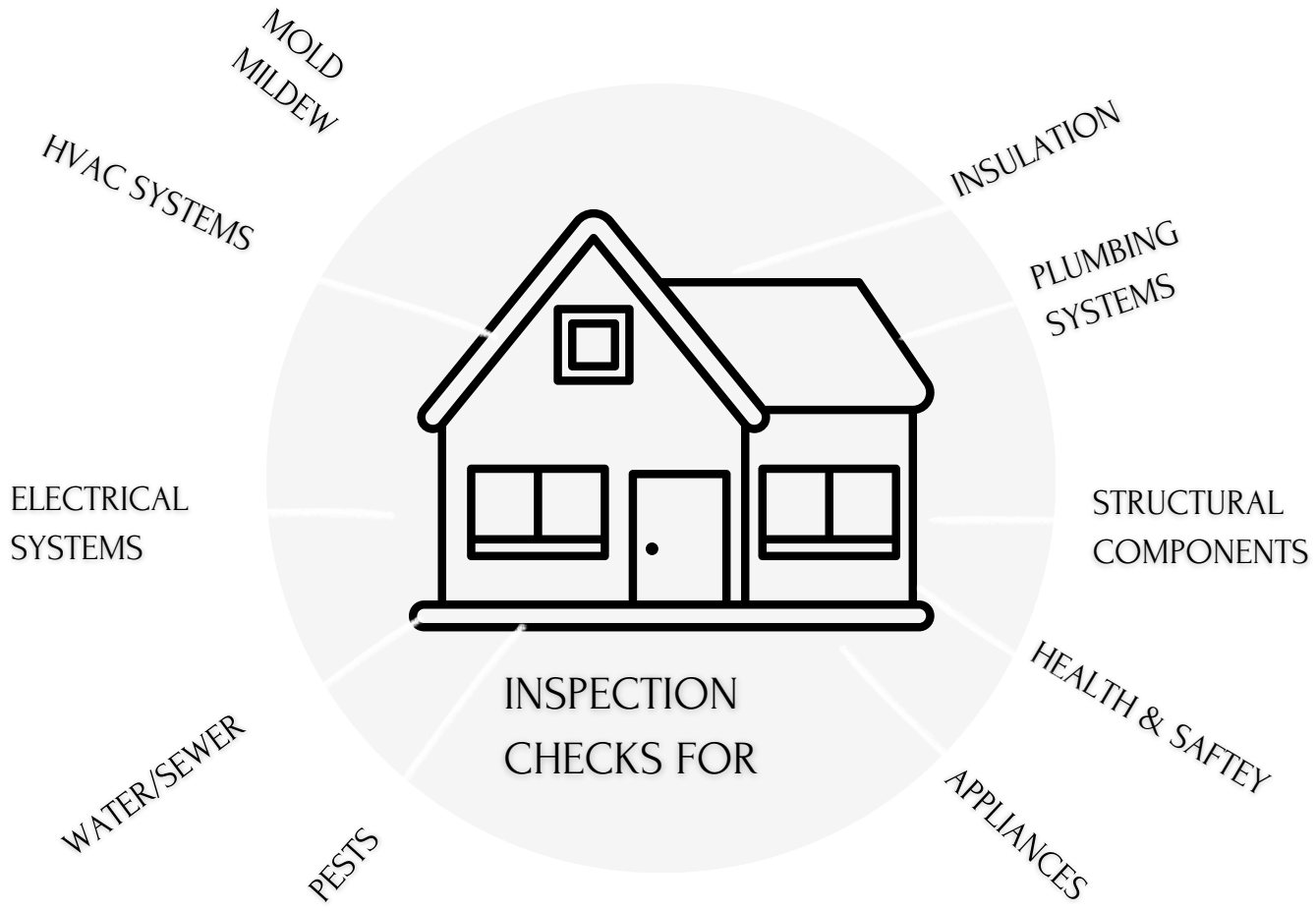
- Once an agreement is reached, we'll finalize the purchase agreement.
- We'll ensure all terms are clearly understood and documented.
- Congratulations you are officially UNDER CONTRACT!

BONUS

- Be Prepared: Understand your budget and be prepared to act quickly.
- Stay Flexible: Be open to negotiation and consider compromises.
- Don't Get Emotional: Keep your emotions in check and focus on the business aspects of the transaction.
- Trust Your Agent: Rely on my expertise and guidance throughout the negotiation process.

THE HOME INSPECTION & APPRAISAL: PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT

ONCE WE'VE FOUND THE PERFECT HOME, IT'S TIME TO MAKE AN OFFER. THIS IS A CRITICAL STEP, AND I'LL GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS TO ENSURE YOUR OFFER IS COMPETITIVE AND REFLECTS YOUR BEST INTERESTS.



GUIDE TO APPRAISAL

AN APPRAISAL IS AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPERTY'S MARKET VALUE, CONDUCTED BY A LICENSED APPRAISER.

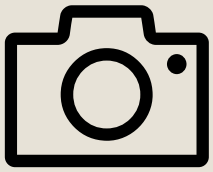
APPRAISAL PROCESS: THE APPRAISER WILL

MANDATORY FOR LENDER TO VALIDATE VALUE

INSPECT PROPERTY



TAKE PHOTOS OF PROPERTY



RESEARCH COMPARABLES



CREATE A REPORT



BUT WHAT HAPPENS IF IT DOESN'T APPRAISE?

SO IT DIDN'T APPRAISE? WELL, NOW WHAT'S THE PLAN?

APPRAISAL CONTINGENCY: IF THE APPRAISAL COMES IN LOWER THAN THE PURCHASE PRICE, WE CAN:

RENEGOTIATE THE PURCHASE PRICE AND DROP TO APPRAISED VALUE.

OR

CHALLENGE THE APPRAISAL BY PROVIDING MORE COMPARABLES

OR

PAY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE APPRAISED VALUE AND THE PURCHASE PRICE OUT OF POCKET.

OR

TERMINATE THE CONTRACT (IF YOUR APPRAISAL CONTINGENCY ALLOWS)

BONUS TIPS*

REQUEST A SECOND APPRAISAL: DEPENDING ON YOUR CONTRACT AND LENDER GUIDELINES IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO REQUEST A SECOND APPRAISAL. THIS WILL INCUR ADDITIONAL COSTS.

THE SELLER SHOULD PREP FOR THE APPRAISAL: ENSURE THE PROPERTY IS CLEAN AND PRESENTABLE. PROVIDE THE APPRAISER WITH ANY RELEVANT INFORMATION, SUCH AS RECENT RENOVATIONS.

CLOSING & MOVING IN: THE FINAL STEPS TO YOUR *New Home*



The closing and moving in stages are the exciting culmination of your home buying journey. Here's what you can expect as we finalize the transaction and prepare you for your new home:

1. **The Closing Process:**
    - *What to Expect:The closing is a formal meeting where ownership of the property is transferred to you.*
    - *It typically takes place at a title company or attorney's office.*
    - *You'll sign numerous legal documents, including the mortgage and deed.*

The Closing Process continued:

- *Preparing for Closing:We'll review the closing disclosure with you, which outlines all closing costs.*
- *You'll need to bring a government-issued photo ID and certified funds for your closing costs.*
- *We will confirm with the title company that all paperwork is in order.*
- *Closing Day:We will be there to support you and answer any last-minute questions.*
- *We will ensure all documents are signed correctly.*
- *Once all documents are signed and funds are transferred, you'll receive the keys to your new home!*



Moving In: Your Moving Day Guide



- PLANNING AHEAD:START PACKING EARLY! DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE.
- CLEARLY LABEL ALL BOXES WITH THE ROOM THEY BELONG IN.
- PACK AN "ESSENTIALS BOX" WITH ITEMS YOU'LL NEED IMMEDIATELY (TOILETRIES, MEDICATIONS, A CHANGE OF CLOTHES, ETC.).
- CONFIRM MOVING ARRANGEMENTS WITH YOUR MOVERS OR RENTAL COMPANY.
- IF USING MOVERS, CONFIRM ARRIVAL TIME, AND CONTACT INFORMATION.

Moving Day Logistics:



- PROTECT YOUR FLOORS AND WALLS WITH MOVING BLANKETS OR CARDBOARD.
- KEEP WALKWAYS CLEAR TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS.
- HAVE A DESIGNATED AREA FOR MOVERS TO PLACE BOXES.
- DO A FINAL WALKTHROUGH OF YOUR OLD HOME TO ENSURE NOTHING IS LEFT BEHIND.
- IF YOU ARE DOING THE MOVE YOURSELF, HAVE PLENTY OF HELP, AND STAY HYDRATED.
- ONCE YOU ARRIVE AT YOUR NEW HOME:
- HAVE A PLAN FOR WHERE BOXES GO.
- CHECK THAT ALL UTILITIES ARE WORKING.
- CHANGE THE LOCKS ON ALL EXTERIOR DOORS FOR SECURITY.



the MOVING CHECKLIST.

PREP IN *Advance.*

- [ ] Allocate a budget for your move
- [ ] Organize, declutter & clean
- [ ] Schedule movers / rental truck
- [ ] Make inventory of household items
- [ ] Transfer medical records & refill prescriptions
- [ ] Get school records & register at new schools
- [ ] Arrange time off work / childcare for moving day
- [ ] Make a plan for moving vehicles, pets & plants
- [ ] Dispose of hazardous & flammable items
- [ ] Measure furniture for placement at new home
- [ ] Defrost freezer, clean refrigerator & oven



NOTIFY OF UPCOMING MOVE

Essentials:
- [ ] Post office
- [ ] Employer

Utility & Home Services:
- [ ] Gas
- [ ] Electric
- [ ] Water
- [ ] Telephone, internet & cable
- [ ] Garbage removal
- [ ] Lawn service

Finances:
- [ ] Banks & credit unions
- [ ] Loan companies

Insurance:
- [ ] Homeowner / renters insurance
- [ ] Health & dental insurance
- [ ] Life insurance
- [ ] Car insurance

Government Agencies:
- [ ] Tax agencies
- [ ] Social Security Administration

Service Providers:
- [ ] Doctors
- [ ] Dentists
- [ ] Veterinarians
- [ ] Attorneys
- [ ] Accountants
- [ ] Subscriptions & memberships



PACK AN OVERNIGHT BAG

- [ ] Pajamas & clean clothes
- [ ] Toiletries
- [ ] Any medications needed
- [ ] Towels
- [ ] Toilet paper
- [ ] Pet food & supplies
- [ ] Cell phone charger
- [ ] Important documents
- [ ] Cash & valuables

LABEL AN "OPEN FIRST" BOX

- [ ] Cleaning supplies
- [ ] Light bulbs
- [ ] Basic tools
- [ ] Paper plates, cups & utensils
- [ ] Coffee & snacks
- [ ] Hand soap
- [ ] Remote controls
- [ ] Kids toys

Moving DAY.

- [ ] Plan to be home when movers arrive
- [ ] Protect floors & carpets
- [ ] Contain pets in a safe place during move
- [ ] Make sure all boxes are labeled accurately
- [ ] Do a final cleaning & dispose of trash
- [ ] Take a final walk-through of your home
- [ ] Leave owner manuals & household receipts
- [ ] Leave labeled keys & garage door openers
- [ ] Lock doors, windows & turn off all switches

Contacts:

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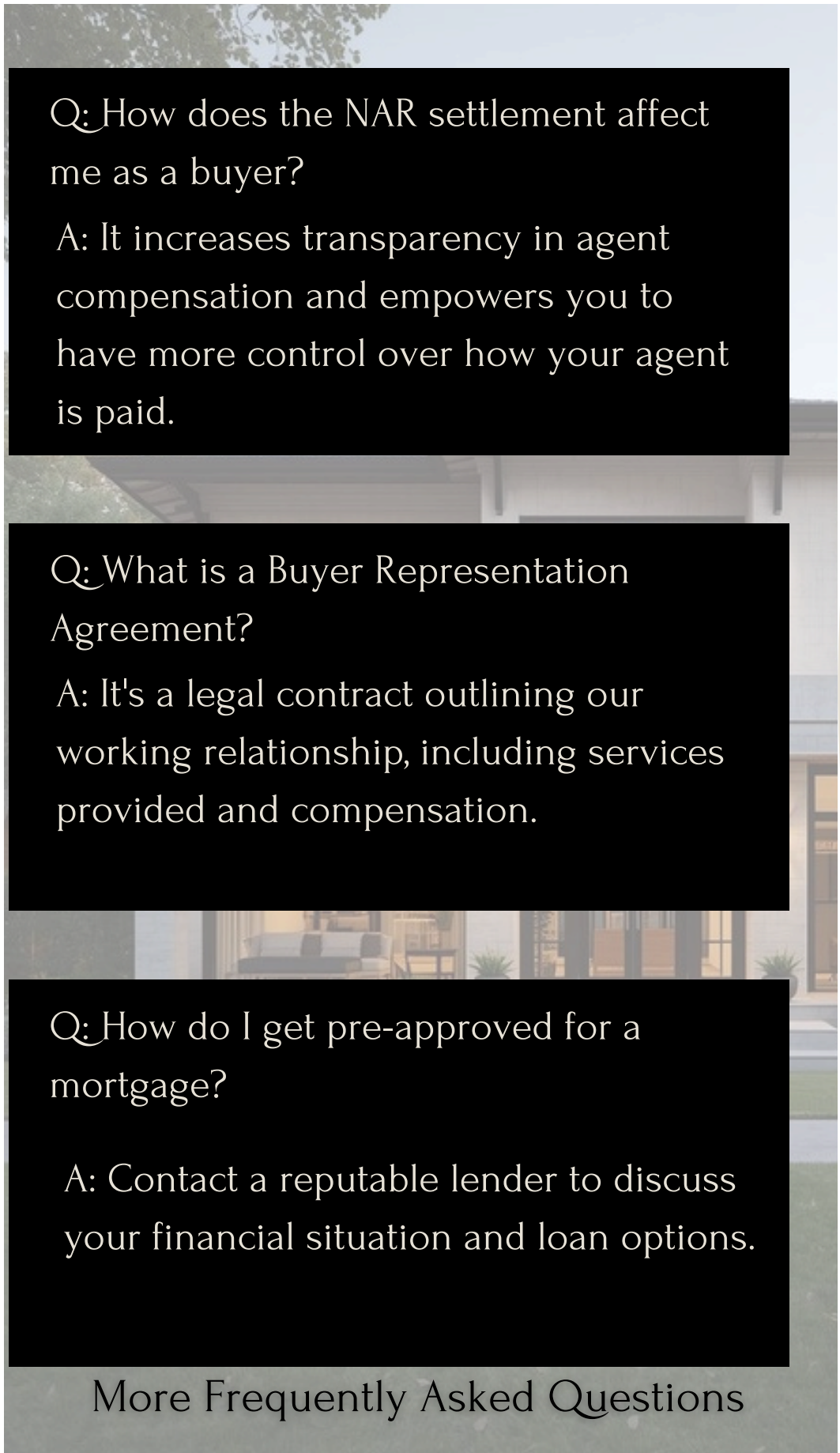
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Your Next Steps & Contact Information

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):



Q: How does the NAR settlement affect me as a buyer?

A: It increases transparency in agent compensation and empowers you to have more control over how your agent is paid.

Q: What is a Buyer Representation Agreement?

A: It's a legal contract outlining our working relationship, including services provided and compensation.

Q: How do I get pre-approved for a mortgage?

A: Contact a reputable lender to discuss your financial situation and loan options.

More Frequently Asked Questions

Congratulations on taking the first steps towards finding your dream home! I hope this guide has provided you with valuable insights and clarity on the home buying process, especially in today's evolving real estate landscape.



Q: What happens if the home inspection reveals issues?

A: We can negotiate with the seller for repairs or a credit towards closing costs.

Q: What should I do if the appraisal comes in lower than the offer price?

A: We can renegotiate, challenge the appraisal, or terminate the contract (if contingencies allow).

Q: How can I make my offer stand out in a competitive market?

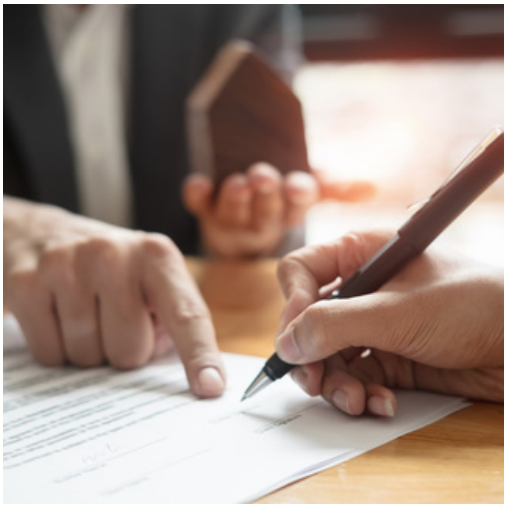
A: Working with an experienced realtor, offering a clean offer, and making sure your financing is solid are all great ways to stand out.

Q: What are my fiduciary duties?

A: Loyalty, confidentiality, disclosure, obedience, reasonable care, and accounting.

YOUR NEXT STEPS:

MICHELLE FOSS
REALTOR®







Schedule a Consultation: Let's discuss your specific needs and goals in more detail.

Get Pre-Approved: Contact a lender to get pre-approved for a mortgage.

Start Your Home Search: We can begin exploring properties that match your criteria.

Stay in Touch: Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

HOME BUYERS TIMELINE

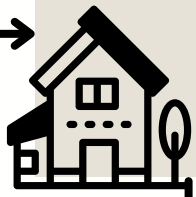
MEET WITH A REALTOR



GET PRE APPROVED



VISIT HOMES



IDENTIFY THE PERFECT ONE FOR YOU



MAKE AN OFFER
BE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE



OFFER ACCEPTED

Congrats!

INSPECTION



APPRAISAL



LOAN PROCESS



CLOSING DAY



FINAL WALK THROUGH



CLEARED TO CLOSE



VALUABLE RESOURCES FOR YOUR HOME BUYING JOURNEY

We understand that making an informed decision is crucial when buying a home. Here are some resources to help you gather the information you need:

1. Crime Information:
    - Local Police Department Websites:Many police departments provide online crime maps and statistics.
    - NeighborhoodScout:Provides detailed crime data, including crime rates and comparisons to national averages.
    - City-Data.com:Offers user-generated information and statistics on various aspects of cities and neighborhoods, including crime.
    - SpotCrime:Visual crime maps.

2. School District Information:
    - GreatSchools.org:Provides ratings and reviews of public and private schools.
    - Niche.com:Offers comprehensive school district profiles, including academic performance, teacher quality, and student diversity.
    - Local School District Websites:Provide detailed information on school programs, enrollment, and contact information.
    - State Department of Education Websites:Provides test score data, and other important information.

3. General Neighborhood Information:
    - City-Data.com:Provides demographic information, cost of living data, and user-generated reviews of neighborhoods.
    - Nextdoor:A social networking platform for neighborhoods, allowing residents to share information and connect with each other.
    - This is good for the "vibe" of a neighborhood.
    - Walk Score:Provides walkability scores and information on nearby amenities, such as restaurants, shops, and parks.

4. Property Information:
    - County Assessor's Office Websites:Provide property tax information, property records, and assessment data.
    - FEMA Flood Maps:Essential for determining if a property is in a flood zone.
    - Local Government Websites:Provide zoning information, building permits, and other relevant property data.

A note from Michelle

It is truly an honor to be your dedicated real estate advisor. I am thrilled to officially launch our partnership in securing your next great home!

You are now equipped with a comprehensive strategy, thanks to this guide. You know how to navigate current market trends, master the art of negotiation, and ensure a seamless path to the closing table.

Now the real work begins. Please know that my full support and expertise are yours every step of the way. Whether you need clarity on lending options, insights on the best emerging communities, or assistance crafting a winning offer, never hesitate to reach out. Your success in finding your perfect property is my absolute priority.

chat soon

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