HOME BUYER'S GUIDEBOOK

The Mountain Home Buyer's Playbook.

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Photos by Visit Big Bear

YOUR HOME BUYING PLAYBOOK

A step-by-step guide to buying with confidence.

NAVIGATING THE BIG BEAR MARKET

STARTING YOUR JOURNEY INTO HOME BUYING?

We're here to guide you through it!

Think of this guide as your roadmap, simplifying each turn and crossroad in the journey to buying your dream home. Our aim is not just to inform but to inspire confidence as we work together to navigate one of your most exciting life ventures.

Embarking on the path to owning a home is more than just a series of transactions; it's about bringing your personal aspirations to life in a space that's truly your own. The real estate world can be complex, with market fluctuations, legal details, and crucial decision-making moments.

That's exactly why this guide, combined with our expertise, becomes invaluable. We're here to clear the fog and ensure you are fully equipped to make informed, confident choices. Think of me as your partner in this journey, providing not just guidance, but also the assurance that you are making the right moves at every step.

Our commitment is to offer you a comprehensive service that goes beyond the standard, making sure that when you're ready to make that commitment, it's with a sense of excitement and assurance in the value of my partnership.

Ready?

Then let's get started...

OK, SO...
WHAT IS *"BUYER AGENCY?"*

DEFINITION: Buyer Agency refers to a legal relationship between a potential homebuyer (that's you) and a real estate agent or broker (hopefully that's us). In this relationship, the agent or broker (known as the Buyer's Agent) represents your interests during the home-buying process.

AGENCY AGREEMENT: Much like listing agreements are entered into with sellers, the relationship between a buyer and the Buyer's agent is typically formalized through a Buyer Agency Agreement. This legal document outlines the duties and obligations of both the agent and you, the buyer. It includes details like the duration of the agreement, the geographic area for your home search, the type of property you're interested in, and details of the agent's compensation.



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF A *BUYER'S AGENT*

Fiduciary Duties: As your buyer's agent, we have fiduciary responsibilities to you. This means we must act in your best interests, with loyalty, confidentiality, and care. We prioritize your needs and work to ensure that you get the best possible outcome in your home-buying endeavor.

Property Search and Coordination: We not only assist in searching for properties that fit your criteria, but we also schedule and attend viewings, provide insights into the local real estate market, gather all available disclosures, and communicate with the various listing agents to help gather as much information as possible.

Expert Advice: We offer expertise in various areas such as market trends, neighborhood information, property values, financing incentives, and pricing strategies. We can also interpret complex real estate documents and contracts to ensure proper protections and safeguards are integrated for your specific situations.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF A *BUYER'S AGENT*

(continued)

Negotiation: Besides negotiating the price, terms, and conditions of the sale, we often strategize and negotiate several other aspects when writing offers for you.

- Closing Date
- Contingencies
- Repairs and Credits
- Inclusions & Exclusions
- Rent-Back Agreement
- Closing Costs
- Warranty
- Escalation Clauses
- Earnest Money
- Title and Survey
- Closing Location & Time

Coordination of the Purchase Process: We coordinate the extensive purchase process, organize inspections, ensure deadlines are met, and act as the liaison with other professionals involved in the transaction like mortgage brokers, attorneys, insurance agents, title companies, and home inspectors.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF A *BUYER'S AGENT*

(continued)

BENEFITS TO YOU

Representation: We ensure that your interests are represented in the transaction.

Access to Resources: We have access to extensive real estate listings, including many "off-market" properties.

Save Time and Stress: We handle the heavy lifting of the home-buying process, saving you time and reducing stress.

Negotiation Power: We have negotiation skills and experience critical in getting a favorable deal.

Guidance and Support: We guide you through every step, providing support and advice, particularly helpful for first-time buyers.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Exclusive vs. Non-Exclusive Agreements: Agreements can be exclusive or non-exclusive; understand the terms before signing.

Commission: Understand how we are compensated, in light of recent industry changes around how commissions can be paid. In short, commission can be negotiated to be paid either by the seller, by the buyer, by the listing broker, or a combination.

Communication and Compatibility: Partnering with us, an agent you're comfortable with and who communicates well, is crucial in your home-buying journey. The buyer-agent relationship should be a trusted one.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF A *BUYER'S AGENT*

(continued)

As a buyer's agent, our role in coordinating the purchase process is comprehensive and involves several key responsibilities:

Handling Paperwork and Managing Documentation:
We manage all the necessary paperwork and documentation involved in the purchase process. This includes drafting and reviewing addendums, amendments, disclosures, and ensuring all contract elements are correctly executed. Our expertise lies in making sure that every document reflects your interests and needs accurately.

Timelines and Deadlines:
We meticulously track and adhere to all time frames and deadlines stipulated in the contract. It's our job to ensure that every step, from the offer submission to the closing, happens within the agreed-upon schedule. This includes prompt communication and follow-ups with all involved parties.

Guidance on Complex Legal Contracts:
We provide detailed guidance on the complexities of legal contracts involved in buying a home. Our role is to demystify the legal jargon and ensure you understand the implications of what you're signing, protecting your rights and interests at every stage.

Coordinating Inspections:
We coordinate various types of inspections necessary for your prospective home, including general home inspections, pest inspections, and any specialized assessments that may be required. It's crucial to identify any potential issues that could affect your decision or negotiation position.

Review of Inspection Findings:
After inspections, we review the findings with you, advising on the significance of each aspect. If there are issues, we strategize on the best course of action, whether it's negotiating repairs, asking for credits, or re-evaluating the offer.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF A *BUYER'S AGENT*

(continued)

Managing Contractors:
If repairs or improvements are needed, we can help manage interactions with contractors, obtain quotes, and ensure work is completed satisfactorily.

Navigating the Closing Process:
We guide you through the entire closing process, which includes finalizing financing, reviewing closing documents, and ensuring all legal and financial obligations are met. We are prepared to tackle any unexpected hurdles or curve ball that might arise.

Final Walk-Through:
Before closing, we conduct a final walk-through with you to ensure the property is in the agreed condition and that all terms of the sale are met.

Providing Ongoing Information and Recommendations:
Throughout this process, we offer continuous information, recommendations, and advice on what is customary in the market. This includes sharing insights into market trends, data, and past sales which might influence your decisions.

Support and Advice:
We are your steadfast advocate and advisor from the beginning to the end of the home-buying process. Our goal is to make this journey as smooth and successful as possible, ensuring that you are informed, comfortable, and confident in your decisions.

Why Commit to an Experienced Buyer's Agent?

In essence, our role as a buyer's agent in coordinating the purchase process is to be your knowledgeable and reliable partner, navigating each step with precision and care to ensure a successful and satisfying home-buying experience. And due to new regulations that real estate agents are prohibited from showing properties without first entering into a Buyer Agency agreement and establishing compensation.

UNDERSTANDING HOW *BUYER AGENTS* GET PAID

A SIMPLE EXPLANATION

As a buyer's agent, my compensation typically comes from a commission-based model, paid out in various possible ways. See the next page for a simplified break down to give you a clear picture on how it works.

CURRENT AS OF 04/11/2024
Beginning in July, 2024, all agents by law, will be required to use buyer representation agreements and establish their compensation PRIOR to showing a property.

UNDERSTANDING HOW *BUYER AGENTS* GET PAID

(continued)

Commission Origin

When a seller lists a home, they enter into a listing agreement with their real estate broker. Before we begin showing homes, we'll also enter into a Buyer Representation Agreement that outlines the services we'll provide and how our compensation will be handled.

How Compensation Works

Buyer broker compensation is no longer advertised through the Multiple Listing Service (MLS). Instead, it is negotiated as part of the purchase agreement.

Depending on the transaction, compensation may be:

- Paid by the seller
- Paid by the buyer
- Shared by both parties
- Offset through seller concessions

Every transaction is unique, and we'll discuss the best approach before submitting an offer.

Closing the Transaction

Any agreed-upon compensation is paid through escrow at closing according to the terms of the Buyer Representation Agreement and the purchase agreement. My goal is complete transparency, so you'll always know how compensation is being handled before moving forward.

Key Takeaway

Our role as your buyer's agent is to represent you and your interests in the home buying process, and this service, in a traditional setup, doesn't add a direct cost to you as a buyer. The commission structure ensures that we are compensated for our efforts and services by receiving a portion of the commission paid by the seller to the listing brokerage. This setup allows us to focus entirely on your needs and interests, helping you find and purchase the ideal home.

UNDERSTANDING HOW *BUYER AGENTS* GET PAID

(continued)

HOW BUYER AGENT COMPENSATION WORKS TODAY

NEGOTIATED. TRANSPARENT. NO SURPRISES.

1 BUYER REPRESENTATION AGREEMENT

You and your agent agree on the services provided and how compensation will be handled.

2 FIND THE HOME

We tour homes and find the one that's the right fit for you.

3 PURCHASE OFFER

We submit an offer that includes terms and compensation negotiation.

4 COMPENSATION NEGOTIATED

Buyer broker compensation is negotiated as part of the purchase agreement.

5 PAID THROUGH ESCROW AT CLOSING

Any agreed-upon compensation is paid through escrow at closing according to the terms of the agreements.

COMPENSATION MAY BE STRUCTURED IN DIFFERENT WAYS:

SELLER PAYS

The seller agrees to pay the buyer broker as part of the purchase agreement.

BUYER PAYS

The buyer agrees to pay the buyer broker directly.

SHARED PAYMENT

The buyer and seller agree to share the cost of the buyer broker compensation.

SELLER CONCESSION

The seller offers a credit that can be used toward buyer broker compensation (or other costs).

Every transaction is unique. Buyer broker compensation is not advertised in the MLS and is negotiated as part of the purchase agreement. We'll discuss your options and create a plan that works for you.

Clarity first. Always.

UNDERSTANDING HOW *BUYER AGENTS* GET PAID

(continued)

ALTERNATE COMPENSATION MODELS:

1. Negotiating Commission with the Seller:

If we encounter a listing that is NOT offering a commission to buyer agents, and you still want to consider the property, one approach we can take is to negotiate with the seller or the seller's agent to include our buyer's agent commission in the terms. This can be part of the overall negotiation process when making an offer on the property.

2. Adjusting the Purchase Offer:

Another strategy could be to adjust the purchase offer to indirectly cover the commission. For example, if the home is listed for $300,000 and the typical commission would be $9,000, we could offer $309,000 with the condition that the seller pays a $9,000 commission to the buyer's agent. This way, the net to the seller remains the same and your commission obligations are rolled into the overall price of the home.

3. Seller Concessions:

A seller concession is an agreement where the seller agrees to pay a portion of the closing costs on behalf of the buyer. This can include various fees associated with purchasing a home, such as loan origination fees, appraisal fees, points, etc, reducing your upfront out-of-pocket expenses, potentially making the home purchase more affordable to account for direct pay commission obligations.

4. Buyer Pays

In cases where the seller refuses to pay the buyer's agent commission, and it cannot be built into the purchase price, you as the buyer may be responsible to pay the commission directly. This would be something we'd discuss and agree upon before moving forward on a property and it will be stipulated in our buyer's agency agreement.

OR ANY COMBINATION OF THE ABOVE

UTILIZING YOUR AGENT

HOW TO REAP ALL THE BENEFITS

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW COULD COST YOU

When you're in the market to buy a home, **it's crucial to understand the dynamics of real estate transactions,** especially regarding agent representation and compensation. One key concept that can significantly impact the process is the principle of ***"procuring cause."***

PROCURING CAUSE: SIMPLIFIED

Procuring cause is a term used in real estate to determine which agent is entitled to the commission on a property sale. It refers to the actions that directly lead to the sale of a property.

UTILIZING YOUR AGENT

HOW TO REAP ALL THE BENEFITS

(continued)

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES THAT MAY UNKNOWINGLY PUT YOU IN THE POSITION OF PAYING COMPENSATION OUT OF POCKET:

1. Contacting Listing Agent Directly *(see page 14)*

Visiting open houses on your own is a great way to learn what you like and dislike. Make sure to register with the host agent and let them know you're partnering with us. Remember, keep your excitement contained. The host agent represents the seller and, it's best to keep your cards close to the vest for negotiating. Think of it this way...ANYTHING you say or do can be used against you in negotiations!

2. For Sale By Owner *(see page 15)*

If you find a FSBO, let us know so we can help you maximize your process. I have the expertise to make contact, negotiate, and make sure the entire process goes off without a hitch. We can help you save money in the transaction, but more importantly, save you the headaches of buying all on your own.

3. New Construction *(see page 16)*

Creating your dream home is an adventure. Surprisingly to most buyers, the builder's role is very much like a traditional home seller. I will represent you as a buyer and use my expertise to make sure you get the absolute best experience with peace of mind knowing you received the best deal possible. Many builders budget for a buyer's agent commission whether you use one or not, so take advantage of my expertise by ensuring we are having you follow their policies when visiting developments.

We explain these 3 things on the following pages...

UTILIZING YOUR AGENT

What you don't know could cost you:
#1 CONTACTING A LISTING AGENT DIRECTLY

(continued)

If you contact a listing agent directly to view a property without involving me, it could impact who receives the commission *(remember in some cases the seller is paying the listing agent and the agent is sharing that commission with the buyer's agent who consummates the sale)*. In such cases, the listing agent may claim they are the procuring cause of the sale since they showed you the property and initiated the transaction and make a claim for the buyer's agent compensation.

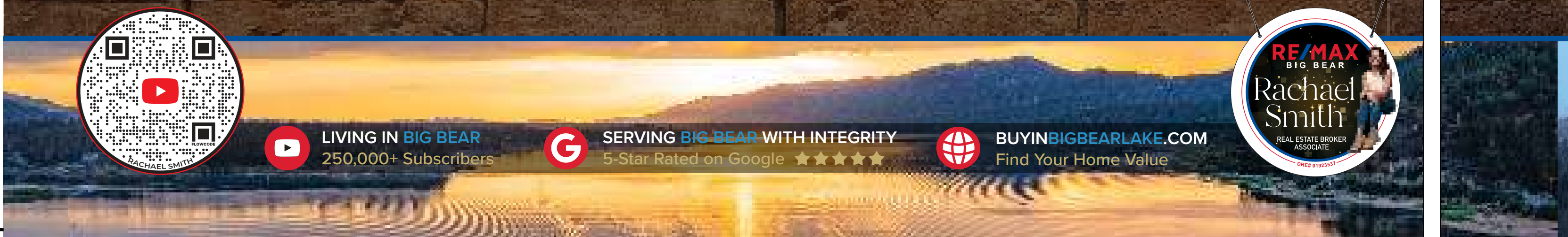
Why This Matters:
If the listing agent claims to be the procuring cause, they might be entitled to the full commission. This can complicate or even jeopardize our agency relationship and the level of service we can provide to you and require you to pay commission directly. It's essential to have consistent and dedicated representation to ensure your interests are always the top priority.

Your Protection and Benefit:
Working consistently with us, your buyer's agent, ensures that you have an expert advocating for your best interests throughout the entire process. It also avoids any potential disputes over commission that could arise from direct interactions with listing agents and from you unknowingly divulging information that might put you at a disadvantage in negotiations.

Best Practices for You as a Buyer:
Always communicate through your buyer's agent (that's us!) when you're interested in a property. This ensures clear representation and avoids any confusion over procuring cause.

This includes visiting open houses too!
If you happen upon an open house or a listing online, inform the listing agent that you are represented by a buyer's agent, this declaration helps maintain clarity about who is representing you. Always call us to arrange for any showing appointments.

Remember, as your buyer's agent, I'm here to guide you, negotiate the best deal for you, and protect your interests. Keeping the lines of communication open and letting me take the lead on property inquiries and viewings will help ensure a smooth and successful home-buying experience. This approach not only respects the rules of conduct between agents but also ensures that you have expert guidance at every step of your home-buying journey.



UTILIZING YOUR AGENT

What you don't know could cost you:
#2 FOR SALE BY OWNER

(continued)

When you encounter a For Sale By Owner (FSBO) property, **it's important to approach it with the same level of caution in terms of agent representation. Here's why and how this can affect the commission compensation:**

Understanding FSBO:
FSBO listings are properties sold directly by the owner without a listing agent. This means the seller is trying to avoid paying a commission to a real estate agent.

The Impact of Direct Contact:
If you, as a buyer, directly contact the owner of a FSBO property without informing me, your buyer's agent, it can create complications. In some cases, FSBO sellers might be less cooperative to pay a buyer's agent commission, believing that you are unrepresented.

Your Agent's Role in FSBO Transactions:
As your agent, our job is to represent your interests, which includes contacting FSBO sellers on your behalf. We can negotiate terms, including the discussion of agent commission, which is crucial for maintaining the professional services we provide to you.

Potential Risks of Direct Communication:
By directly interacting with a FSBO seller, you might inadvertently signal that you don't need or value the services of a buyer's agent. This can lead to a situation where the seller refuses to pay a commission, assuming you are handling the transaction independently, shifting the responsibility of commission payment to you.

Why It's Important to Involve Your Agent:
Involving me in your FSBO interactions ensures that your interests are professionally represented. We can bring our experience and expertise to negotiate fair terms, address legal complexities, and ensure that your rights are protected in the transaction.

Ensuring Proper Representation:
Always inform us about any FSBO property you are interested in. We will reach out to the seller to establish the terms of the transaction, including the discussion of the buyer's agent commission. This not only secures our role in the process but also ensures you receive the full benefit of our professional assistance without additional costs.

Our goal is to guide you through every aspect of the home-buying process, including dealing with FSBO properties. By ensuring that we are involved from the start, we can avoid any misunderstandings or conflicts regarding representation and commission. This approach guarantees that your interests are always protected and that you receive the comprehensive support and guidance needed for a successful home purchase.

UTILIZING YOUR AGENT

What you don't know could cost you:
#3 NAVIGATING NEW CONSTRUCTION DEVELOPMENTS

(continued)

Exploring new construction developments can be exciting, but it's crucial to understand how your actions can impact our agency relationship, especially regarding representation and commission. Here's what you need to know:

First Visit Implications:
Many new construction builders have specific rules about buyer representation. If you visit a new development without us or without having us register you ahead of time, the builder may refuse to acknowledge us as your agent later. This is particularly critical on your first visit to a development.

Builder's Policies on Agent Commission:
Builders often only pay a commission to a buyer's agent if the agent is present or has registered the buyer on their first visit to the site. If this protocol isn't followed, the builder might argue that they were the procuring cause of the sale and therefore refuse to pay a commission to the buyer's agent.

Your Potential Financial Responsibility:
If the builder denies compensating us due to a breach in their policies (such as visiting without me or not being registered), you could find yourself in a position where you might have to pay for our services out of your pocket. This situation can be avoided by ensuring proper protocol is followed.

Importance of Agent Presence or Registration:
To ensure that we can represent you and be compensated by the builder, it's vital that either we accompany you on your first visit to a new construction site or we register you with the development before your visit. This process is a simple but crucial step in maintaining your right to representation.

Advantages of Having Agent Representation:
With us as your agent in a new construction purchase, you benefit from professional negotiation, insights into the building process, and someone to advocate for your interests. Our presence can be invaluable in navigating contracts, upgrade choices, and ensuring you're making the right choices to maximize your ROI at resale.

Communicating with Developers:
If you come across a new development that interests you, let us know before you plan a visit. We'll take the necessary steps to register you or arrange to accompany you, ensuring that your rights to representation and my role as your agent are secured.

In the excitement of exploring new construction homes, it's easy to overlook the nuances of agent representation and commission policies. By keeping us informed and involved from the beginning, we can avoid any potential issues with builders and ensure that you receive the full benefit of my expertise and services, without any unexpected financial obligations on your part. Remember, our goal is to support you through every step of your home-buying journey, including navigating the complexities of new construction properties.

UNDERSTANDING *DUAL AGENCY*

WHAT BUYERS SHOULD KNOW

As you navigate the home-buying process, you may come across the term "dual agency." This happens when we represent both the buyer and seller in the same transaction. In many situations, dual agency can create a smooth, efficient, and well-coordinated experience when handled professionally and transparently.

What is Dual Agency?

Dual agency occurs when one real estate agent or brokerage represents both sides of a transaction. Most commonly, this happens when a buyer becomes interested in one of our own listings.

In these situations, our role is to help facilitate the transaction fairly, professionally, and with open communication throughout the process.

Why Some Buyers Appreciate Dual Agency

Many buyers appreciate dual agency because it can simplify communication and help create a more streamlined transaction experience.

Potential benefits may include:

- Faster communication and coordination
- A smoother transaction process
- Our in-depth knowledge of the property and seller expectations
- Efficient management throughout escrow
- A more connected overall experience for both parties

Because we're already familiar with the property, disclosures, timelines, and details of the transaction, we're often able to help keep the process organized and moving efficiently.

Things to Consider

It's also important to understand that in a dual agency situation, we represent both parties equally. This means I cannot favor one side over the other during negotiations or disclose confidential information without permission.

Some buyers prefer separate representation for additional negotiation advocacy, while others feel comfortable with the convenience and communication benefits that dual agency can provide. Every situation - and every client comfort level - is different. The most important thing is that you fully understand your options and feel confident in whichever approach works best for you.

Our Commitment to You

Whether we're representing you exclusively as a buyer's agent or acting in a dual agency role, our goal is always to provide professionalism, transparency, communication, and support throughout your home-buying journey. We want you to feel informed, comfortable, and confident every step of the way.

YOUR PATH TO HOMEOWNERSHIP

This is how we'll guide you every step of the way!

1. Let's Meet!
2. Get Pre-Approved
3. Tour Homes
4. Find The One
5. Write Offer
6. Negotiations
7. Counter Offer
8. Offer Accepted
9. Inspections
10. Repairs & Credits (If Any)
11. Title & Escrow
12. Home Insurance
13. Final Walkthrough
14. Closing Day
15. Home Sweet Home!

LET'S TALK FINANCING

Affordability Assessment for Home Purchase

It's vital to assess your financial capacity for a home purchase before starting your search. This assessment helps in setting achievable goals by focusing on homes within your budget, thus streamlining the search and avoiding potential disappointments. It also plays a significant role in financial planning, taking into account the total cost of homeownership including mortgage, taxes, insurance, and upkeep.

This ensures a sustainable investment over time. Additionally, being aware of your budget can enhance your credibility with sellers, potentially giving you leverage in a competitive market. It also helps in avoiding financial overreach, ensuring a more comfortable and rewarding home buying experience.

Maintaining a Strong Credit Score

Follow these strategies to bolster your credit score:

Punctual Payment:
Avoiding late or missed payments is crucial for maintaining a good score.

Balanced Credit Utilization:
It's advisable to keep your credit card balances below 30% of the limit.

Manage New Credit Accounts:
Frequent applications for new credit can temporarily lower your score.

Diversify Credit Portfolio:
A mix of different credit types can positively influence your score.

Monitor Credit Reports:
Regular checks and correcting any errors can help maintain a healthy score.

LET'S TALK FINANCING

Affordability Assessment for Home Purchase

(continued)

Preparing for Home Purchase Expenses

Key costs to consider include:

Down Payment:
Typically ranging from 3% to 20%, though some programs offer 0% down options.

Closing Costs:
These usually range from 2% to 5% of the loan amount.

Home Inspection:
Essential for identifying potential issues; costs can vary.

Moving Costs:
These depend on the distance and the amount of belongings.

Initial Home Maintenance:
Budget for potential immediate needs like painting or minor repairs.

The Importance of Mortgage Pre-Approval

Securing pre-approval is a crucial early step in the home-buying process. It involves a lender evaluating your financial situation to determine a feasible loan amount. This not only indicates your seriousness as a buyer but also clarifies your purchasing budget.

Essential documents for pre-approval include:

Income Proof:
Recent pay slips and tax documents.

Asset Proof:
Statements from banks and investment accounts.

Credit Analysis:
Lenders will assess your credit score.

Employment Confirmation:
Verification of your current job.

Identification:
Government-issued ID like a driver's license or passport.

This process not only sets a realistic purchasing limit but also strengthens your negotiating position when making offers.

LET'S TALK FINANCING

Affordability Assessment for Home Purchase

(continued)

TYPES OF MORTGAGE LOANS

LOAN TYPE	WHO QUALIFIES	DOWN PAYMENT	UPFRONT MORTGAGE INSURANCE	MONTHLY MORTGAGE INSURANCE	MINIMUM CREDIT SCORE
VA Department of Veterans Affairs	Veterans, personnel with honorable discharge, reservists & National Guard, surviving spouses	None	None	None	580
USDA Department of Agriculture	Someone who is buying a home in a USDA-designated rural area	None	2% of the loan amount. Can be rolled into loan amount.	Required	640
FHA Federal Housing Administration	Anyone who meets the minimum credit and income levels	At least 3.5% of purchase price	1.75% of loan amount	Required	580–640
203K Federal Housing Administration	Anyone who plans to purchase a fixer-upper or needs to renovate their home and meets credit & income requirements	At least 3.5% of purchase price	1.75% of loan amount	Required	580–640
CONVENTIONAL 97	Depending on the program, available first-time home buyers (a buyer who hasn't owned in the last three years) can put 3% down with a Conventional 97 program	Varies from 3%–20% of purchase price	None	Required	620
SELECT SMART PLUS	Anyone who meets lender's credit, income & debt level requirements	Varies from 3%–20%, but typically ranges from 5%–20%	None	Required	620

START THE SEARCH

Let the Home Shopping Begin...

It's now the time to start visiting homes that make the cut!

Once we identify your top picks, we'll make the arrangements with the listing agents for each home we are visiting and gather available information for each property.

We encourage you to take notes and photos as the properties can start to run together if we are viewing multiple homes. We'll be making notes of inclusions or exclusions that we would want to make part of an offer.

Also, keep in mind nothing is private anymore. Between Ring doorbells, cameras, audio/visual surveillance, nanny cams, etc., you never know when your actions, and more importantly your words, might be monitored by a seller.

It's important that you keep negative or positive comments and your interest level in the property to yourself until we are away from the property.

Never, ever discuss any terms you might be willing to offer to the seller while in the vicinity of the home.

START THE SEARCH

Let the Home Shopping Begin...

(continued)

TIPS WHEN VIEWING

Prepare a Checklist:
Before visiting homes, make a checklist of your must-haves and nice-to-haves. This helps you stay focused on what's most important to you during the viewings.

Inspect Carefully:
Pay attention to the condition of the home. Look for signs of damage or wear, such as water stains, cracks in walls or ceilings, and the condition of the roof and floors.

Ask Questions:
Don't hesitate to ask us questions about the property. If a seller's disclosure is available, it can provide valuable information about the age of the home, recent renovations, utility costs, and neighborhood amenities.

Consider the Location:
Think about the home's location in relation to your work, schools, shopping, restaurants, recreation, and other daily necessities.

Visualize Your Life in the Home:
Try to imagine your furniture and personal belongings in the space. Consider the flow of the home and whether it fits your lifestyle, both now and in the future.

Check Outside the Home:
Don't just focus on the interior. Walk the property, look at the yard, explore the neighborhood, and consider factors such as street noise, parking, traffic, and proximity to neighboring homes.

Be Open-Minded:
Keep an open mind while touring homes. Sometimes a property that doesn't check every box can still be the perfect fit with a few updates or compromises. Focus on the features that matter most and remember that many things can be changed over time.

MAKING AN OFFER

It's more than just the price.

If we're in a seller's market, we'll need to act quickly. If you've found a home you love, it's time to make a strong offer.

Keep in mind, you may only have one opportunity- there's no guarantee the seller will issue a counteroffer. If multiple buyers are competing for the same home, submitting your strongest offer from the start can make all the difference.

DETERMINING THE RIGHT OFFER

Several factors help determine a competitive and well-informed offer:

Comparative Market Analysis (CMA):
I'll analyze recent sales of similar homes, current market conditions, and competing listings to help determine a fair and competitive offer price.

Your Budget:
We'll make sure your offer aligns with your financial goals, comfort level, and mortgage pre-approval amount.

Terms & Contingencies:
Price is only one part of an offer. We'll also consider contingencies, timelines, seller requests, credits, and other terms that can make your offer more attractive while protecting your interests.

Earnest Money Deposit:
A strong earnest money deposit can demonstrate your commitment to the purchase and strengthen your offer.

Every home and every seller is different. Our job is to help you develop the strongest strategy for your unique situation, balancing competitiveness with smart decision-making so you can pursue the home you love with confidence.

MAKING AN OFFER

It's more than just the price.

(continued)

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR OFFER TO MAKE IT MORE APPEALING

A strong offer isn't always the highest offer. Sometimes the right combination of price, terms, and flexibility can make all the difference.

Mortgage Pre-Approval Letter
Include a current pre-approval letter to demonstrate you're financially qualified and ready to move forward.

Understand the Seller's Priorities
Every seller is different. Some value the highest price, while others prioritize timing, certainty, or convenience. We'll work to understand what's most important so we can tailor your offer accordingly.

Flexible Closing Timeline
Being flexible with your closing date can make your offer more attractive, especially if the seller needs additional time to move or is purchasing another home.

Strong Earnest Money Deposit
A larger earnest money deposit shows confidence and demonstrates your commitment to completing the purchase.

Smart Use of Contingencies
Contingencies protect you as the buyer, but fewer or shorter contingencies can strengthen your offer. We'll help you strike the right balance between being competitive and protecting your interests.

Shorter Contingency Periods
When appropriate, reducing inspection, appraisal, or loan contingency timelines can give sellers greater confidence in the transaction.

Offer to Cover Certain Seller Costs
In some situations, offering to pay for specific seller expenses or fees can help your offer stand out.

Personal Letter (When Appropriate)
A personal letter may help create a connection with the seller in certain situations. However, because of Fair Housing considerations, We'll advise you on when this is appropriate and whether it's the best strategy.

Escalation Clause
In a multiple-offer situation, an escalation clause can automatically increase your offer over competing bids up to a maximum amount you've approved.

Rent-Back Agreement
If the seller needs additional time after closing to move into their next home, offering a temporary rent-back can provide flexibility and strengthen your offer.

MAKING AN OFFER

AFTER YOU SUBMIT AN OFFER

(continued)

Once your offer is submitted, the seller has several options.
Understanding each possibility helps you know what to expect as we navigate the negotiation process together.

#1 The Seller Could:

Accept the Offer — Congratulations! Your offer has been accepted, and we'll move into escrow and begin working through the timelines and contingencies outlined in your purchase agreement.

Reject the Offer — The seller declines your offer, ending the negotiation. If this happens, we'll regroup and continue searching for the right home.

Let the Offer Expire — If the seller doesn't respond before the offer expiration date, the offer automatically expires and is no longer valid.

Accept Another Offer — In a competitive market, the seller may choose another offer without giving us the opportunity to revise ours.

Counter the Offer — Rather than accepting or rejecting your offer, the seller may propose different terms, such as price, closing date, contingencies, or credits.

#2 You Can Then:

Accept the Counteroffer — Congratulations! Once both parties sign, you're officially under contract.

Decline the Counteroffer — If the revised terms don't meet your needs, you can decline and end the negotiations.

Counter Back — You can respond with another counteroffer. Negotiations may go back and forth several times until both parties reach an agreement - or decide to walk away.

Keep in mind: *During negotiations, the seller can continue considering other offers unless otherwise agreed. Responding promptly helps strengthen your position*

ESCROW PERIOD

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOUR OFFER IS ACCEPTED.

Now that your offer has been accepted, you're officially under contract and the escrow process begins. This is where we work through the details of the transaction - from inspections and financing to appraisal and closing - while making sure every deadline is met. Our job is to guide you through each step so you can move forward with confidence.

KEY STEPS OF ESCROW

Choosing Inspections

Together, we'll determine which inspections are appropriate for the property. Common inspections may include a general home inspection, pest inspection, sewer inspection, septic or well inspection, pool inspection, radon testing, roof inspection, or other specialty inspections depending on the property and location.

Inspector Recommendations

If you don't already have preferred inspectors, we're happy to recommend trusted professionals with proven experience. Our goal is to connect you with qualified experts who will provide a thorough evaluation of the property.

Scheduling Inspections

Once we've selected the inspections, we'll help coordinate scheduling with the seller and inspectors while making sure we stay on track with all contractual deadlines. We also encourage you to attend the general home inspection so you can learn more about your future home and ask questions directly.

Reviewing Inspection Reports

After the inspections are complete, we'll carefully review each report together. We'll help you understand the findings, prioritize any concerns, and determine which items may warrant further evaluation or negotiation.

Negotiating Repairs or Credits

If inspections uncover issues, we'll discuss the best strategy moving forward. Depending on the situation, we may request repairs, negotiate a credit toward closing costs, or adjust other terms of the agreement. Throughout the process, we'll advocate for your best interests while helping you make informed decisions with confidence.

ESCROW PERIOD

NEGOTIATING REPAIRS & CREDITS

(continued)

Not every home is perfect. If inspections uncover issues, we'll help you determine the best strategy and negotiate a fair resolution while protecting your interests.

Credit in Lieu of Repairs

Rather than asking the seller to complete repairs before closing, we may negotiate a credit that allows you to handle the work after you take ownership. This option often gives you more control over who performs the repairs and the quality of the work.

Keep in mind that lender guidelines may affect whether repair credits are permitted. We'll help you evaluate the pros and cons based on your specific situation.

Seller Repairs Before Closing

In some cases, it makes sense to ask the seller to complete repairs before closing. This can eliminate the need to coordinate contractors after you move in and ensure certain items are addressed before ownership transfers.

The tradeoff is that you'll typically have less control over who completes the work and how it's performed.

TIPS TO CONSIDER

Keep Your Poker Face

During inspections, remember that the seller or listing agent may be nearby- or security cameras may be recording. Avoid revealing how much you love the home or reacting strongly to inspection findings until we've had a chance to discuss them privately.

Focus on the Big Picture

The inspection period can be emotional for both buyers and sellers. Sellers may feel their home is being unfairly criticized, while buyers often expect everything to be perfect. We'll help keep negotiations productive by focusing on the issues that truly matter, allowing us to work toward a fair resolution and keep the transaction moving forward.

ESCROW PERIOD

APPRAISAL & TITLE

Two important milestones that help ensure your investment is protected and your purchase stays on track.

Appraisal Ordered

Once your purchase agreement is finalized, your lender will typically order an appraisal to determine the current market value of the home. A licensed appraiser will evaluate the property and compare it to recent sales of similar homes in the area.

The appraisal helps confirm that the home's value supports the purchase price and protects both you and your lender from overpaying.

If the home appraises at or above the purchase price, your loan can continue moving through final underwriting. If it comes in lower, I'll help you evaluate your options and negotiate the best path forward.

Title Search Ordered

At the same time, the title company begins researching the property's ownership history to ensure the seller has the legal right to transfer ownership and that the title is free of unexpected issues.

The title search helps:

Confirm Ownership

Verifies the seller has the legal right to sell the property.

Identify Liens or Encumbrances

Reveals unpaid liens, judgments, or other claims that must typically be resolved before closing.

Review Easements & Restrictions

Identifies easements, CC&Rs, or other recorded restrictions that may affect how the property can be used.

Provide Clear Title

The ultimate goal is to ensure you receive clear ownership of the property, giving you peace of mind before closing.

ESCROW PERIOD

PROPERTY SURVEY & HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE

(continued)

PROPERTY SURVEY *(When Applicable)*

Not every transaction requires a property survey, but when one is needed, it provides valuable information about the property and helps prevent future surprises.

A survey can help:

Verify Property Boundaries
Confirms the property's legal boundaries and dimensions.

Identify Easements & Access Rights
Reveals utility easements, shared driveways, or legal rights others may have to use portions of the property.

Locate Structures
Shows where the home, fences, garages, pools, and other improvements sit in relation to the property lines.

Identify Potential Issues
May uncover encroachments, boundary disputes, or other concerns that should be resolved before closing.

Plan for Future Improvements
Provides accurate property information that can be helpful if you plan to build, remodel, or add structures in the future.

HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE

Before closing, you'll need to obtain homeowners insurance to protect your investment and satisfy your lender's loan requirements.

Your policy typically provides protection for:

Your Home & Personal Property
Coverage for damage caused by covered events such as fire, wind, hail, theft, and other insured losses.

Personal Liability
Protection if someone is injured on your property or you are legally responsible for certain damages.

Lender Requirement
Your lender will require proof of insurance before funding your loan and completing the purchase.

Policy Activation
Your coverage generally begins on the day you become the owner, providing protection from the moment you receive the keys.

We'll work closely with your lender, escrow officer, and title company to help ensure everything is completed on time so your closing stays on schedule.

WELCOME HOME

MY COMMITMENT DOESN'T END AT CLOSING.
IT SIMPLY BEGINS A NEW CHAPTER.

Buying a home is one of life's biggest milestones, and we want you to know that you won't be navigating it alone. Even after the keys are in your hand, we're here as a trusted local resource whenever you need advice, recommendations, or simply someone to point you in the right direction. We're just a phone call or text away.

HOW WE CAN HELP AFTER CLOSING

Trusted Local Contractors

Need a plumber, electrician, painter, roofer, HVAC technician, handyman, landscaper, or cleaning service? We've built relationships with professionals we trust and happy to share my recommendations.

Home Improvement Guidance

Thinking about remodeling, updating, or adding value to your home? We can connect you with the right people and offer ideas based on local market trends.

Living the Big Bear Lifestyle

As a longtime Big Bear resident, we'd love to help you discover everything our mountain community has to offer-from favorite restaurants and hiking trails to local events, schools, recreation, and hidden gems.

Short-Term Rental Guidance

If you're considering using your home as a vacation rental, we're happy to share insights and best practices. For a deeper dive, be sure to check out my Airbnb Buyer's & Owner's Guidebook, which walks you through everything from setting up your rental to maximizing income and creating a five-star guest experience.

Your Home's Value

Curious what your home is worth? Whether it's six months or six years from now, we're always happy to provide an updated market analysis and discuss your options.

Your Real Estate Resource for Life

Buying your first home, upgrading, investing, downsizing, or simply answering questions - we're here for all of it. My goal is to be your trusted real estate advisor for years to come.

Thank you for trusting us to be part of your home-buying journey. It has truly been our privilege to help guide you through this exciting chapter. We hope this guide has given you confidence and clarity throughout the process. If you ever have questions - before, during, or long after closing - please don't hesitate to reach out.

Welcome to your new home... and welcome to the Big Bear family.

Hi! *I'm Rachael Smith-Meadors.*

DRE # 01923537

Your Trusted Partner in Real Estate!

I grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, in a loving family that instilled values of **kindness, respect, and honesty**. **My faith is the foundation** of my life, guiding me to live with gratitude and a heart for service.

Real Estate became my calling because it allows me **to make a meaningful impact by helping people** find their perfect home or investment while guiding them through one of life's biggest decisions with care and expertise.

With over 13 years as a top-producing agent in Big Bear and a **degree in Management and Marketing**, I bring a strategic approach and deep market knowledge to every transaction. I've successfully closed hundreds of deals, earning my clients' trust through professionalism and a results-driven focus. As a proud **owner and "Super Host" of two Airbnb properties**, I also offer valuable insights for those looking to invest in short-term rentals. Ask for my **Big Bear Airbnb Owner & Buyers Guide** booklet to learn what it takes to be successful as a owner and host.

One of my greatest accomplishments - and one that continues to grow - is building a **YouTube channel of more than 250,000 subscribers**. Through my videos showcasing Big Bear's neighborhoods, lifestyle, market insights, and hidden gems, I've had the privilege of helping hundreds of thousands of people discover what makes this mountain community so special.

Outside of work, my greatest joy is my family. **My three daughters - Addie, Cali, and Nora are my heart and inspiration.** My husband, Andy, is my real estate business partner and my world-adventure partner. Together, we have co-authored 2 books - **TRANSFORMED BY TROUBLE** (a guided faith journal to turn trials into triumphs), and our latest one is **DIVORCE TO DELIVERANCE** (a 360 page Christ-centered daily devotional prayer & gratitude journal using the 12-steps of Recovery to heal from divorce), both available on Amazon. My world at home is full of love and laughter, especially with our playful French Bulldog - Meatball!

Personally, **I love challenges and adventure**, whether it's competing in Ironman races, daily CrossFit, summiting Mount Whitney, or growing my real estate career. Publishing our books is one of my proudest achievements, alongside helping countless clients achieve their real estate dreams. **I'm always seeking growth, new goals, and ways to serve others better.**

Hi! *I'm Andy Meadors.*

DRE # 02280088

She married him. You can Trust him!

I bring more than 30 years of experience in **branding, marketing, and business development** to my career in real estate. As the owner of a branding agency, I've helped organizations build **trust, communicate their value, and stand out in competitive markets.** Today, I use that same marketing expertise to help buyers and sellers make confident, informed real estate decisions.

Beyond real estate, **my greatest joy is serving others.** I've co-authored Transformed by Trouble and Divorce to Deliverance and am currently writing a book focused on addiction recovery. Every Friday night, I lead a Christ-centered Life Recovery group using my own 12-step-based curriculum, and I have the privilege of sponsoring men as they walk their journeys toward freedom.

One of my favorite quotes is, **"You are most qualified to help the person you used to be"** -Ed Mylett. Having overcome my own struggles with addiction and adversity, that belief has become the mission behind my life. Whether I'm walking alongside someone through recovery, helping a family navigate one of the biggest financial decisions they'll ever make, or serving on home-building projects in Cambodia, my goal is always the same - **to help people find hope, healing, freedom, and a better future.**

When I'm not working, you'll usually find me training for an Ironman or HYROX event, exploring the outdoors, traveling the globe with Rachael, or enjoying everything the Big Bear lifestyle has to offer. As a former CrossFit gym owner and coach, I have a passion for helping people push beyond what they thought was possible - a mindset I carry into every area of life and business.

My faith, family, and desire to serve others are at the center of everything I do. Whether you're buying your first home, searching for the perfect investment property, or making your next move, I'd be honored to help guide you through the journey with confidence, integrity, and maybe even a little fun along the way. **My hope is that by the time we reach the closing table, you've not only gained a trusted Realtor, but a lifelong friend as well.**

A.

Together, It's Better.

We believe our clients deserve more than just one perspective. Together, we combine Rachael's proven real estate expertise with Andy's marketing, branding, and investment experience to provide a well-rounded approach to every transaction. From finding the right property and negotiating the best terms to evaluating investment potential and connecting you with trusted local resources, you'll have two dedicated professionals working on your behalf.

Our shared faith, commitment to service, and love for the Big Bear community shape everything we do. We believe God brings people into our lives for a reason, and we truly consider it a blessing to have you not only as our client, but as our friend.


WELCOME HOME
The journey is just beginning.
909/744·2190
RachaelSmithRealEstate@gmail.com
BuyInBigBearLake.com
Scan to explore everything in one place!
BROWSE MORE HOMES & EXPLORE
Rachael's Social Channels & More
Tap the Play Button & Step Into Big Bear Life!
JOIN 250,000+ YouTube SUBSCRIBERS
Follow Rachael's Local Expertise
RE/MAX
BIG BEAR
Rachael Smith
REAL ESTATE BROKER ASSOCIATE
DRE# 01923537