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THE BUYER GUIDE

Buying a Home in San Diego

The step by step playbook from first showing to keys in hand.

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A LETTER FROM JONATHAN

Buying a Home in San Diego

Buying a home in San Diego is one of the biggest decisions you will make, and one of the most rewarding. It can also feel like a maze: lenders, offers, inspections, escrow, and a dozen people asking you to sign things.

This guide is the same playbook our team walks every buyer through. Read it once, keep it handy, and you will know what is coming at every stage. When you are ready, we will do the heavy lifting with you.

Jonathan Fisher & The Fearless Realty Team

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01

Know your number

Before you look at a single home, know what you can comfortably afford. Not what a lender will approve, what fits your life.

YOUR MONTHLY PAYMENT INCLUDES MORE THAN THE LOAN

- Principal and interest on the loan
- Property taxes (in California the base is about 1% of the purchase price, plus local assessments that vary by area, including Mello Roos in many newer communities)
- Homeowners insurance
- HOA dues, if the home is in an association
- Mortgage insurance, if your loan requires it

CASH YOU WILL NEED

- Earnest money deposit, usually around 3% of the price, due within a few days of an accepted offer
- Down payment, which depends on your loan (more on that next)
- Closing costs, commonly 2% to 3% of the price for lender, title, escrow and prepaid items
- Inspection and appraisal fees, paid during escrow
- A cushion for moving and the first few months of ownership

> Ask us for a free payment breakdown. We will show you the full monthly number for any home before you fall in love with it.

02

Get the right loan

Get pre approved before you shop. In San Diego, sellers expect it, and it tells you exactly where you stand.

LOAN TYPE	WHO IT FITS	DOWN PAYMENT
Conventional	Buyers with solid credit and steady income	As low as 3% to 5%, with mortgage insurance below 20%
FHA	Buyers rebuilding credit or with smaller savings	As low as 3.5%
VA	Eligible veterans and active duty service members	As low as 0% with full entitlement
Jumbo	Loans above the local conforming limit	Often 10% to 20%
Physician	Doctors, residents and fellows (lender rules vary)	Often 0% to 10%, usually no mortgage insurance

DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE

California and San Diego County offer programs that can help first time and moderate income buyers with the down payment. Rules, income limits and funding change often, so ask us and your lender what is open right now.

- ☐ Last two years of tax returns and W2s or 1099s
- ☐ Last 30 days of pay stubs
- ☐ Last two months of bank statements, all pages
- ☐ Photo ID
- ☐ Explanation for any large deposits

03

Pick the neighborhood

The right home in the wrong area is still the wrong home. Narrow your search with the things you cannot change later.

- Commute: drive it at rush hour, not on a Sunday
- Schools: check the district and the specific school boundaries
- Monthly costs: HOA dues and Mello Roos can change the math between two similar homes
- Lifestyle: parks, beaches, shopping, family nearby
- Future plans: room to grow, ADU potential, resale appeal

WHY BUYERS LOVE THE SOUTH BAY

Chula Vista, Otay Ranch, Eastlake, Bonita, National City and Imperial Beach give buyers newer master planned communities, established neighborhoods with bigger lots, quick access to downtown and the bases, and some of the best value in the county.

04

Tour homes with a plan

Before touring, California requires a written buyer representation agreement. It spells out what we do for you and how we are paid. We will walk you through it line by line.

- We set up a custom search so new listings reach you first
- We preview homes and flag issues photos hide
- We pull sales data so you know what a home is really worth
- Take notes and photos at every showing; homes blur together fast

05

Win the offer

A strong offer is more than price. Sellers weigh certainty and timing just as much.

- Price based on recent comparable sales, not the list price
- A solid pre approval from a lender who answers the phone
- Earnest money deposit that shows you are serious
- Contingency periods that protect you without scaring the seller
- A close date that works for the seller
- A short, personal cover note when it fits

> In multiple offer situations we call the listing agent before writing anything. Knowing what the seller values most is often worth more than an extra few thousand dollars.

06

Inspect and protect

Once your offer is accepted, escrow opens and the clock starts. Standard California contracts give buyers about 17 days for key contingencies, but every deal is negotiated.

01 **DEPOSIT**
Wire your earnest money to escrow, usually within 3 business days. Always call escrow at a verified number before wiring. Wire fraud is real.

02 **INSPECTIONS**
General home inspection, plus termite, roof, sewer line or other specialists as needed.

03 **DISCLOSURES**
Review the seller disclosures and reports carefully. We go through them with you.

04 **APPRAISAL**
Your lender orders it to confirm the value supports the loan.

05 **REPAIRS**
Ask for repairs, credits or a price adjustment based on what we find.

06 **REMOVE CONTINGENCIES**
Signed in writing, only when you are comfortable.

07

Close with confidence

01 **FINAL LOAN APPROVAL**

Do not open new credit, change jobs or make large purchases until you close.

02 **INSURANCE**

Bind homeowners insurance early; some areas take longer to insure.

03 **FINAL WALKTHROUGH**

Confirm repairs are done and the home is in the agreed condition.

04 **SIGN**

Sign loan and escrow documents with a notary, usually a few days before closing.

05 **FUND AND RECORD**

Your loan funds, the deed records with the county, and the keys are yours.

> Most San Diego escrows close in about 30 days. Cash deals can close faster.

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NEXT STEP

Let's talk about your move.

Every guide ends the same way: with a real conversation. Call or text us and we will build a plan around your timeline, your budget and your goals. No pressure, no obligation.

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