

BUYER'S GUIDE

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE HOME BUYING PROCESS



DESIGNED AND PUBLISHED BY

JR ASSOCIATES
RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

NAVIGATING THE HOME BUYING PROCESS

There are many steps, tasks, and requirements to buying a home and you may be anxious about the journey. To demystify the process, here is a guide of what you will need to consider before you buy and what you can expect during the process.

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Have questions?

Email Phillip@jrassociates.co for more information or to get started.

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MEET PHILLIP

LICENSED SALES & LEASING ADVISOR

Real estate professional and seasoned property owner, Phillip has a firm understanding of what it takes to be on all sides of the transaction. Whether considering a sale, purchasing your first home, leasing an apartment, or a landlord seeking quality tenants for their investment property, Phillip can offer sound advice and strategic guidance that will ensure a smooth enriching experience.

An alumnus of the Resource Economics program at UMass Amherst, Phillip returned home to Boston and diligently forged his own path in varied sectors from hospitality to healthcare.

As a lifelong Boston Metro resident, condo owner in the EU, and recent Massachusetts home buyer, he draws upon deep personal experience to guide each client through their own search. A licensed agent since 2008, Phillip is passionate about providing individually tailored concierge-level customer service.

Phillip happily resides in Roxbury, MA with his partner Hallie, and their beloved children, Lucy and Bode.



FIVE STAR CUSTOMER RATING



Visit our Zillow and Google profiles online to read client testimonials



OUR BROKERAGE

FULL SERVICE, FAMILY OWNED

As an established real estate brokerage, JR Associates has been helping people buy, sell, and lease property in Massachusetts for over 20 years. We understand that with any move, whether permanent or temporary, it can be an exciting but emotional journey. In these unprecedented times, it's never been more important to be confident and comfortable with the people you entrust.

As a boutique-style agency, we put the utmost emphasis on communication, education, and trust at the forefront of every transaction. Our professional expertise stretches beyond the real estate market. As general contractors and builders, our clients have access to far more resources than working with any other traditional brokerage. We attribute our continued success to the personal and professional relationships we create with every client. As a testament to our core values and as the highest level of regard, our clients not only become lifelong repeat customers, but those who find undoubting comfort in referring their friends and family.

As advocates of rescue animal adoption, JR Associates makes a donation to Last Hope K9 and the MSPCA for every successful closing. 🐾

GETTING STARTED

ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP

BUYER CONSULTATION

The first, and most important part of this initial process is to choose an agent/brokerage and get acquainted. It is critical in those early conversations to develop a clear understanding of what your current lifestyle is like and how that will influence the type of home you see yourself in, what location, what amenities you need and so on. Just as important, you should feel comfortable with your agent, the brokerage, and their experience in the industry so that you can feel confident about making this journey together.

The initial consultation is typically a 30-45 minute discussion, either in-person or virtually, where we discuss the entire buying process start to finish, answer questions you might have, and end with a clear set of next steps.

"It is my job to ensure that you feel educated, comfortable, and most importantly, *inspired* to find a home that is perfect."

Phillip Mahnken

LENDER/BANK INTRODUCTION

Similar to finding a great buyer's agent and getting acquainted, you will want to put the same emphasis on finding and building a relationship with a bank or lender. This is critical to not only being able to understand how much how you can afford, but working with people you like and trust is a big part of getting to the closing table. In the following section, we have provided a list of our trusted partners who can help you better understand mortgaging a home and how to get pre-approved.

KEY PEOPLE

OUR TRUSTED PARTNERS IN THE HOME BUYING BUSINESS

LENDERS



RYAN VAN AUKEN, LOAN OFFICER
GUARANTEED RATE MORTGAGE

Ryan is a consummate professional in the mortgage industry. His goal is to educate you on the *financing* side of the first-time home buying process and to see that your loan underwriting is smooth from start to finish.

phone: (508) 981-3444
email: ryan.vanauken@rate.com



JAMES HIRBOUR, LOAN OFFICER
WORKERS CREDIT UNION

James Hirbour is a seasoned mortgage professional with 18 years of lending experience and a degree in Economics-Finance from Bentley University. He has successfully overseen thousands of transactions and was named the #1 credit union loan officer in Massachusetts in 2024. James offers deep industry knowledge and strategic, personalized guidance. Whether you're buying your first home, refinancing, or investing, he provides expert support every step of the way.

phone: (978) 509-6038
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LEGAL/TITLE



CHRISTINA MORISSEAU, PARTNER, ATTORNEY
TOUCHSTONE CLOSING & ESCROW

Christina represents real estate clients with a people-first, solutions-based approach. Prior to finding her place in real estate, she represented clients in complex civil litigation matters, including contested estates and construction. Now, she passionately works with everyone from developers to first-time home-buyers.

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JIM RICHARDS, FOUNDER, ATTORNEY
STANDARD TITLE & ESCROW

Jim Richards is the founder and principal attorney at Standard Title & Escrow, a successful firm that provides representation to buyers and sellers of real estate. Jim strives for excellence in everything he does while combining an extensive level of experience in both finance and law.

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PREREQUISITES

IMPORTANT TOPICS TO DISCUSS & TASKS TO COMPLETE

DISCUSS YOUR FINANCES

Whether you are buying a home solely, with a partner, or with some help, you will want to have a good idea of what kind of financial commitment you can comfortably take on, how much free cash you have, and or how much more time you might need to reach a point where you are ready to get serious. There other important part of this prerequisite is to speak with your lender, as that will also have an impact on how you evaluate your finances to buy a home.

GET YOUR CREDIT IN CHECK

A huge part of your general eligibility for a mortgage and access to various loan programs will depend on your credit score. Not all the free online credit check services will do. Instead, opt for an in-depth review across the three credit bureaus so you know exactly what shape your credit is in. You may find that there are some inaccuracies being reported, or that you have some over utilized credit cards. Regardless, credit can take a couple of weeks/months to improve, so better to know now then when you find a home you love.

BE PREPARED

A lender will need information from you in order to get you pre-approved and through the entire home buying process. Here are a few things to have ready for them:

- W-2 forms from the past two years
- Pay stubs from the past 30 days
- Federal tax returns from the past two years
- Proof of other sources of income
- Recent bank statements
- Details on long-term debts such as car or student loans.
- ID and Social Security number

*If you are self-employed, you may have to provide extra proof of your financial stability, including having a higher credit score or large cash reserves, and possibly providing business tax returns.

TALK WITH A BANK/LENDER

The right lender can make a significant difference in not only obtaining a great loan product, but being educated on the mortgage process, feeling confident in this financial commitment, and most importantly, getting you to the closing table without issue. You are welcome to choose your own lender, but it is important to understand that our brokerage has longstanding relationships with trusted partners in the business that we would strongly recommend. These people are vetted and established and we are familiar with their work ethics. Your lender is going to be a big part of this journey and you are going to want one that truly cares.

CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

After meeting with your lender, you will be able to better assess your options from various types of loans to home *types*, and locations. This is a good time to start making a list of what makes sense to you both financially and that of features, finishes, layouts, and locations of your dream home.

BENEFITS

TO BEING REPRESENTED & BUYING REAL ESTATE

USING A BUYER'S AGENT

Whether you are buying your first home or you are a seasoned investor, choosing professional representation is an important decision. In most real estate transactions, one party is represented — often both — because the process involves complex negotiations, legal obligations, and financial risk. A buyer's agent exists to guide you through this process, protect your interests, and help you make informed decisions at every stage.

- **Professional Advocacy & Negotiation** - A buyer's agent advocates for your interests in pricing, terms, inspections, timelines, and risk exposure. In today's market, that advocacy can directly impact what you pay, what concessions you receive, and whether you win the home at all. Buyer representation may involve a fee paid by the seller, the buyer, or a combination of both, depending on the transaction. The goal remains the same: to protect you from costly mistakes, unfavorable terms, or overpaying — outcomes that can far exceed the cost of professional representation.
- **Exclusive Representation** - Just as the seller is represented by an agent legally obligated to protect their interests, exclusive buyer representation ensures you have a professional solely committed to yours. Your agent's fiduciary responsibility is to advise you candidly, negotiate strategically, and protect you throughout the transaction.
- **Experience & Process Management** - Real estate transactions involve many moving parts, deadlines, and decisions. An experienced agent helps manage the process from start to finish, anticipating issues before they become problems and keeping your purchase on track.
- **Trusted Network of Professionals** - Buying a home requires coordination with lenders, attorneys, inspectors, and other professionals. Your agent provides access to a vetted network of trusted industry partners to help ensure a smooth and efficient path to closing.
- **Access to Inventory & Market Insight** - Agents stay closely connected to the market, including new listings, off-market opportunities, and properties that may never reach public platforms. This access and insight can make a meaningful difference in competitive conditions.
- **Credibility in the Marketplace** - Buyers working with a professional agent are often viewed as more prepared and serious. Representation signals that you are informed, pre-approved, and ready to act — which can strengthen your position when competing for a home.
- **Long-Term Relationship** - Our goal is not just to help you buy a home, but to build a long-term relationship. Many of our clients become repeat buyers, sellers, and trusted referral sources for friends and family.

WHY BUY REAL ESTATE?

While renting can be a good short-term option, long-term ownership offers powerful financial and personal benefits. When you buy a home, your monthly payments build equity rather than paying a landlord. Ownership also offers potential tax advantages, long-term appreciation, and the ability to improve and leverage your property over time. Beyond the financial benefits, owning a home provides stability, pride of ownership, and a strong foundation for long-term wealth.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

IMPORTANT POINTS & CLARIFICATIONS OF BUYING

SETTING THE STAGE

When first starting out on the journey to home ownership, we find a lot of our clients take to the internet to do their research but ultimately end up with a lot of conflicting information.

A critical step in not only beginning this journey but to make it an enjoyable one, is to reset your expectations. These points below will set the record straight as we clear the slate of some misconceptions about buying.

- You do not need 20% of the homes purchase price as a down payment. There are programs that allow as little as 3.5% down, programs you can finance your downpayment, and other programs that provide grant money to cover your down payment and closings costs almost entirely. The first step is to talk to a lender.
- Not all markets operate the same. Activity in the city can significantly vary from what it is like doing business in the suburbs. The same can be said for the type of property you are looking for i.e. the condo market versus single family homes. And of course, markets are very different from state to state. This is important to understand because you will need to consider what type of terms, negotiations, and other tactics are prolific in the market where you are looking.
- This process can be stressful and frustrating at times. There are a lot of moving parts in buying a home, and there are a lot of external factors that can have an influence on that process. Raising interest rates, the housing stock (inventory of available homes), global economies, shifting trends, etc. can all have an affect on the buying process and potentially your transaction. An experienced agent and their trusted team of professionals will significantly de-risk a lot of those situations, but it's important to remember that things can happen.
- It is okay to change certain aspects of your search criteria. You may go into this search with a particular house style in mind in a certain location, but after touring homes and seeing everything in person, you may start to learn more about yourself and what really makes sense to you ultimately shifting your search.
- It is our job to attend showings *with* you if we can, so don't feel bad about asking us to attend on the weekend. It's our pleasure!
- With that, go to those open houses! It is very important to tour lots of spaces/properties in person to elucidate your wants/needs in a home.
- Check in with your lender every 2-3 weeks on any changes. In more fluctuating markets, it's good to keep tabs with your lender about any changes or new loan programs that might make more sense for you.
- Make sure to have some paper checks handy. You're going to need to write deposit checks for making offers, so it's good to have actual paper checks on hand.
- If you are planning on buying a home jointly with someone, the lending eligibility is based on the person with the lower credit, just an FYI.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

IMPORTANT POINTS & CLARIFICATIONS OF BUYING

CONT.

- Understand that even though we will do our best to find you the perfect house, you may ultimately make some compromises along the way. But we will always do our best to get all those boxes checked for you.
- You can start the home buying process even if you are renting with a lease agreement. This process takes time and if you need to break your lease after finding your dream home, there are ways to do so that won't leave you on the hook financially.
- There is no magic number for the amount of property you have seen before it makes sense to make an offer. There is definitely some degree of luck when searching, and some clients fall in love and make an offer on the very first property they see.
- Bidding wars can happen in this market. Acknowledging that this can happen and being educated on the potential outcomes will save you some stress. In hotter markets, *intrinsic value* can play a big part in your offer strategy and why you might be in a position to offer more than the listed price.

BUYER EXPENSES

AN ITEMIZED BREAKDOWN

THE TRUE COST OF BUYING

An important exercise in preparing to buy your first home is to understand the costs associated with making the purchase. Your lender will also cover these expenses in detail, but below we breakdown the various costs that you can expect to pay as a buyer, when those payments will come due, roughly how much, and how they are tied to the deal.

- **1st Deposit:** This good faith deposit or "earnest money" is attached to the offer to purchase. It is normally a \$1,000 check and made out to the listing brokerage. It is to be delivered upon acceptance of the offer.
 - *Note* - This is normally refundable if the deal falls through and if not, it is held in escrow and applied to your closing costs.
- **Home Inspection(s):** There are a few different types of home inspections all of which are the responsibility of the buyer. A home inspection can cost anywhere from \$450-\$900 depending on the area and the type of inspection. This will be due, in full, when the inspection report is sent to you.
- **Legal Representation:** In Massachusetts, you will need an attorney to handle your closing, draft the purchase and sale agreement, conduct the title search, etc. This flat fee can range anywhere from \$1,000-\$2,000. It may appear as a "Title examination fee or settlement fee" on your closing disclosure. This is part of your "closing costs" and will be due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs.
- **2nd Deposit:** At the time you sign the Purchase and Sale Agreement, it will require another monetary installment to bind the agreement. This amount is usually between 4-5% of the purchase price. It is typically held by the seller's attorney, kept in escrow and applied to your closing costs at closing.
 - *Note* - This money can *also* be refundable depending on if/how the deal falls apart.

BUYER EXPENSES

AN ITEMIZED BREAKDOWN

CONT.

- **Appraisal:** When applying for a mortgage, your bank/lender will always order the appraisal as part of their services, but it's a fee that you'll be responsible for at closing. This can range from \$450-\$650. This is part of your "closing costs" and will be due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs.
- **Points:** Depending on your lender and the programs they offer, you can actually pay money to obtain a better interest rate. This is called "paying down points". It's a completely separate cost to closing the loan you would pay for only if you want to "buy" a better interest rate.
- **Well Tests:** This is a test conducted to ensure the quality and quantity of water. This typically pertains to single family homes and that of new construction or buying land to build using a construction loan. This can range from \$300-\$500. If this applies to you, it will likely be due upfront in order to schedule the test.
- **Appraisal Gap:** This type of cost is more rare and may be even be negotiated, but it can come up in really competitive markets. If a property is appraised for lower than what you've agreed to pay, you may have to cover the difference as an out of pocket expense. This "gap" cannot be rolled into your loan. So if this happens, it may be a situation that is negotiated between all parties or in some cases, a cost *you* need to cover if you want to buy the house.
- **Credit Report:** Every time the bank/lender has to check your credit throughout the deal, you will be charged a fee. It will appear as part of the loan closing costs and is anywhere from \$15-30 each time it is run. This is due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs.
- **Origination Charges:** You will likely see an administration fee, processing fee, and an underwriting fee on your closing disclosure. Each line item can be a couple hundred dollars. This is part of your "closing costs" and will be due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs.
- **Flood Certification:** This is a verification that the property is not within a flood plain. This charge is typically under \$20. This is part of your "closing costs" and will be due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs.
- **Tax Service Fee:** This fee is assessed and collected by the bank/lender to ensure that mortgagors pay their property taxes on time. This charge is typically around \$50. This is part of your "closing costs" and will be due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs.
- **Lender's + Owner's Title Insurance:** When mortgaging a home, this insurance is required to protect the homeowner and the lenders during the mortgage process. This is part of your "closing costs" and will be due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs.
- **Recording Fee:** There is a fee associated with recording a piece of property that's been bought/sold and is issued by the state/ local government. This is part of your "closing costs" and will be due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs. The national average for this fee is \$125.
- **Buyer Agent Compensation:** Buyer representation may involve a professional fee that is agreed upon in advance. Depending on the property and how the transaction is structured, this fee may be paid by the seller, the buyer, or a combination of both. In situations where the buyer is responsible for some or all of this cost, it is typically due at closing and cannot always be rolled into the mortgage. Your agent will clearly explain all compensation scenarios upfront so there are no surprises.
- **Prepaid Expenses:**
 - **Homeowners Insurance:** A buyer must obtain this insurance binder in order to close. You can shop for it yourself or your bank/lender can obtain it. This cost can vary, but a 12-month prepayment is required plus 2 months into an escrow account. This is part of your "closing costs" and will be due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs.
 - **Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI):** This is a type of insurance that's typically required when putting less than 20% down. It tends to be a couple hundred dollars per month but can certainly vary on the costs of the loan.
 - **Prepaid Interest:** Interest on the loan for the remainder of the days in the month when you close.
 - **Property Taxes:** You will typically be required to prepay 3 month's worth of property taxes. This is part of your "closing costs" and will be due at the time of closing. Your 1st and 2nd deposits will also be applied to these costs.

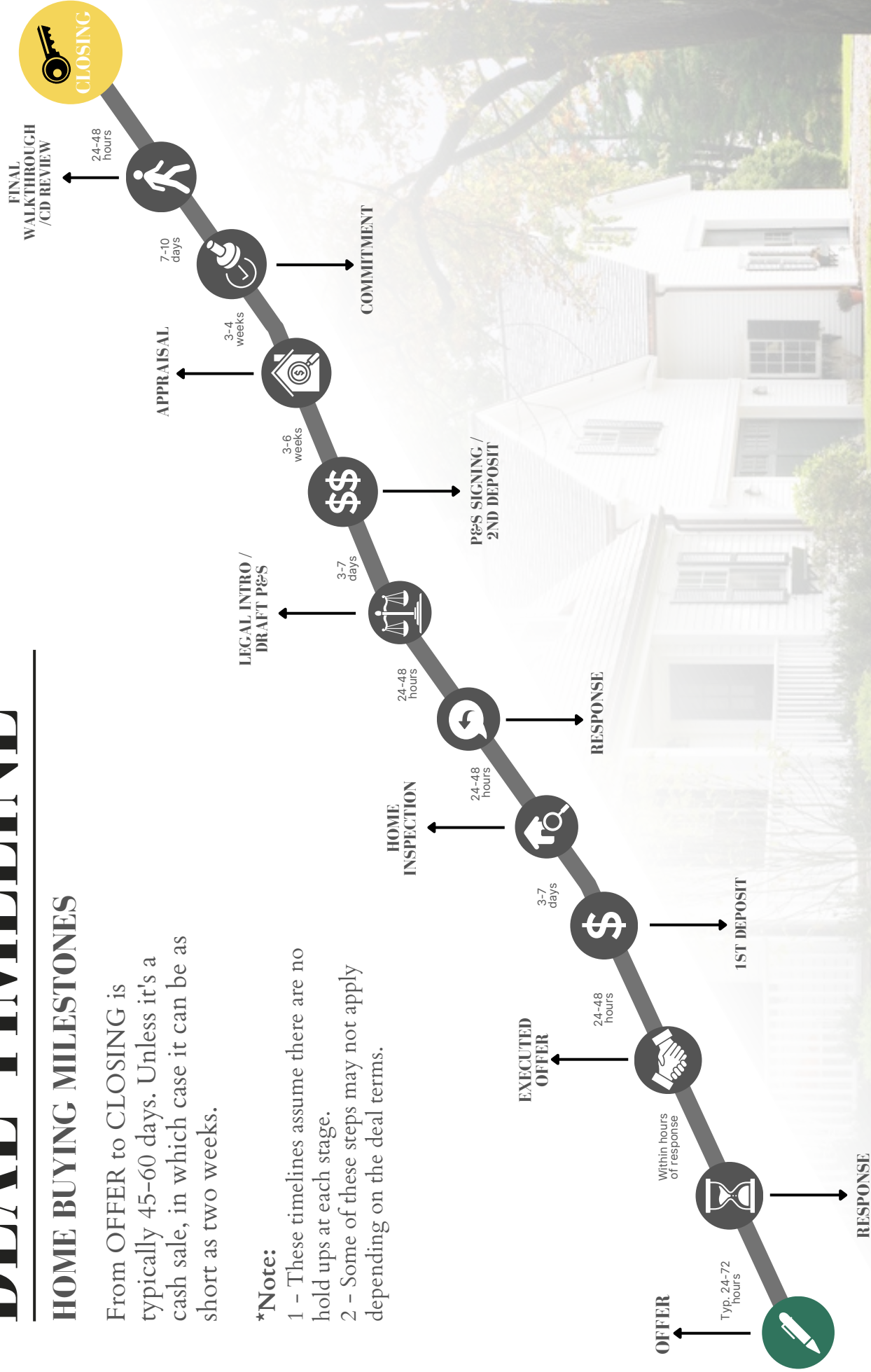
DEAL TIMELINE

HOME BUYING MILESTONES

From OFFER to CLOSING is typically 45-60 days. Unless it's a cash sale, in which case it can be as short as two weeks.

***Note:**

- 1 - These timelines assume there are no hold ups at each stage.
- 2 - Some of these steps may not apply depending on the deal terms.



BUYER QUESTIONNAIRE

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR THE ONLINE VERSION

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO LIVE?

List any towns/neighborhoods you are interested in and why.

PRICING & FINANCING

What is your price range? If you need financing, are you pre-approved yet?

TIMEFRAME

Do you need to sell a current home? Are you leasing? When does your current lease end?

TYPE OF PROPERTY + SPECS

Single family, condo, multi? # of Bedrooms? Baths? Total square feet? Parking?

MUST HAVE

|

NICE TO HAVE

List in each column your needs and wants in an ideal property

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BUYER QUESTIONNAIRE

FIXER UPPER OR TURNKEY?

Are you looking for something you can add value or that is newly renovated?

DESCRIBE YOUR LIFESTYLE

Understanding your lifestyle will help us hone in on the appropriate style, layout, features, etc

AREA AMENITIES

Do you want to be close to anything in particular? School, transit, highway, coast, etc.

LENDER

Do you have a mortgage lender you've been working with? If not, we have trusted partners!

LEGAL

MA is a lawyer state, so you'll need an attorney to purchase. Do you have one?

CONTACT

We hope this buyer's guide is a helpful starting point in your journey to becoming a homeowner. If you have any additional questions or are ready to get started, we look forward to hearing from you!

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