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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO

Atlanta

First-Time

Buyer's Guide

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY IN ATLANTA

01 The Atlanta Market — What to Expect

02 Financing Your Home

03 Choosing the Right Neighborhood

04 The Buying Process, Step by Step

05 Making an Offer & Negotiating

06 From Contract to Closing Day

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Welcome

Buying your first home is one of the most significant decisions you'll ever make — exciting, emotional, and at times, overwhelming. That's exactly why I created this guide.

Atlanta's real estate market moves quickly. Neighborhoods are evolving. Prices are shifting. And as a first-time buyer, you deserve to enter this process informed, confident, and fully prepared.

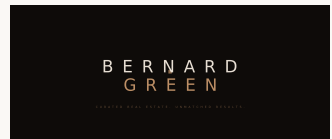


This guide will walk you through every stage of the homebuying journey — from understanding your budget and getting pre-approved, to touring homes, making offers, and sitting at the closing table. We'll also explore Atlanta's most sought-after neighborhoods so you can find the community that fits your lifestyle.

When you're ready to take the next step, I'm here to guide you every mile of the way.

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The Atlanta Market

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2025

Atlanta remains one of the Southeast's most dynamic real estate markets. Strong job growth driven by tech, film, logistics, and finance continues to fuel demand — while a limited housing supply keeps competition healthy. Here's what first-time buyers need to understand going in.

4–6%

AVG. ANNUAL APPRECIATION

21 Days

AVG. DAYS ON MARKET

\$385K

MEDIAN HOME PRICE (METRO)

68%

BUYER RATE FIRST-TIME

Pro Tip: Atlanta's market varies dramatically by neighborhood. A home in Buckhead competes very differently than one in Decatur or East Atlanta Village. Working with a local expert isn't optional — it's essential.

- **Multiple offer situations** are common in popular price ranges. Being pre-approved before you start touring is not just helpful — it's required.
- **Move-in ready homes** command a premium. Budget-conscious buyers can find great value in homes that need cosmetic updates.
- **School districts** heavily influence value. Even if you don't have children, buying in a top-rated district protects your resale value.
- **MARTA access** is an increasing priority for buyers. Walkable, transit-connected neighborhoods continue to outperform.

Financing Your Home

BUDGETS, MORTGAGES & GETTING PRE-APPROVED

Before you fall in love with a home, you need to know what you can afford. Your budget isn't just about the mortgage payment — it includes taxes, insurance, HOA fees, maintenance, and utilities.

Step 1: Know Your Numbers

- **Down payment:** Conventional loans typically require 3–20%. FHA loans allow as low as 3.5% with a 580+ credit score.
- **Debt-to-income ratio (DTI):** Most lenders want your total monthly debt payments to stay below 43% of your gross income.
- **Credit score:** A score above 720 unlocks the best rates. Below 620 and your options narrow significantly.
- **Closing costs:** Budget 2–5% of the loan amount for closing costs — appraisal, title, lender fees, etc.

Step 2: Get Pre-Approved

Pre-approval is a lender's written commitment to loan you a specific amount, based on a review of your credit, income, and assets. It's different from pre-qualification (which is just an estimate).

***Important:** In Atlanta's competitive market, most sellers won't consider an offer without a pre-approval letter. Get yours before you start touring homes.*

Loan Types at a Glance

- **Conventional:** Best for buyers with 620+ credit and 3–20% down. Most flexible terms.
- **FHA Loan:** 3.5% down, easier qualification. Requires mortgage insurance premium.
- **VA Loan:** 0% down for eligible veterans. Excellent terms, no PMI.
- **USDA Loan:** 0% down for eligible rural/suburban areas near Atlanta.
- **First-Time Buyer Programs:** Georgia Dream offers down payment assistance for qualifying buyers.

Atlanta Neighborhoods

FINDING YOUR PERFECT COMMUNITY

Atlanta's neighborhoods each have a distinct personality. Here are six communities that consistently attract first-time buyers — each offering a different blend of lifestyle, price point, and long-term value.

Buckhead \$600K–\$2M+

Atlanta's premier luxury address. Top-rated schools, world-class dining, and iconic architecture. Best for buyers prioritizing prestige and resale value.

Midtown \$350K–\$800K

Arts, culture, and walkability. Home to Piedmont Park, the High Museum, and a thriving restaurant scene. Great for professionals who love urban energy.

Inman Park / Candler Park \$400K–\$900K

Historic Victorian homes meet hip coffee shops and farmers' markets. One of Atlanta's most beloved in-town neighborhoods.

Decatur \$300K–\$650K

A small-city vibe with outstanding public schools and a tight-knit community. Excellent value with strong appreciation history.

East Atlanta Village \$250K–\$500K

Eclectic, creative, and affordable. Perfect for first-timers who want walkability, personality, and long-term upside.

Sandy Springs \$350K–\$900K

Suburban polish with easy highway access. Top schools, corporate headquarters nearby, and family-friendly parks.

The Buying Process

STEP BY STEP

01

Define Your Goals

Consider location priorities, must-have features, timeline, and non-negotiables. The clearer your vision, the more focused your search.

02

Get Pre-Approved

Contact a lender before you tour a single home. Your pre-approval letter tells sellers you're serious and defines your price range.

03

Start Your Search

Work with your agent to tour homes that match your criteria. Keep notes on each property — details blur quickly after multiple showings.

04

Make an Offer

When you find the right home, move quickly. Your agent will prepare a competitive offer based on market data, comparable sales, and strategy.

05

Under Contract

Once accepted, you'll complete your inspections, finalize financing, and review all disclosures during the due diligence period.

06

Close & Get Your Keys

Final walkthrough, sign the paperwork, wire the funds. The home is yours. Congratulations — you're a homeowner.

Making an Offer

STRATEGY, NEGOTIATION & DUE DILIGENCE

When you find the right home, your offer needs to be competitive — not just in price, but in terms, timing, and presentation. In Atlanta's active market, how you make an offer can be just as important as how much you offer.

What Goes Into an Offer

- **Purchase price:** Informed by comparable sales ("comps") your agent pulls from the MLS.
- **Earnest money deposit:** Typically 1–3% of purchase price. Shows the seller you're serious.
- **Due diligence period:** Your window to inspect the property and negotiate repairs (usually 7–14 days in GA).
- **Financing contingency:** Protects you if your loan falls through. Can be waived for stronger offers.
- **Closing date:** Typically 30–45 days from contract. Flexibility here can win deals.
- **Inclusions / exclusions:** What stays with the home — appliances, fixtures, window treatments.

In a multiple-offer situation: Consider an escalation clause ("I'll beat any offer by \$2,000 up to \$X"), a larger earnest deposit, or a shorter due diligence period to strengthen your position.

The Inspection Process

Never waive an inspection. A licensed home inspector will evaluate the roof, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, foundation, and more. In Georgia, you have a separate "due diligence" period — use it. Budget \$300–\$500 for a general inspection, and additional fees for specialized inspections (septic, radon, sewer scope).

Closing Day

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE FINISH LINE

Closing day is the final step — when ownership officially transfers from seller to buyer. It typically takes 1–2 hours and involves signing a significant amount of paperwork. Here's what to expect.

Before Closing

- Final walkthrough: 24–48 hours before closing, you'll do a final walkthrough to confirm the home is in the agreed-upon condition.
- Closing disclosure: You'll receive this 3 days before closing. Review every line item carefully — it lists all your final costs.
- Wire your funds: You'll wire your down payment and closing costs to the title company. Confirm wiring instructions by phone to avoid fraud.
- Bring: Government-issued photo ID, cashier's check (if not wiring), and any required documentation.

What You'll Sign

- **Closing Disclosure:** Final accounting of all loan terms and costs.
- **Promissory Note:** Your legal promise to repay the mortgage.
- **Deed of Trust / Mortgage:** Secures the lender's interest in the property.
- **Grant Deed / Warranty Deed:** Transfers legal ownership to you.

After signing, you'll receive the keys. You're officially a homeowner. This is the moment everything has been building toward.

Your Next Steps

- Change the locks on all exterior doors immediately.
- Set up utilities: electricity, gas, water, internet.
- Notify USPS and update your address with banks, employer, DMV.
- Schedule your HVAC service and review all home systems.
- Connect with your HOA (if applicable) and get community details.

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Ready to start your Atlanta home search? Let's talk.

