



Landmark  
REAL ESTATE

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# BUYER GUIDE

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE HOME BUYING PROCESS





# SERVICES

- Learn your wants, needs and budget
- Use in-office networking to gain access to off-market and upcoming properties
- Find properties that meet your criteria
- Guide you with local neighborhood and market expertise
- Schedule showings
- Tour properties with you and offer guidance and advice during the tour
- Pull sold home comparables to advise whether the list price represents a fair market value
- Help you understand the Buy/Sell Agreement and disclosures
- Strategize a competitive offer using local market techniques and best practices
- Be the liaison between you and the seller
- Offer vendor recommendations such as lenders and home inspectors
- Help identify and schedule inspections
- Review the Title Commitment and any other property or HOA documents with you
- Negotiate during the inspection period and guide you on all of your options
- Help you prepare for closing and do a final walk through with you



# OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

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ERA Landmark Buyer's Agents are your guides during your real estate journey and beyond! With a reputation for expertise, integrity, quality and service, we commit to working tirelessly to ensure your interests are protected throughout the entire buying process.

## ✔ WE ADVOCATE FOR YOU

The most important thing we do as a Buyer's Agent is commit to advocate for you; guiding you and protecting your interests through the entire transaction. From finding the perfect property and negotiating the offer, to facilitating the inspection process and sitting with you at the closing table, we are in your corner.

## ✔ EXPERTISE AND GUIDANCE

We have extensive knowledge of the local market, neighborhoods, and property values and can offer valuable insights and guidance tailored to your specific needs and preferences. We keep you up-to-date with properties that fit your criteria and can provide information about active listings and their property history. At ERA Landmark, our network of agents provide an opportunity to access off-market and upcoming listings not available online. Once you've found the right property, we leverage our market expertise and competitive strategies to develop a compelling offer.

## ✔ BUYER AND SELLER LIAISON

We understand that effective communication between Buyers and Sellers is essential for a smooth transaction. Our Buyer's Agents serve as liaisons between you and the seller with the goal of ensuring all parties are on the same page throughout the process. From coordinating property viewings, gathering relevant property information to addressing concerns and negotiating terms, our Agents are always advocating on your behalf.

## ✔ SUPPORT

Navigating the complexities of real estate transactions can be overwhelming, but having a knowledgeable Agent and team by your side can help you decipher real estate jargon, avoid costly mistakes or delays as well as negotiate terms to your advantage.

## ✔ LET US BE YOUR GUIDE

A home is one of the biggest purchases you'll make in your lifetime, and having an experienced Buyer's Agent who offers expert advice and assistance will help you make informed decisions throughout the entire home buying process.



# HOME BUYING OVERVIEW

## **BUYER CONSULTATION**

Let's meet and talk through your goals, answer any questions you may have about the purchasing process and sign your Buyer Representation Agreement.

## **GET PRE-QUALIFIED**

If you're getting a loan to purchase a property, meet with your lender to get pre-approved. I can recommend some local lenders if you need them.

## **SEARCH FOR HOMES**

Using the property goals we created at your buyer consultation, the search is on for the perfect property! You'll be updated with properties that match your criteria and during showings we will get any questions answered.

## **GET FAMILIAR WITH BUY/SELL AGREEMENT AND DISCLOSURES**

We will review the contractual documents and the disclosures included in the transaction to make sure you understand them.

## **MAKE AN OFFER**

Once we've found the perfect match, using my market expertise, we will draft a competitive offer for you.

## **NEGOTIATE**

I will work with the seller's agent if there are any initial negotiations needed to get under contract.

## **UNDER CONTRACT**

The seller has accepted your price and terms and a Buy/Sell Agreement is signed by both parties.

## **INSPECTION AND APPRAISAL**

Once we are under contract, it is time to schedule the home inspection and if you are working with a lender for a loan, they will order the appraisal if needed. Ask me about my preferred vendors list for local home inspectors.

## **CLOSING**

We will be getting pre-closing documents to review before closing to make sure all information is correct. Documents are signed at closing.

# WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

Let's talk about what kind of property you're looking for

## MOVING TIMELINE

In a Rental?

Do you need to sell before you buy?

## MUST HAVES VS. WANTS

## AREAS/NEIGHBORHOODS

School District

## QUESTIONS FOR ME?

## TYPES OF PROPERTY

Condo or Townhouse

Single Family home

Commercial

Land

Multi-Family

## NOTES

## PROPERTY DETAILS

Square footage

Lot size

Bed/Bath

Garage size

Fixer Upper or Move-In Ready

## PRICE RANGE

# YOU'RE UNDER CONTRACT, WHAT'S NEXT?

Once you and the Seller agree on offer terms and the Buy/Sell Agreement is signed, the house is officially under contract! Here is a preview of what's to follow:



## DEPOSIT EARNEST MONEY

The agreed amount of Earnest Money will need to be deposited to the title company by the date set in the Buy/Sell Agreement. The title company will hold the money for the duration of the transaction until closing day. Your deposit will go towards your down payment which is paid at closing.

1



## SCHEDULE A HOME INSPECTION

Home inspections are optional but we recommend them to make sure there aren't any unknown issues that weren't visible during your showing and. We recommend hiring an inspector soon after going under contract to ensure the inspection is completed before the inspection contingency in the Buy/Sell Agreement.

2



## NEGOTIATE DURING THE INSPECTION PERIOD

You'll get the inspection report from the home inspector to see if there are any costly or unsafe defects. During the inspection period of the transaction, you'll have the option to negotiate with the seller or terminate the agreement and receive your earnest money back.

3



## GET FINANCING IN PLACE

After going under contract, you'll work with your lender to complete your loan application and lock in your interest rate if you are getting a loan. If you are paying cash, make sure your funds are in an account that is readily available to draw from at closing.

4

# YOU'RE UNDER CONTRACT, WHAT'S NEXT?

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## ORDER AN APPRAISAL

An appraisal may be required by your lender and will be ordered to confirm the home is worth the loan amount. It will take into account factors such as similar property values, the home's age, location, size and condition to determine the current value of the property.

5



## INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

Most lenders require homeowner's insurance, title insurance and flood insurance, if necessary. Ask your lender for more information.

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## CLOSING DISCLOSURE

At least 3 days before closing day, your lender will provide you with a Closing Disclosure for you to review. In it, you'll find the final loan terms, closing costs and more. You'll want to review this document and make any corrections necessary so it'll be ready by closing day.

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## FINAL WALK THROUGH

We'll do a final walk through to make sure the home is still in the same condition as when you wrote your offer. This will also be the time to check that repairs done during the inspection period were completed and that nothing from the Buy/Sell agreement was removed from the home.

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# REASONS TO HAVE A HOME INSPECTION

Buying a home is likely the biggest investment you'll ever make. Are you confident you can spot potential problems hidden beneath the surface? Most buyers aren't. A professional home inspection, a small investment now, can save you thousands in costly repairs down the road. Can you afford to risk overlooking critical issues? Here's what a thorough inspection covers:

## STRUCTURAL

Professional home inspections adhere to established industry standards, focusing on key structural components, both inside and out. While inspectors aren't structural engineers, they are trained to identify visible defects that may require immediate attention.

## ELECTRICAL

They will check that outlets are functional, assess whether any modifications appear safe and comply with current building codes, and examine visible wiring for signs of fraying or damage. These observations help identify potential electrical hazards and ensure the home's electrical system is operating safely.

## PLUMBING

Inspectors will check for leaks and drips, ensuring pipes and fixtures are properly sealed. They'll also test the functionality of mechanical systems, such as water heaters and pumps, and verify that all plumbing fixtures, like faucets and toilets, are operating correctly.

## BUILT-IN APPLIANCES

Built-in appliances are also carefully evaluated. Inspectors will test the functionality of appliances like dishwashers, ovens, and garbage disposals, checking for proper operation and any signs of damage or malfunction.

## SAFETY HAZARDS

A crucial aspect of a home inspection involves identifying general safety hazards. Inspectors will examine areas for potential risks, such as improperly installed handrails, missing smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, or trip hazards.

## MISCELLANEOUS

While a standard home inspection covers many critical areas, certain components may require separate evaluations. Be sure to clarify with your inspector whether these items are included: septic systems, roofs, drainage issues, wood decks, patios, and other exterior structures. Understanding the scope of your inspection is essential.

## RADON GAS TESTING & MITIGATION

Radon, a radioactive gas found in Montana, can pose health risks if it accumulates in buildings. Because elevated radon levels are common, testing is strongly recommended during a home purchase. Montana law requires disclosure of any prior radon testing or mitigation. Contact your local health department for more information. Radon testing is often offered by home inspectors as an additional service.

## OTHER INSPECTIONS

For a complete picture, consider these separate inspections: termite, geological/land subsidence, environmental (mold, asbestos, lead), and septic (if applicable). These go beyond a standard home inspection, revealing potential issues and protecting your investment.



# WHAT NOT TO DO DURING THE HOME BUYING PROCESS

Any of these types of changes could affect or jeopardize your loan approval. It's standard procedure for lenders to also do a final credit check before closing. To avoid any disruption to your loan application, don't do any of the following until after you close on your property:

- ⊗ Buy or lease a car
- ⊗ Change jobs
- ⊗ Miss a bill payment
- ⊗ Open a line of credit
- ⊗ Move money around
- ⊗ Make a major purchase



## PRE-QUALIFIED VS. PRE-APPROVED

### Pre-Qualified

In order to be pre-qualified a lender may or may not check your credit score and won't require documentation, only going off what you tell them. This will give you an idea of what you could qualify for, but when you're serious about buying, you'll need to get pre-approved.

### Pre-Approved

To be pre-approved, the lender will pull your credit and ask for documentation to verify your finances. Before making an offer on a property, it's best to get pre-approved to show sellers your offer is serious and that a lender has already approved you for the amount of money to purchase the property. This allows you to receive a pre-approval letter from your lender.

## PROFESSIONAL FEES

Buyer Agent fees are established in a few different ways. At the time of your first consultation with a Buyer's Agent, you will be presented with a Buyer Representation Agreement which states the services and duties of the agent. In this agreement, you will negotiate the Buyer's Agent compensation with your agent which will be due to the agent. This agreed upon amount can be paid to the agent in a few different ways:

- Portion of the Listing Broker's commission
- Concession from the Seller
- Fixed-fee commission paid directly to the agent by the Buyer

Prior to touring a property, the Buyer Representation Agreement must be signed by the client and the Buyer's Agent. Our Buyer's Agents will openly communicate with the buyer, prior to offering on a property, whether the Seller of the home is willing to pay any or all of the Buyer's Agent fee. In the scenario a Seller has not agreed to offer a buyer Agent fee, it can be negotiated at the time of offering on a property and can be a term included in the Buy/Sell Agreement.



# MOVE-IN CHECKLIST

## UNPACK

Make sure that boxes filled with essentials are clearly labeled so you can find them when you need them. When unpacking your home, we recommend going room-by-room, starting with the bedrooms and kitchen, saving non-necessity rooms for last.

## TRANSFER UTILITIES AND SET UP TRASH REMOVAL

Utilities may include cable and TV, internet, water and sewer, gas, electricity, satellite, security, trash and phone. Notify utility providers of your move a few weeks prior to your move. Ask me for our Utility Resource list for a list of providers and their contact information! Before closing, ask the sellers or neighbors for trash and recycling pickup timing.

## GET LOCKS CHANGED

Don't forget to change the locks when you move in. We recommend making a few copies of the new keys. You can DIY or contact a local locksmith.

## UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS AND FORWARD MAIL

Fortunately, the U.S. postal service makes it easy to do this ahead of your move. Simply go to [USPS.com](https://usps.com) and choose the date you wish to begin forwarding your mail.

## GATHER APPLIANCE MANUALS

Often, former residents leave a folder with warranty information and appliance manuals for the new residents. After the move, locate this folder in your home.

## TEST SMOKE DETECTORS

Upon moving into your new home, test the smoke detectors to ensure they're in working order. Install carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the house if there aren't any already installed.

## CONDUCT AN ENERGY AUDIT

For those that live in an older home and/or in a location with extreme temperatures, it's important to conduct an energy audit of the new home. With an energy audit, a professional will conduct a room-by-room examination to detect any air leaks or gas leaks in the home.

## FIND LOCAL HOME SERVICE PROVIDERS

Don't wait until your AC dies or your toilet overflows to find a good local handyman and plumber. There are many great local companies for all of your home service needs.

## GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

Now's the time to say "hello" to your neighbors and introduce yourself!





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*Offices in Big Sky, Bozeman, Livingston and Ennis*

VISIT US ONLINE

