



YOUR GUIDE TO BUYING A HOME IN WASHINGTON STATE



Presented by Marcus Butler
www.nwhomeseekr.com



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Owner, NW HomeSeekr | 21-Year Army Veteran | Broker, Northfork Realty

NW HomeSeekr – Helping You Find Your Place in WA State

Empowering buyers and sellers with expert guidance, veteran values, and a heart for community – from first consultation to final closing.

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WELCOME TO HOMEOWNERSHIP IN WASHINGTON STATE

Hi, I'm Marcus Butler, Owner of North West HomeSeekr and a 21-year Army veteran. After two decades of military service, I understand the importance of loyalty, attention to detail, and following through. These are the same values I bring to every client I serve.

I created this guide not just as a roadmap, but as a reflection of my commitment to helping you win in Washington's real estate market. Whether you're a first-time buyer, upgrading, downsizing, or exploring your next move, this guide will walk you through the entire journey — step by step.

My goal is to simplify the home buying process and empower you with the tools, insight, and confidence to make informed decisions that align with your dreams and your budget. This isn't just about real estate — it's about finding your place and building a future.

Buying a home in Washington is more than just a transaction — it's a milestone. Whether you're drawn to the cityscapes of Seattle, the quiet suburbs of Pierce County, or the open charm of Eastern Washington, your journey to homeownership starts here.

At NW HomeSeekr, we believe that every buyer deserves expert guidance, no matter their credit score or experience level. That's why I created this comprehensive guide — to empower, educate, and equip you with what you need to succeed in this market.

Let's Win Together.



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Step 1: Get Financially Prepared



Check Your Credit

Start by reviewing your credit report. Many Washington-based lenders offer loan programs designed for buyers with varying



credit scores. I can connect you with trusted mortgage professionals who will walk you through your options.

Understand Loan Types & Minimum Requirements

Here are the most common types of home loans available to Washington buyers:

- **FHA Loans:** Backed by the Federal Housing Administration. Ideal for first-time buyers or those with lower credit scores.
 - Minimum credit score: 580 (with 3.5% down payment)
 - Lower closing costs and flexible guidelines
 - [Learn more about FHA Loans](#)
- **VA Loans:** Available to eligible veterans, active-duty service members, and some military spouses.
 - No down payment required
 - No private mortgage insurance (PMI)
 - Flexible credit and income guidelines
 - [Learn more about VA Loans](#)
- **Conventional Loans:** Offered by private lenders and not government-backed.
 - Minimum credit score: 620
 - Down payments as low as 3% (typically 5–20%)
 - Best suited for borrowers with stronger credit
 - [Learn more about Conventional Loans](#)
- **USDA Loans:** Designed for buyers in eligible rural areas.
 - No down payment required
 - Must meet income and location eligibility requirements
 - [Learn more about USDA Loans](#)

Note: Your credit score is only one part of the approval process. Lenders will also consider your debt-to-income (DTI) ratio, job history, savings, and overall financial health. If your score isn't where you want it to be, there may still be options.

Get Pre-Approved

Before we begin house hunting, getting pre-approved for a mortgage shows sellers that you're serious and helps you determine your price range. It also gives you a competitive edge in hot markets.

Tip: Washington offers down payment assistance programs that may be available to you depending on your income and location. Ask me about which ones you may qualify for!



DETERMINE YOUR NEEDS



Step 2: Define Your Home Goals

Defining your home goals is a critical step in the home-buying process — think of it as the blueprint that guides your entire journey. The more thought you put into this upfront, the smoother the rest of your experience will be.



Start by Listing Your Must-Haves and Nice-to-Haves:

- What features are absolutely essential? (e.g., number of bedrooms, fenced yard, proximity to work or school)
- What would be great but not deal-breakers? (e.g., a home office, bonus room, updated kitchen)

Tips for Prioritizing:

- Rank each item in order of importance
- Consider your lifestyle now and 5–10 years from now
- Think about resale value — features like location and layout usually hold value better than cosmetic updates

Researching School Districts: If schools are a factor, take time to evaluate nearby school districts. You can find updated rankings and community feedback at:

👉 [Niche - Best School Districts in Washington](#)

Commute & Accessibility: Test out the commute during peak hours. Research public transportation options, walkability, and nearby amenities. A shorter commute often means more time with family and less daily stress.

Neighborhood Vibe & Future Growth: Explore neighborhoods at different times of day. Check local zoning, crime rates, community plans, and upcoming developments. A growing area might offer more appreciation potential and better infrastructure.

Take Time Here — It Matters: Spend the most time on this step. It's easy to fall in love with a house that doesn't truly fit your needs. Having a clearly defined list keeps you grounded and focused.



STEP 3

HOUSE HUNTING



Step 3: Start House Hunting



Step 3: Start House Hunting

This is the fun part! As your broker, I'll:

- Schedule and attend showings
- Help you evaluate each home's value
- Provide insight on local markets and trends
- Look out for red flags or costly repairs

Where to Search for Homes in Washington:

- www.nwhomeseekr.com – My personal site with updated listings and buyer tools.

Helpful Tools for Your Search:

- [Walk Score](#) – See how walkable a neighborhood is.
- GreatSchools.org – Compare nearby public and private schools.
- CrimeReports.com – Check neighborhood safety.

Expanded Insight: House hunting can be exciting but also overwhelming. I always recommend starting with 3–5 homes to get a feel for your preferences. Take notes on what you like and dislike after each showing. Think long-term: Is the neighborhood growing? Are there upcoming infrastructure projects? Will this home meet your needs in five years?

Top 5 Red Flags to Watch Out For:

1. **Water Damage** – Stains on ceilings or musty smells
2. **Cracks in Foundation** – Indicate possible structural issues
3. **Old Electrical Systems** – Safety and insurance concerns
4. **Roof Damage** – Missing shingles, sagging
5. **Neglected Neighborhoods** – Can impact long-term value



Step 4: Make an Offer

Once you've found a home you love, it's time to move quickly and strategically. In Washington State, offers are typically submitted using standardized forms provided by the Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS), most commonly the Form 21 (Residential Purchase and Sale Agreement). Here's what you can expect:



- 1. Review the Seller's Disclosure (Form 17):** Before submitting an offer, you'll receive a Seller Disclosure Statement. Review it carefully with me to look for any red flags.
- 2. Determine Offer Price:** We'll look at comparable homes ("comps") in the area to help you determine a strong but competitive offer based on current market conditions.
- 3. Include Earnest Money:** This is a good-faith deposit (typically 1–3% of the purchase price) that shows the seller you're serious. It is applied toward your closing costs if the deal goes through.
- 4. Add Contingencies:** We'll discuss including contingencies such as:
 - Home inspection
 - Financing
 - Appraisal
 - Title review
 - Sale of current home (if applicable)
- 5. Set Important Deadlines:** NWMLS forms include timelines for inspection, financing, and closing. Typical closing in WA is 30–45 days. You'll also choose a closing date that aligns with your lender and the seller's needs.
- 6. Submit the Offer:** I'll draft and submit your offer using NWMLS forms. The seller may accept, reject, or counter your offer. I'll guide you through any negotiations to ensure your best interests are protected.
- 7. Get Mutual Acceptance:** Once both parties agree and sign, you have what's called "mutual acceptance." This marks the official start of the transaction timeline.
- 8. Escrow is Opened:** The earnest money is deposited, and a neutral third-party escrow company begins managing the closing process.



Step 5

Close the Sale





Step 5: Inspection & Appraisal

Once your offer is accepted, you enter a critical due diligence phase. This step is essential to protect your investment and ensure you're making a sound purchase — but don't worry, you're not alone in the process.

Home Inspection: A professional, licensed inspector will examine the home's structure and systems, including the roof, foundation, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and appliances. I'll help you:

- Choose a reputable inspector
- Attend the inspection (recommended!)
- Review the inspection report line by line
- Negotiate repairs or credits with the seller if necessary

This part of the process can feel intimidating, especially for first-time buyers, but it's a powerful tool for protecting yourself. Most homes will have a few minor issues — and that's completely normal. We'll focus on the major concerns and make sure you're making an informed decision.

Appraisal: Your lender requires an appraisal to ensure the home is worth the agreed purchase price. If the appraisal comes in lower than the purchase price, we may:

- Renegotiate the price with the seller
- Cover the difference in cash (if feasible)
- Challenge the appraisal with additional comps
- Cancel the deal using the appraisal contingency (if included)

Helpful Tip: Be proactive. The faster we handle inspection issues and appraisal responses, the smoother the path to closing. And remember — it's okay if the inspection or appraisal brings up concerns. My job is to help you understand your options and make adjustments without losing momentum or confidence.. The faster we handle inspection issues and appraisal responses, the smoother the path to closing.



6 STEP CLOSE THE SALE





Step 6: Closing Day

You made it! The final step in your home buying journey is where everything comes together.

Here's What to Expect on Closing Day:

- You'll sign your final loan documents and legal paperwork (often at the escrow or title office)
- Your down payment and closing costs will be paid via a cashier's check or wire transfer
- The lender funds the loan
- The transaction is recorded with the county

Only after the recording is confirmed are you officially the legal owner — and that's when you receive your keys! 🎉

What to Bring:

- A valid government-issued photo ID
- Proof of homeowner's insurance
- Final closing disclosure and wire instructions (double check these with your escrow company to avoid fraud)

Closing Costs Typically Include:

- Loan origination and underwriting fees
- Title insurance and escrow fees
- Appraisal and inspection fees
- Prepaid taxes and insurance

Final Tip: Don't schedule your move for the same day — delays can happen. Give yourself a buffer of at least 1–2 days after your scheduled closing.

Most closings in Washington take 30–45 days from mutual acceptance to handing over the keys. I'll coordinate with all parties to ensure everything stays on track.



WA Buyer Resources: A comprehensive list of Washington State homebuyer resources, assistance programs, and educational tools

Washington State Housing Finance Commission (WSHFC):

The WSHFC provides a range of financial assistance and educational resources for homebuyers across the state. Learn more at:

👉 <https://www.wshfc.org/buyers/downpayment.htm> 👉 wshfc.org

Key Down Payment Assistance Programs through WSHFC:

- **Home Advantage DPA:** 0% interest, 30-year deferred second mortgage loan. Must be used with WSHFC's Home Advantage first mortgage loan program.
👉 <https://www.wshfc.org/buyers/homeadvantagedpa.htm>
- **Opportunity DPA:** Offers up to \$15,000 in down payment assistance with a 1% interest rate, deferred for 30 years.
👉 <https://www.wshfc.org/sf/dpaOpportunity.htm>
- **HomeChoice Program:** Up to \$15,000 in down payment help for buyers with disabilities or family members with disabilities.
👉 <https://www.wshfc.org/buyers/HomeChoice.htm>
- **Veterans DPA Program:** Designed to help Washington State veterans with their home purchase through a second mortgage loan.
👉 <https://www.wshfc.org/sf/Veterans.htm>

Local Down Payment Assistance Programs:

- **City of Tacoma:** Offers up to \$20,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance.
👉 https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/community_and_economic_development/housing_division/homeownership_assistance
- **Seattle Office of Housing:** Up to \$45,000 in down payment assistance for eligible low-to-moderate income homebuyers.
👉 <https://www.seattle.gov/housing>

Additional Homebuyer Tools & Education:

- **Washington Homeownership Resource Center:** Offers free help, guidance, and referrals for homebuyers and homeowners.
👉 <https://www.homeownership-wa.org>
- **DFI Homebuyer Education:** Free tools and classes to help you understand mortgages, budgeting, and your rights as a buyer.
👉 <https://dfi.wa.gov/homeownership/buy-home>
- **Washington Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF):** Provides financial relief for homeowners, including mortgage, property tax, and utility assistance.
👉 <https://washingtonhaf.org>