



**DARBY**  
*merriman*  
REAL ESTATE TEAM



MISSION TO CLOSE  
REAL ESTATE

# HOMEBUYER HANDBOOK

DARBY@DARBYMERRIMANTEAM.COM  
WWW.DARBYMERRIMANTEAM.COM

# nice to meet you



Let's be honest: Real estate is complicated.  
That's where we come in.

At the closing table, our goal is for the experience of selling your home to have exceeded all of your expectations, so throughout all of our interactions – from the first meeting to closing – we will work diligently toward achieving that goal.

When you choose us as your partner, you are not just getting a trusted, respected and experienced team – you are getting a local expert who is passionate about serving our community and the people who call it home. Our goal is always to educate our clients throughout the homebuying process where you feel knowledgeable, aware and updated throughout the process.

Our team is prepared to guide you through every phase of the home buying process. This packet contains some helpful information you may want to reference before, during and after you search for your home, so be sure to hang onto it. We know you will become raving fan of the professional real estate experience we provide to each one of our clients and customers. We believe we are in a people business, not just the business of selling homes. We want our relationship to continue long after we finish up at the closing table ...our goal is to have you as a client for life.

## READY. SET. GO... let's find you a *home!*



469-682-3455



darby@darbymerrimanteam.com



www.darbymerrimanteam.com



@darbymerrimanrealtor



@darbymerriman

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# ABOUT US





# meet THE TEAM

In order to provide top notch service during every phase of your home buying experience, Darby enlists the help of an experienced and customer-focused team.



*Darby Merriman*

REALTOR® | MANAGING BROKER

- Leads, trains and mentors team members
- Primary point of contact to all clients
- Acts as primary negotiator for all contracts



*Victoria Nicolai*

REALTOR® | SHOWING PARTNER

- Hosts open houses
- Schedules and shows homes
- Provides info on available homes and weekly open house lists



*Erin Adams*

LISTING COORDINATOR

- Meets photographer
- Collects data for listing accuracy
- Enters listing into MLS and ShowingTime



*Carlee Riggs*

TRANSACTION COORDINATOR

- Manages paperwork once in contract
- Coordinates scheduling
- Oversee contract timelines



*Trey Moore*

PHOTOGRAPHER

- Photographs listings
- Edits images



*Vaughn Merriman*

RUNNER

- Delivers signage & lockboxes
- Runs miscellaneous errands

**DARBY**  
*merriman*  
REAL ESTATE TEAM



# about **DARBY MERRIMAN,** **REALTOR® /BROKER**



Darby Merriman has lived in the Dallas-Fort Worth area for over 30 years and knows it like the back of her hand. Her love for real estate began at an early age as she watched many family members get involved in the business and make their client's dreams come true. Darby has a keen eye for detail and vast experience in home remodeling, staging, interior design, marketing and corporate relocation. All of this gives Darby a unique perspective and the ability to offer expertise on many topics related to homes and real estate. This is why she continues to surprise and delight her clients with a 5-star customer experience while keeping the home buying and selling process as fun and stress-free as possible. Darby understands that buying and selling homes is the biggest financial decision people make and is known for making her clients feel knowledgeable and at ease throughout the entire buying and selling process.

A top producing realtor in the Dallas-Fort Worth market, Darby has a proven track record of success, is well respected among her peers and has received numerous industry awards and accolades. She has been recognized as Carrollton's Best Realtor multiple times, is a multi-year D Magazine Best Real Estate Agent, Best of Denton County Listing Agent, North DFW Real Producers Top 500 Real Estate Agent, Local Profile Top Realtor in Collin County, Frisco Style Best Real Estate Professional, NextDoor Neighborhood Favorite and one of RealTRENDS America's Best Real Estate Professionals. She has earned her admission into the Institute for Luxury Home Marketing through qualifying sales and has been recognized as a Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist (CLHMS) with an additional GUILD designation. Darby has helped hundreds of families achieve their real estate dreams and nearly \$100m in dollars in real estate since she obtained her license in 2016. She is sought out trainer in the area of social media, regularly teaches classes on numerous real estate topics and coaches several top producing real estate agents. Prior to becoming a real estate agent, Darby honed her "type A" organization and relationship skills planning and delivering educational training, meetings and events for 15+ years for nonprofit organizations and professional associations.

Darby is a dedicated volunteer whose greatest passion is serving her community. In 2023, she was recognized as the Metrocrest Chamber's Businesswoman of the Year for her advocacy and support of women in business, revenue growth, innovation in service and providing exemplary customer service. She was selected by the Carrollton City Council as the 2019 Rising Star for her commitment to the community and dedication to making the city a better place to live and do business. Darby has also received numerous city-level appointments including the Mayor's Advisory Council, the Neighborhood Advisory Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission in Carrollton. She is also a graduate of Leadership Metrocrest. Currently, she serves on the Board of Directors for the Metrocrest Chamber, Connecting the Community and several other local nonprofit organizations. She has also held multiple leadership roles on PTA boards in both Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD and Lewisville ISD, Carrollton Aqua Racers Swim Team and National Charity League - Hebron Chapter. She regularly gives her time, expertise and support to a number of local nonprofit organizations and school groups.

Darby has lived in Carrollton for over 20 years with her husband, Rich, and their two children, Vaughn and Beau. In her spare time, Darby loves to spend time with her family and friends, travel, try new restaurants, cheer for the Arkansas Razorbacks, do anything creative, read and volunteer. Darby is a University of North Texas graduate and her areas of study included a triple major in Volunteer Management, Public Administration and Criminal Justice and a minor in Applied Economics. She is a master negotiator who has over 400 hours in alternative dispute resolution training and is certified in multiple areas of professional mediation.



# DARBY MERRIMAN

## BROKER/REALTOR® | TEAM LEADER

Award winning, top producing realtor in the DFW market with a proven track record of success. Vast experience in home remodeling, staging, interior decorating, marketing and corporate relocation.

### PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Bachelor of Applied Arts & Sciences (2002),  
*University of North Texas*

MAJORS: Public Administration, Criminal Justice, Volunteer Management

MINOR: Applied Economics

400+ Hours in Professional Mediation & Negotiation Training

Professional Mediation Certification (2002)

Workplace Alternative Dispute Resolution Certification (2002)

Licensed in Texas (2016) - Texas Real Estate Commission

Team Leader, Darby Merriman Real Estate Team

Member, Collin County Association of Realtors

Member, Texas Association of Realtors

Member, National Association of Realtors

Keller Williams Luxury Division

CLHMS, Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist

GUILD designee, Institute for Luxury Home Marketing

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Board of Directors, Metrocrest Chamber (2023-current)

Board of Directors, Connecting the Community (2021-current)

Metrocrest Chamber Business Woman of the Year (2023)

Texas PTA Lifetime Member Honoree (2021)

CFB ISD District Improvement Council (2020-current)

City of Carrollton Planning & Zoning Commission (2020-2021)

Carrollton City Council Metrocrest Chamber Rising Star (2019)

Women's Business Forum, Metrocrest Chamber (2018-current)

City of Carrollton Neighborhood Advisory Commission (2018-2020, 2021-2022)

Leadership Metrocrest Class XXX (2018)

National Charity League, Hebron Chapter (2017-current)

CFBISD & Lewisville ISD PTA Boards (2012 - current)

City of Carrollton Mayor's Advisory Council (2017-2018)

### AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Top 3 Individual Agent, Keller Williams Plano (2021-2023)

Top Individual Agent, Keller Williams Plano (2020)

#4 Team, Keller Williams Texas | New Mexico | Memphis Region (2019)

D Magazine Best Real Estate Agent & Top Producer (2018-2023)

Keller Williams Quadruple Platinum Producer (2020-2022)

Keller Williams Triple Platinum Producer (2018-2019)

Keller Williams Rookie of the Year (2017)

Keller Williams Double Gold GCI Club (2017)

Chosen member of the Keller Williams Associate Leadership Council

Carrollton's Best Realtor

Best of Denton County Listing Agent

North DFW Real Producers Top 500 Real Estate Agent

Local Profile Top Realtor in Collin County

Frisco Style Top Real Estate Agent

NextDoor Neighborhood Favorite

RealTRENDS America's Best Real Estate Professional

### STATS

Top 1% of Realtors in NTREIS

2022 - 40 units, \$17m volume

2021 - 44 units, \$16m volume

2020 - 38 units, \$13m volume

2019 - 39 units, \$11m volume

2018 - 36 units, \$11m volume

2017 - 36 units, \$11m volume

# HOMEBUYING PROCESS: PHASE 1





# HOMEBUYING PROCESS: PHASE 1





# FIND THE RIGHT AGENT

Buying a home is one of the most significant purchases most people make in their lifetime. It is essential to have an experienced agent in your corner, always looking out for your best interest. A buyer agent's fiduciary responsibility is to represent the buyer and to ensure that they are protected throughout the process.

After all, a seller has someone in their corner. A listing agent has an allegiance to the seller. Their goal is to get the seller top dollar for their home. There is incredible value in having someone working for YOUR best interests when buying a home.



## Why you need a Realtor

### GETTING YOU IN THE DOOR

We will narrow down the homes that fit your unique wants and needs and get you in the door! I look at dozens of homes every week, and I can help you identify potential problems within a home.

### HANDLING CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

When repairs or changes in price need to be made, I will be your guide and handle requesting any repairs or changes in price to the sellers.

### STAYING ON TOP OF THE PAPERWORK

Buying a home involves many types of documentation. Our team has the experience and knowledge to navigate real estate contracts. Ensuring that nothing is overlooked and that you truly understand what a document covers before ever signing on the dotted line.

### ON YOUR SIDE

A buyer's agent will represent your best interests. With a pulse on the local market and a sound understanding of how various amenities effect the value of a home, we will make sure we submit a competitive offer on the right house for you.

### NEIGHBORHOOD EXPERT

I work daily in neighborhoods with inspectors, contractors, and negotiating with sellers. I have the market knowledge you need to get you the home of your dreams at the best price! Understanding the local real estate market is essential when it comes time to make an offer on a house.

### PROBLEM SOLVER

I will work hard to protect all of your interests and take on any issues that may arise throughout the entire process. I work tirelessly to make sure buying a home is a fun and stress-free process.

### AFFORDABILITY

The seller typically pays the commission for both the seller's agent and the buyer's agent.

# APPLICATION FOR **LOAN PRE-APPROVAL**

## HOW MUCH HOUSE CAN YOU AFFORD?

Mortgage lenders are experts when it come to how much home you can afford. A lender will work with you to get a loan that meets your needs. Some buyers are concerned with keeping their monthly payments as low as possible, others want to make sure that their monthly payments never increase.

**Conventional Mortgage** This is the most commonly used type and usually has the best rates. You'll typically need at least 5% for a down payment and good credit. Conventional loans are typically for 15 or 30 years or "interest only" where you are not paying any principal in your payment.

**FHA Mortgage** Think of as the first time home loan program but actually available to anyone. The minimum down payment is only 3.5% and is more forgiving of lower credit scores. The interest rates are not as attractive as conventional loans, but qualifying for the loan isn't as tough either.

**VA Loan** Zero down payment loan, but you must be a veteran.

**USDA Rural Housing Loan** USDA Mortgage Loans can only be used in designated areas & towns, but their definition of "rural" may be more flexible than you think so be sure to check with your realtor and lender.

**Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM)** These have rates that start out lower than the current rates, but can change after one, two, or five years – usually upward!

**Mortgage Insurance** Alright, this isn't a mortgage type, but you need to know about it! If you put less than 20% down on a home, mortgage insurance or PMI, protects your lender in case you quit making payments. The cost varies by type of loan so ask your lender about it when reviewing options. Remember, once you believe you have at least 20% equity, you should contact your lender to find out about getting rid of PMI.

**Down Payment Assistance Programs** Be sure to ask your lender if you qualify for one of the many programs that offer FREE money to help you get into a home.

*get* **PRE-  
APPROVED:**

Being pre-approved, unlike being pre-qualified, means you've actually been approved by a lender for a specific loan amount. You will need to provide documented financial information (income, statements, assets, debt & credit reports etc.) to be reviewed and verified by the lender.



# MY LENDER RECOMMENDATIONS



Shervin Razmzan | NMLS #621519

*Senior Loan Officer*

CORE Mortgage

Cell: 469-878-4747

Office: 469-857-7212

shervraz@coremortgagepros.com

MaryAnn Comparin Jones | NMLS #216842

*Senior Loan Officer*

Fairway Mortgage

Office: 817-812-2284

Cell: 817-729-0036

maryannc@fairwaymc.com

Shane Campbell | NMLS #1211817

*Branch Manager*

Mortgage Financial Services

Cell: 972-754-8957

Office: 817-930-1397

scampbell@mfsus.com

Dominic Troilio | NMLS #2021948

*Production Partner*

Team Troilio | Benchmark Mortgage

Cell: 916-996-4907

dominic@teamtroilio.com



*Lender's*

## 10 COMMANDMENTS

- I. Thou shalt not change jobs, become self-employed or quit your job.
- II. Thou shalt not buy a car, truck or van (or you may be living in it!)
- III. Thou shalt not use charge cards excessively or let your accounts fall behind.
- IIIV. Thou shalt not spend money you have set aside for closing.
- V. Thou shalt not omit debts or liabilities from your loan application.
- VI. Thou shalt not buy furniture.
- VII. Thou shalt not originate any inquiries into your credit.
- VIII. Thou shalt not make large deposits without first checking with your loan officer.
- IX. Thou shalt not change bank accounts.
- X. Thou shalt not co-sign a loan for anyone.



## SET UP A **SEARCH** + EMAIL ALERTS

### Your Dream Home...



Maybe you're into live music or occasional fun nights out on the town. Perhaps you're super civic-minded and like to participate in activities that enhance and boost communities. or prefer the quiet solitude of the country. Check out each city's website and community social media pages to discover what activities it offers, school district ratings, and to get a feel for what goes on in the area year round.

You may think you know exactly what you're looking for but it helps to come up with a list of the location, size and features of your dream home before you start looking at properties.



When setting your monthly housing budget, it's a smart move to include every potential expense into your final equation, not just the sale price and mortgage. Property taxes, insurance premiums, utility bills, and other recurring costs can fluctuate considerably between houses, so make sure you know what to expect.



What features will make your new house feel like HOME? Do you want a fireplace to snuggle up by during cold winters, or a pool to cool off in those hot summer days? If you like to entertain, do you need a large kitchen island or a beautiful dining room? Make a list of the features you can't live without.



House size is more than just how many bedrooms and bathrooms you'd like to have. Be sure to consider the how much time and expense do you want to devote to keeping the house clean? How much storage space will you need? Will the number of family members living in this home be getting significantly bigger or smaller?

complete YOUR WISH  
LIST HERE:



# Darby's BUYER RULES

- ☑ Open Houses: Go, but give them my name!
- ☑ New Construction: I will go with you to the model home the first time! The sales agents can be pushy. Be aware!
- ☑ **DO NOT CALL SIGNS:** If you need more info on any house, just email me. If you see a sign, but can't find the house online it is likely under contract. I can check it.
- ☑ If you see a For Sale By Owner, I can help with that too!
- ☑ Most showing appointments require a 2 hour notice.
- ☑ Many homes have cameras recording audio and video. *Be mindful of anything you say and do inside any home we view.*
- ☑ Drive-bys of listings and neighborhoods are always a good idea.
- ☑ **Do not** view homes outside of your price range (online or in person). There's no reason to torture yourself.
- ☑ Getting pre-approved before seeing homes in person is non-negotiable. Certain misery will follow if you are not pre-approved and start shopping for a home - see previous rule!





## VIEW AVAILABLE PROPERTIES

Time to start shopping! You will begin receiving emails about new listings and open houses each week so you will know immediately when homes that fit your criteria hit the market. We will take notes on all the homes we visit. It can be hard to remember all the details of each home, so take pictures or videos to help you remember each home and review the notes you have written.

## MAKE AN OFFER

### WHEN TO MAKE AN OFFER:

So you have found THE house! Congrats! In today's market, it is important to consult your agent on the timing of when to make an offer because it varies.

### HOW MUCH TO OFFER:

We will sit down and look at recent sales and current buyer activity in the area, as well as the value of the property in its present condition. Putting all this information together, we will determine the price that you would like to offer.

### REVIEW OFFER SUGGESTIONS

Based on the current situation with the home you are interested in, we will send over a list of offer suggestions for you to review before drafting your offer. These recommendations are based on market norms and the specific circumstances surrounding the property you are interested in making an offer to purchase.



*Congratulations!* Your offer is accepted! Now what?...

Per the contract, we have three days to deliver your earnest money and option fee to the title company. This is extremely important to ensure we have an option period. These funds need to come from your own bank account so we will be able to provide proof to your lender that the funds were removed for this purpose at a later time.



## OPTION PERIOD

### ORDER AN INSPECTION

During the option period, we will schedule an inspection with a reputable home inspector to do a thorough inspection of the home. Once this is complete, the inspector will provide us with a detailed report of their findings. Our team will review the report and send over recommendations. You can take the issues as-is or request that the seller address some or all of the findings. We will be mindful and reasonable on smaller items while being very cautious and vigilant of potentially significant issues, and provide recommendations for what to request based on our experience and market trends.

## HOME INSPECTOR RECOMMENDATIONS

### NOTABLE INSPECTIONS

*Ryan Beattie*

Cell: 214-566-1900 (Call or Text)

[ryan@notableinspections.com](mailto:ryan@notableinspections.com)

[www.notableinspections.com](http://www.notableinspections.com)

### TRU INSPECTION SERVICE

*Brandon Rudolph*

Cell: 469-441-3453

[brandon@truinspectionsservices.com](mailto:brandon@truinspectionsservices.com)

[www.truinspectionsservices.com](http://www.truinspectionsservices.com)

### BURGESS INSPECTION GROUP

972-690-3838

[info@burgess-inc.com](mailto:info@burgess-inc.com)

[www.burgessinspection.com](http://www.burgessinspection.com)

Typical cost for home inspections are dependent on the size of the home, but can range from \$350+ and is paid to the inspector at the completion of the inspection by credit card or personal check. You can expect your home inspection to take between 2 - 3 hours.



### NEGOTIATE REPAIRS & FINALIZE REPAIR AMENDMENT

Issues typically arise after the home inspection, and those issues tend to result in another round of negotiations for credits or fixes.

1. Ask for credit for the work that needs to be done. Likely, the last thing the seller wants to do is repair work.

2. Think "big picture" and don't sweat the small stuff. A tile that needs some caulking or a leaky faucet can easily be fixed. Repairs are still up for negotiation and perhaps a small credit would help with closing costs.

3. Keep your poker face. The listing agent will be present during inspections and revealing your comfort level with the home could come back to haunt you in further discussions or negotiations.

All repairs are agreed to and signed by both parties on an amendment to the contract. Repairs are to be completed by the seller prior to closing with proof of completion in the form of receipts or other documentation. We recommend that you verify all receipts.





# HOMEBUYING PROCESS: PHASE 2





# WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE SALE OF A HOUSE?

Contracts commonly used in Texas home sales state that the house, fixtures, improvements, and accessories are part of the sale. Here are examples of what stays and goes.

## GOES WITH THE *Seller*

Table lamp  
Television  
Potted plants  
Bed  
Couch  
Dining room table  
Area rugs  
Hammock  
Patio grill\*  
Bookcase\*  
Washer and dryer\*  
Paintings and decor

If you want to include items from the sale- a dining room chandelier, for example- the contract includes a place where we can help you properly document your intent.

## STAYS WITH THE *Property*

Stove  
Wall-to-wall carpeting  
Ceiling fan  
Television wall mount  
Chandelier  
Window shutter  
Smoke detectors  
Curtains/ drapes and rods  
Blinds and window shades  
Garage door opener  
Shrubbery and landscaping  
Window air-conditioning unit

You can request items that aren't included in the contract stay behind. We can use a different form called a *Non-Realty Item Addendum* to put your request in writing.

## \**Exceptions*

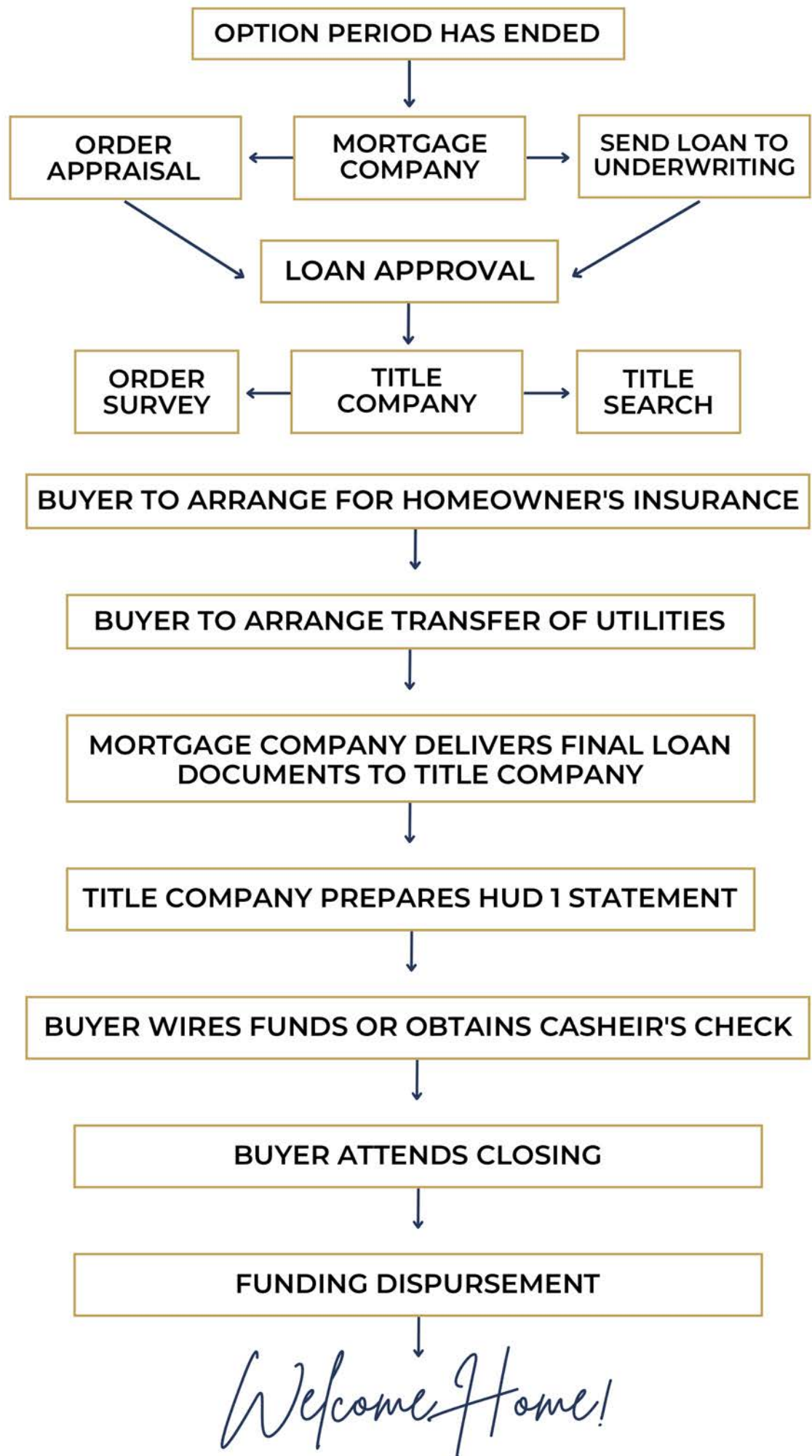
Certain items stay or go depending on whether they're permanently installed or built-in. Freestanding clothes washers and dryers go with the seller, but built-in units would likely stay. A grill on wheels on the patio leaves, but one that is encased in stone as part of an outdoor kitchen stays put.

Three factors determine if something is permanently installed and built-in:

- How is the item attached? Will the property be damaged by its removal?
- Is the item customized or standard for the property?
- Was the installation intended to be permanent or temporary?



# HOMEBUYING PROCESS: PHASE 2





# ABOUT THE APPRAISAL PROCESS

Once you are under contract, your lender will send out an appraiser to make sure the purchase price is in line with the property value.

## **APPRAISALS HELP GUIDE MORTGAGE TERMS**

The appraisal value of a home is an important factor in the loan underwriting process. Although lenders may use the sale price to determine the amount of the mortgage they will offer, they generally only do so when the property is sold for less than the appraisal amount. Also, the loan-to-value ratio is based on the appraised value and helps lenders figure out how much money may be borrowed to purchase the property and under what terms. If the LTV is high, the lender is more likely to require the borrower to purchase private mortgage insurance.

## **APPRAISED VALUE IS NOT A CONCRETE NUMBER**

Appraisals provide a professional opinion of value, but they aren't an exact science. Appraisals may differ quite a bit depending on when they're done and who's doing them. Also, changes in market conditions can dramatically alter appraised value.

## **APPRAISED VALUE DOESN'T REPRESENT THE WHOLE PICTURE OF HOME PRICES**

There are special considerations that appraised value doesn't take into account, such as the need to sell rapidly.

## **APPRAISERS USE DATA FROM THE RECENT PAST**

Appraisals are often considered somewhat backward looking, because they use sold data from comparable properties (often nicknamed "comps") to help come up with a reasonable price.

## **OTHER USES FOR THE APPRAISED VALUE**

For buying purposes, appraisals are usually used to determine market value or factor into the pricing equations. But other appraisals are used to determine insurance value, replacement value, and assessed value for property tax purposes.



# A WORD ABOUT HOME INSURANCE



Buyers should begin the process of researching homeowner's insurance policies once they are out of their option period. The cost and details of the insurance policy for the home is required by the lender prior to underwriting. When contacting insurance companies, you will need to know the square footage, number of bathrooms, roof and exterior wall materials, age and condition of the home, etc. Below is a list of insurance agents we recommend.

Jeff Van Matre  
Jeff Van Matre Insurance Agency  
469-691-2866  
[jeff@jvminsurance.com](mailto:jeff@jvminsurance.com)  
[www.jvminsurance.com](http://www.jvminsurance.com)

Hailey Pescatore  
Royalty Insurance  
972-801-9188  
[Hailey@royaltyinsurance.com](mailto:Hailey@royaltyinsurance.com)  
[www.royaltyinsurance.com](http://www.royaltyinsurance.com)

Sally McAlvain  
Goosehead Insurance  
972-427-6971  
[sally.mcalvain@goosehead.com](mailto:sally.mcalvain@goosehead.com)  
[www.goosehead.com](http://www.goosehead.com)



# closing day

## CLOSING DAY

You will receive the keys to your home once all parties have signed the paperwork and the transaction is funded.

## CLOSING DISCLOSURE

Lenders are required to provide you with a closing disclosure, at least three days before closing. This will show you what your final loan terms and closing costs will be. You will have three days to review the statement. This is done to ensure that there are no surprises at the closing table. If there is a significant discrepancy between the loan estimate and the closing disclosure, we must notify your lender and title company immediately.

## FINAL WALK THROUGH

We will do a final walk through the home within 24 hours of closing to check the property's condition. This final inspection takes about an hour. We will conduct a visual inspection of any repair work that the seller agreed to make has been done.

## CLOSING TABLE

You will be signing lots of paper work so get your writing hand warmed up! Some of the papers you will be signing include: the deed of trust, promissory note, and other documents.

## CLOSING COSTS

Closing costs can vary depending on your home's purchase price and where you are located. You can generally expect your closing costs to be around 3% to 4% of the home's sales price. These closing costs can sometimes be shared with the seller.

## BRING TO CLOSING

- Government-issued photo ID
- Funds to cover your final cash to close per the closing disclosure

## UPON FUNDING, RECEIVE YOUR KEYS

Congratulations! It was a lot of hard work but you are now officially home owners!! Time to throw a party and get to know your new neighbors!