



Homebuyer's Guide

By Thomas Leemon, REALTOR®

This guide sets out to enlighten and inform you of the process of buying your new home. Buying a home may seem daunting and stressful for many. It is my hope that this guide will relieve you of any stress and anxiety you may experience about buying a home.

The following pages will outline the steps in buying a home and the importance of each step. This includes the pre-approval, the house hunting, the offer, the inspections, and eventually closing day. This guide will also introduce you to the team that you will be working with as you buy your new home. This team includes me, the real estate agent, the lender, the inspectors, the insurance agent, and the title agent - just to name a few.

I believe that buying a home ought to be the most educated financial decision a person makes. It is my goal to not just assist in buying a home, but also to educate and discuss any concerns and thoughts related you may have. Together, we will get you into a home that you can both afford and make your home!

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

Are You Ready to Buy a Home?	3
What to Expect from Your REALTOR®:	4
Who am I?	4
What Are the Steps to Buying a Home?	5
Mortgage Pre-Approval	5
Home Hunting	6
Submitting the Offer	7
Inspections, Repairs, Surveys, Appraisals	8
Inspections	8
Repairs	9
Survey	9
Appraisal	9
Your Lender Needs You!	10
You Need Home Insurance.	11
The Wrapup	12
Clear to Close	12
Final Walkthrough	12
Closing Time!	12
Choosing the Right Lender	14
My Partners	15
LENDERS	15
INSPECTORS	15
INSURANCE	15
TITLE & ATTORNEYS	16

Are You Ready to Buy a Home?

Whether you are buying a home for the first time or for the third time, there are some questions that you should ask yourself before deciding whether buying is right for you or not. Why is this? Because buying a home is an investment, financial responsibility, and a great achievement. Ask yourself these questions:

1. How is your debt and credit?
2. Do you have money saved up for fees/costs?
 - a. Inspection
 - b. Appraisal
 - c. Application fees
 - d. Closing costs (such as possible down payments)
3. Are you able to afford the actual monthly payment?
 - a. Mortgage
 - b. Insurance
 - c. Taxes
 - d. HOA
 - e. Utilities
4. Are you ready to settle down in one location?
5. Will you be able to afford possible repairs and maintenance?

These are questions you should be able to answer before buying a home.

Homeownership is a great achievement that includes great responsibility. Thankfully, you have a real estate agent.

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

What to Expect from Your REALTOR®:

As your real estate agent, it is my job and pleasure to do the following for you:

- Connect you with lenders, inspectors, and other vendors
- Educate and give insight into the property aspect of buying a home
- Coordinate the transaction process by scheduling necessary steps
- Communicate and remain transparent about every aspect of the transaction

Please know that you will be taken care of and that I will do everything I can to ensure the home buying process is as smooth as possible.

Who am I?

My name is Thomas Leemon, and I have been a REALTOR® since 2018. I have been with HomeSmart Sunshine Realty since 2020 where I am involved in creating a strong culture and presence. I have a background in education, political science, social media management, design, and banking.

It is my mission to provide you with a property that will fulfill your wants and needs. - to provide you with the most convenient and well-rounded service. I have been in the Pensacola area for over 10 years now and have come to love the community and the people in it. I focus my business on individuals. Because of that, my real estate business is built on service, care, and relationships!

With that out of the way, we can get to talking about the steps to buying a home.

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

What Are the Steps to Buying a Home?

In brief, here are the steps that will be taken to buy your new home. Each step will be discussed further below.

The steps are:

1. Speaking with a lender to get pre-approval for a mortgage
2. Hunting for the right houses for you
3. Submitting an offer
4. Scheduling inspections, survey, and appraisal
5. Work with the lender to obtain approval for a mortgage
6. Finding suitable insurance
7. Doing the final walkthrough
8. Close on your new home!

Mortgage Pre-Approval

The very first step to buying a home is getting pre-approved for a mortgage.

Why is the very first step to buying a home the pre-approval? This is for several important reasons.

First, pre-approval will determine what you can afford when buying a home. The lender will gather some information from you and run your credit to determine how much you are able to afford.

Second, pre-approval allows you to discuss what kind of mortgage will work best for you. As you speak with your lender, your lender will go over different options or programs there may be available to you.

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

6

Finally, pre-approval tells the sellers you are serious about buying their home. Every offer includes a pre-approval letter to show that you are able to afford the home you want.

Next to me, your lender will be the most important person you work with as you buy your home. The lender will be looking at your finances and working with you to ensure that your financing is in place to buy a home.

I have included four lenders that I work with for you to contact at the end.

With that being said, choose the lender you are most comfortable with and gives you the best deal. That could be your local bank or a lending company that I have not listed.

Now that you've been pre-approved, it's time to house hunt!

Home Hunting

Home hunting is usually the most enjoyable part of buying a home. We'll be looking at houses until we find the one you like enough to submit an offer on.

Once you've been pre-approved and I have your pre-approval letter, you and I will discuss what you are looking for. Some criteria that I'd be looking for are:

- location
- square footage (size)
- number of bedrooms
- number of bathrooms
- price range
- type/style of home

Using the determined criteria, we will put together a few options for us to go see. I will then schedule appointments to go see the homes you're interested in. As we

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

7

see homes, I will also be providing a homebuyer property checklist so that you can keep track of the homes we see!

Once we have found the home for you, we can get the offer submitted.

Submitting the Offer

Once we've found a house you like, the time comes to submit an offer.

What exactly is included in an offer? The following is included:

- Contract
- Pre-approval letter
- Signed seller's disclosure
- Possibly an earnest money deposit (a good faith deposit)

The contract is what we use to dictate the terms of our offer. The contract will state your offered price, your down payment, your earnest money deposit, any concessions asked for, and the desired date to close on the home.

This is where the pre-approval letter comes into play. Using that letter, we can determine what your down payment will be. Also, the letter will show the sellers that you are able to afford the home you want.

The signed seller's disclosure is a document the sellers may provide that discloses the current known conditions of the home. Information that may be included in the disclosure could be helpful, such as the age of the roof. However, not every disclosure will have all of the information we would like. In addition, not every seller may provide a disclosure.

The final part of an offer is the earnest money deposit. This is an initial deposit made (usually within 3 to 7 days) to show your intent to buy the home. If for some reason, you back out of a contract within the allotted time, you will be able to get your earnest money deposit back.

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

8

Once an offer is submitted, we will wait to hear back from the sellers. There are three different outcomes:

1. Accepted - If your offer is accepted, we begin scheduling inspections and obtaining your final approval from the lender.
2. Countered - If your offer is countered, the seller has changed certain terms of the contract. We will begin negotiations until a final offer is accepted by everyone.
3. Rejected - If your offer is rejected, the seller refuses your offer. We will have to move on to another house.

The offer is where we will work extremely closely to submit the best offer possible. Once there is an accepted offer, the home is taken off the market and marked as “under contract.” This is where the work really begins!

Inspections, Repairs, Surveys, Appraisals

At this point, your lender and I will work together to schedule what is needed. I will schedule your inspections and survey. Your lender will schedule the appraisal.

You will pay for each of these out of pocket.

Inspections

There are two inspections that will be scheduled: home inspection and a WDO (wood-destroying organism) inspection. Usually, there is a fifteen-day period to get these inspections scheduled. The average cost for inspections could be around \$450 - although, this is subject to change and the exact cost will be known as we schedule.

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

Repairs

The inspections may reveal certain repairs that either needs to be or could be made. Certain repairs such as roof repairs and WDO repairs are lender required repairs that **MUST** be completed in order to close. Other repairs that are not necessary in order to close could also be requested. Sellers have the ability to either complete repairs or offer credits back to you for any repairs that are not required to be done.

Survey

The survey is a document that maps out and outlines the boundaries of a specific property. In order to clear the title and close, a survey **is** needed. The average cost for a survey could be \$400 to \$600 based on the specific circumstances. There are times where the seller may already have an updated survey. If so, and we are able to obtain it, no survey will be scheduled and needed.

Appraisal

The appraisal is scheduled by your lender. An appraisal verifies the value of the property when compared to the offered price. If the appraisal is higher, we say that we have appraised. If the appraisal comes in low, negotiations with the seller will have to be opened back up to come to an acceptable contract reflecting the lower appraised value. The average cost of an appraisal is around \$300. Though, your lender will be able to tell you specifics.

I have included inspectors that I work with at the end. With that being said, if you would like to schedule your own inspectors, you are able to.

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

Your Lender Needs You!

While the inspections and the survey are being scheduled, you will also be working with your lender to obtain final approval for a mortgage. In between your offer being accepted and getting to the closing table, there is typically a three to five-week period.

Within that timeframe, your lender will ask for specific documentation to verify your ability to obtain a mortgage. Required documents vary from lender to lender and from circumstance to circumstance, but generally, the following documents will be needed:

- tax returns from the last two years
- bank statements for each bank account from the last two months
- pay stubs from the last two pay periods (verification of employment)
- driver's license
- 401K statement
- employer contact information from the last two years
- letter of explanation for any credit, finance, and/or employment issues

This is incredibly important: **DO NOT OBTAIN ANY MORE CREDIT UNTIL AFTER YOU HAVE CLOSED ON YOUR NEW HOME.** Lenders will go through your financial history and health and make approvals based on your current financial state. Any new credit or loans during this home buying process may throw everything off. You could be declined for a mortgage as a result.

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

You Need Home Insurance.

In addition to scheduling the appraisal, your lender may also provide contacts to reach out to for home insurance coverage. Home insurance is a necessary part of every home buying process that uses a mortgage.

In order to receive the best insurance quote, you will need to provide a couple of inspection reports to your insurance companies. Those reports are:

1. 4-point - this report will give insurance companies an idea of the current conditions of the (you guessed it) four main parts of a home
 - a. Roof and overall structure
 - b. Electrical
 - c. Plumbing
 - d. HVAC system
2. Wind Mitigation - this report will give insurance companies an idea of what kind of features the home has that may mitigate loss during events such as a hurricane
 - a. Building code
 - b. Type of roof
 - c. Roof-deck attachment
 - d. Roof-to-wall attachment
 - e. Roof geometry/shape
 - f. Water resistance
 - g. Door and window protection

I have included a home insurance agent that I have contact with. With that being said, if you would like to get your own home insurance quotes, you are able to. Your lender may also have home insurance contacts for you.

The Wrapup

As the transaction process wraps up, there are a couple of key things that will be happening:

1. Clear to close
2. Final Walkthrough

Clear to Close

A clear to close notice will come from your lender once the mortgage underwriter has given final loan approval. This is what each buyer hopes for! You will also receive a closing disclosure soon after the clear to close notice. This will come from your lender and will lay out how much money you will need to bring to closing or how much money you will be receiving back.

Final Walkthrough

After the clear to close, but right before closing, you have the opportunity to do a final walkthrough of the home you are about to buy. This is your opportunity to review the condition of the house, verify necessary repairs have been made (if any are needed), and ensure the terms of the contract are still in place.

Closing Time!

You're just a few signatures away from being a homeowner!

Congratulations, you've made it to the closing day! On the day of closing, we will go to a title company office or a law firm office where you will sign documents that officially make you a homeowner. These documents include the following:

- real estate transfer documents (deed, tax documents)

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

13

- loan documents (promissory note, mortgage, loan application, closing disclosure, affidavits)
- title documents (title insurance)

There may be other documents for you to sign based on specific circumstances.

In addition, you may have closing costs to pay. This is when you would pay your fees and down payment on your new home. After everything is signed and paid for, you are officially a homeowner!

Remember that you are not alone. The home buying process is thorough and may seem daunting. This is why your real estate agent is important. As your real estate agent, I will ensure that you keep on track and the process runs as smoothly as possible. As a buyer, you have no financial obligation to me. You do not pay for a real estate agent. The seller is the one who pays all real estate agents involved in this process. You can rest your mind knowing that I will work in your stead to ensure that you are able to buy the home you want!

The rest of this guide will go over tips for choosing a good lender and provide you with partners I work with. Feel free to use any of my partners. But, ultimately, use whoever you are most comfortable with. The decision is yours



Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

Choosing the Right Lender

Finding the right lender and mortgage for you is important to your ability to buy a new home. Taken from National Association of Realtors®, the following questions are questions you could ask your potential lenders:

- What are the most popular mortgages you offer?
- What fees are included in a loan and what fees are due at closing (closing costs)?
- What is included in my monthly mortgage payment?
- Who will service this loan?
- Will my rates be fixed or adjustable?
- How long will the loan approval process take?
- How long will it take to close on the loan?
- Are there any assistance programs available to me?
- Based on my situation, which mortgage is best for me?

A lender can make or break your home buying experience. Make sure you find the right one for you!

My Partners

LENDERS

Taylor Pitman, Crew
Lending

NLMS #1124949

(850) 497-3670

talyorp@crew lending.com

<https://taylorpitmanmortgage loans.com/>

Nate Fain, Supreme
Lending

NLMS #478026

(850) 503-8995

nate.fain@supremelending.com

<https://gulfcoastmortgage lender.com/>

Daniel Hughes, Pen Air
Federal Credit Union

NLMS #1933039

(850) 505-3200

daniel.hughes@penair.org

<https://www.penair.org/borrow/mortgage/>

Tracy Frick, University
Lending Group

NLMS #518557

(850) 637-6060

tfrick@university-lending.com

<https://universitylendinggroup.mymortgage-online.com/TracyFrick.html>

INSPECTORS

Anthony Weatherbee,
Cherith Inspections LLC

(850) 879-0488

cherithinspectionsllc@gmail.com

<https://www.cherithinspectionsllc.com/>

Robert Hughey, Pest
Safari

(850) 477-2847

robert@pestsafari.com

<https://pestsafari.com/>

INSURANCE

Jordan Reyes,
Goosehead Insurance

(850) 292-1471

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com

16

jordan.reyes@goosehead.com

https://agents.gooseheadinsurance.com/fl/pensacola/13-palafox-place?utm_source=google&utm_medium=Yext

Allure Title Insurance & Escrow Company

307 E Cervantes Street
Pensacola, FL 32501

(850) 332-5201

<https://alluretitle.com/>

TITLE & ATTORNEYS

Surety Land Title, Inc.

2600 North 12th
Avenue Pensacola, FL
32503

(850) 549-2272

<http://www.suretyland.com/>

Emmanuel Sheppard & Condon

30 South Spring Street
Pensacola, FL 32502

(850) 433-6581

<https://www.esclaw.com/practice-area/personal-real-estate>

Thomas Leemon
REALTOR®
(850) 325-0752

thomasleemonrealtor@gmail.com
thomasleemonrealtor.com