QC HOME ADVISORS
CHARLOTTE REAL ESTATE

Home *Buyer's* Guide

A clear, step by step walk through finding and buying your home in Greater Charlotte.

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BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOMESERVICES | CAROLINAS REALTY

WELCOME

A note before you *begin*.

Buying a home is one of the larger financial and personal decisions you will make. My goal is to make the process clear and steady, from the first conversation through closing. Whether this is your first purchase, a move up for more space, or a move down into something that fits your life now, the steps are the same. What changes is the strategy.

Read it start to finish, or jump to the step you are in. When you are ready for specifics on a neighborhood or a particular home, that is a conversation, and I am glad to have it.

Tim Petrinec
REALTOR® | BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOMESERVICES CAROLINAS REALTY

1	2	3	4
Get pre-approved	Pick your neighborhoods	Tour with a plan	Make a strong offer

THE SEVEN STEPS

ALSO INSIDE

LOCAL PROCESS

How Buying Works in North Carolina

If you are moving from another state, a few things here will look unfamiliar. North Carolina handles offers and closings differently from much of the country. Here is what to expect, so nothing catches you off guard.

THE DUE DILIGENCE FEE

When you go under contract, you typically pay the seller a due diligence fee. It is negotiated, generally non-refundable, and buys you a set window to investigate the home. If you close, it is credited toward your purchase.

EARNEST MONEY

Separately, you deposit earnest money, held in escrow. During the due diligence period you can terminate for any reason and have it returned. After that period ends, it is generally at risk.

THE DUE DILIGENCE PERIOD

This negotiated window is when you inspect, appraise, secure financing, and review documents. It is also your strongest point of leverage, which later steps cover in detail.

CLOSING IS HANDLED BY AN ATTORNEY

North Carolina is an attorney-closing state. A real estate attorney handles the title search, prepares the documents, and conducts closing, rather than a title or escrow company. Ownership transfers once the deed is recorded with the county.

> A TIP FROM TIM
>
> *"The fee amount and the length of the due diligence period are all negotiable. We set them to fit your position on each specific home, and your attorney and lender confirm the specifics."*

STEP ONE

Get Financially Prepared

— PRE-APPROVAL MATTERS

Know your budget and get a letter of pre-approval before you start touring homes. It tells you what is realistic and shows sellers you are serious.

— FINANCING OPTIONS

Conventional, FHA, VA, and USDA each fit a different profile. The next page breaks down the credit and ratios lenders look at.

— HIDDEN COSTS TO PLAN FOR

Taxes, insurance, HOA fees, utilities, and ongoing maintenance all factor into your true monthly cost, not just the mortgage payment.

— BUDGET COMFORTABLY

Aim for a monthly payment that still leaves room for the life you want to live.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Contact a lender for pre-approval
- [ ] Gather tax returns, bank statements, and pay stubs
- [ ] Choose a mortgage type and calculate your monthly budget
- [ ] Review total cost including taxes, insurance, HOA, and maintenance

A TIP FROM TIM

"Even if you qualify for a certain number, consider what keeps your lifestyle comfortable. Don't max out your limit."

QUALIFYING

Understanding Your Numbers

Two numbers drive what you qualify for: your credit score and your debt-to-income ratio. These are general guidelines. Your lender confirms what applies to you.

CREDIT SCORE BY LOAN TYPE

LOAN TYPE	TYPICAL MINIMUM	BEST RATES
Conventional	620	740+
FHA	580 with 3.5% down	620+
VA	620 (lender set)	700+
USDA	640	680+

DEBT-TO-INCOME (DTI)

DTI is your monthly debt payments divided by your gross monthly income. Aim for 36 percent or lower for the best terms. Many loans allow more, sometimes into the 40s, with strong credit or reserves.

DOWN PAYMENT

Down payments commonly range from 3 percent on some conventional loans and 3.5 percent on FHA, up to 20 percent to avoid private mortgage insurance. More down means a lower payment, less down means more cash kept in reserve.

> **FIRST-TIME BUYER?**
>
> *"North Carolina and the City of Charlotte run assistance programs, such as NC Home Advantage and House Charlotte, with income limits. If a first purchase is in the picture, ask me which ones fit and I'll connect you."*

PLAN AHEAD

What It Costs, and When

Beyond the down payment, costs come due at different stages. Buyer closing costs in North Carolina commonly run about 2 to 5 percent of the purchase price. Figures vary, and your lender and attorney provide exact numbers.

AT THE OFFER

Due diligence fee	Paid to the seller, generally non-refundable, credited to you at closing
Earnest money	Held in escrow, refundable if you terminate during due diligence

DURING DUE DILIGENCE

Inspections	A general inspection plus any specialized checks the home calls for
Appraisal	Ordered by your lender to confirm value

AT CLOSING

Down payment	Your equity in the home, set by your loan
Lender & attorney fees	Origination, settlement, and title search
Title insurance	Lender's policy is typically buyer-paid; owner's policy is negotiable
Recording & prepaids	Deed recording, plus prepaid taxes and insurance into escrow

Note: North Carolina has no documentary stamp or intangibles tax for buyers, and the deed excise tax is customarily the seller's cost.

> A TIP FROM TIM
>
> *"We map these to your purchase early, so you always know what is due and when. No scrambling at the closing table."*

STEP TWO

Know Your Local Market

— NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILES

Median price, typical home style, what residents value, and the tradeoffs worth knowing before you commit. Two neighborhoods a mile apart can feel like different cities.

— MARKET TRENDS

Recent sales, price per square foot, and days on market tell you how fast and how competitive an area really is right now.

— BUYER'S MARKET OR SELLER'S MARKET

The balance of supply and demand changes your strategy. We read it together before you write an offer, not after.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Identify two or three neighborhoods that fit your life and budget
- [ ] Track recent sales and pricing trends in those areas
- [ ] Separate your must-haves from your nice-to-haves

A TIP FROM TIM

"The right neighborhood is the one that still fits you in five years, not just on move-in day."

STEP THREE

Touring Homes Like a Pro

— TOUR WITH INTENT

Take notes and photos in every home. They blur together quickly once you have seen a few, and the details are what you will compare later.

— COSMETIC VERSUS STRUCTURAL

Learn the difference between what is easy to change and what is expensive to fix. Paint and fixtures are simple. Foundations and roofs are not.

— LOOK PAST THE STAGING

A well-staged home is doing its job. Focus on the bones, the systems, and the layout, not the furniture. The next page covers the specific red flags worth a closer look.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Bring a notebook or app to capture notes on each home
- [ ] Ask about HOA, utilities, taxes, systems, and recent updates
- [ ] Compare each home against current market comps

A TIP FROM TIM

"Tour at least three to five homes before deciding. Don't fall for the first house before you have a frame of reference."

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Red Flags on a Showing

Most of these are cheap to check and expensive to miss. None is necessarily a dealbreaker, but each is worth a closer look and may become a negotiating point.

— SLOPING OR UNEVEN FLOORS

Charlotte sits on Piedmont clay soil that expands and contracts with moisture, which can shift a foundation over time. Set a marble or a ball on the floor in a few rooms. Watch for zigzag cracks above doorframes.

— FOGGED OR FAILED WINDOWS

Condensation trapped between double panes means the seal has failed and efficiency is gone. Check sun-facing windows first, and use a replacement quote as leverage.

— HEAVY AIR FRESHENERS

A home that smells strongly of candles or plug-ins may be masking a musty odor. Open cabinets and smell under sinks, in closets, and near the HVAC. If something is off, ask for a mold inspection.

— CLUSTERS OF FOR-SALE SIGNS

Several homes for sale on one street can signal rising HOA fees, a planned development nearby, or another issue. It is worth asking why.

> **A TIP FROM TIM**
>
> *"I keep a marble in my bag for exactly this. The cheap checks on a showing are what save you from the expensive surprises later."*

STEP FOUR

Making a Competitive Offer

OFFER STRATEGY

We use your pre-approval, recent comps, and local trends to structure an offer that is strong and still smart for you.

NEGOTIATION

Flexibility on closing timeline or minor repairs can earn goodwill where it costs you little. That preserves your leverage for the terms that matter most to you.

WAYS TO STRENGTHEN AN OFFER

- **Escalation clause.** Auto-raises your bid to a set cap if others compete.
- **A stronger due diligence fee.** Signals real commitment to the seller.
- **Appraisal gap coverage.** Commit to cover a shortfall up to a limit.
- **Flexible possession.** Give the seller the timeline they need.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Review comparable sales together
- [ ] Decide contingencies, due diligence terms, and earnest money
- [ ] Submit the offer and monitor the response

A TIP FROM TIM

"Winning a competitive offer is rarely about the highest number. It's about the cleanest, most certain offer for the seller."

STEP FIVE

The Due Diligence Phase

Once your offer is accepted, the home is under contract, but the process is just beginning. This is one of the most important phases of the entire purchase.

HOME INSPECTION, RIGHT AWAY

Hire a licensed inspector immediately. The findings become your basis to request repairs, credits, or a price adjustment. The next page covers which inspections matter most in Charlotte.

THE APPRAISAL

Your lender orders an appraisal to confirm the home's value matches the loan. If it comes in low, we have options.

REVIEW THE DOCUMENTS

HOA bylaws, neighborhood restrictions, the survey, and property disclosures. We confirm there are no liens, encroachments, or title problems.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Schedule the inspection within 48 hours of acceptance
- [ ] Get quotes for any major issues from trusted contractors
- [ ] Review the appraisal with your agent and lender
- [ ] Hold off on large purchases and new credit until closing

A TIP FROM TIM

"We schedule inspections immediately so we have time to act on what we find. Speed here is leverage."

LOCAL CONDITIONS

Charlotte Inspections Worth Considering

A general inspection is the baseline. Charlotte's climate, soil, and housing stock make a few specialized checks worth the modest cost. Ranges below are typical estimates.

General home inspection $350 to $550
Roof to foundation, with attention to storm damage, drainage, and HVAC age in the humid climate.

Termite and wood-destroying organisms $75 to $150
Required for FHA and VA loans, and smart everywhere. Warm, humid summers favor termites, especially in crawl spaces.

Radon test $100 to $200
North Carolina soil has naturally occurring radon in places. A simple test is worth it for peace of mind.

Sewer scope $150 to $300
For older homes, a camera finds cracks or tree-root intrusion before they become a five-figure repair.

Foundation inspection $400 to $700
If floors slope or you see significant cracks, Piedmont clay soil makes this worth confirming.

Septic or pool varies
A septic inspection is essential for rural properties. A pool inspection checks the pump, filter, and structure.

> A TIP FROM TIM
>
> *"We match inspections to the home. A 1950s bungalow and a new build need different eyes, and ordering the right ones early keeps our negotiating window open."*

STEP FIVE, CONTINUED

Due Diligence as Negotiation

This window is where most of the second round of negotiation happens. What inspections and the appraisal reveal becomes the basis to improve your position before you are fully committed.

— ASK FOR CREDITS, NOT REPAIRS

You can ask the seller to make repairs, but a closing-cost credit is often cleaner. You control who does the work and to what standard, and the sale stays on schedule.

— FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS

Center requests on safety, structure, and systems: electrical, foundation, roof, HVAC, major plumbing. Let cosmetic items go. Written contractor quotes make a request hard to dismiss.

— WHEN THE APPRAISAL COMES IN LOW

Common paths are: the seller lowers the price, you cover the gap, or you split the difference. We choose based on the home, the market, and your position.

> A TIP FROM TIM
>
> *"This is your biggest point of leverage in the whole purchase. We ask for what matters, with quotes to back it, and let the small stuff go so the deal stays strong."*

STEP SIX

The Final Walkthrough

Do your walkthrough within 24 hours of closing to confirm everything is in order before you sign.

— VERIFY THE REPAIRS

Bring your inspection report and repair addendum. Confirm every agreed-upon repair is complete and done properly.

— TEST WHAT PAPER CAN'T SHOW YOU

Garage door openers, alarm codes, outlets, appliances, and windows. Open and close everything that opens and closes.

— CONFIRM THE HOME IS CLEAN AND CLEAR

Included items still in place, nothing missing or newly damaged, and free of the seller's belongings unless you agreed otherwise.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Walk the interior and exterior with fresh eyes
- [ ] Collect all keys, openers, and codes
- [ ] Bring a phone charger to test outlets
- [ ] Flag anything incomplete before you sign

A TIP FROM TIM

"If something is missing or unfinished, we raise it before closing, not after. That's when we still have leverage to get it resolved."

STEP SEVEN

Closing the Deal

CLOSING DAY

Bring your ID and your cash-to-close by wire or cashier's check. You will review and sign the closing disclosure, the promissory note, and the mortgage with the attorney's office.

WHEN THE HOME BECOMES YOURS

Once funded, the deed is recorded with the county and ownership transfers to you. Scheduling closing early in the day gives the recording the best chance to complete that same day.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Review the closing disclosure in advance
- [ ] Confirm your cash-to-close amount and wire instructions
- [ ] Sign paperwork and collect keys
- [ ] Confirm utilities and insurance are active

A TIP FROM TIM

"Always confirm wire instructions by phone with a known number before sending funds. Wire fraud is real, and a 60-second call prevents it."

FROM OFFER TO KEYS

The Under-Contract Timeline

Once your offer is accepted, most purchases close in about 30 to 45 days. Here is the path, and where the important deadlines fall.

DAY 0
Offer accepted
You go under contract. The due diligence fee is paid and earnest money is deposited.

WEEK 1
Inspections
Schedule immediately. Findings become the basis for any repair or credit requests.

WEEK 1 TO 2
Negotiate findings
Request repairs, a credit, or a price adjustment based on what inspections reveal.

WEEK 2
Appraisal
Your lender orders it to confirm value. We address any gap if it comes in low.

WEEK 2 TO 4
Loan underwriting
Your file moves toward final approval. Avoid new credit and large purchases.

NEGOTIATED DEADLINE
Due diligence ends
The window to investigate closes. After this, earnest money is generally at risk.

24 HOURS OUT
Final walkthrough
Confirm repairs are done and the home is in the expected condition.

DAY 30 TO 45
Closing and recording
Sign at the attorney's office. Ownership transfers when the deed records. You get the keys.

Timeline is typical and varies by contract, financing, and property.

WHEN YOU ALSO HAVE A HOME TO SELL

Buying While You Sell

Most move-up buyers have a home to sell, and the timing is the hard part. The goal is to avoid owning two homes at once, or none. There are a few ways to sequence it.

SELL FIRST, THEN BUY

The strongest buying position, since your offer carries no home-sale contingency. You may need short-term housing or a rent-back from your buyer to bridge the gap.

BUY FIRST, THEN SELL

The most convenient, but it can mean carrying two payments for a stretch. It works best with the reserves or financing to absorb the overlap.

COORDINATE BOTH CLOSINGS

We line the two transactions up to close near each other, with possession terms negotiated on each side. Having one advisor on both ends keeps it coordinated.

CONTINGENCIES AND FINANCING

A home-sale contingency protects you but weakens your offer in a competitive market. Bridge financing or a line of credit can give you room to buy before you sell. Your lender weighs the options with you.

> A TIP FROM TIM
>
> *"The first decision is which transaction leads. We make that call together, based on your finances and how competitive the homes you want really are."*

WELCOME HOME

After You Close

SET UP YOUR ESSENTIALS

- **Utilities.** Duke Energy for electric, Piedmont Natural Gas where applicable, Charlotte Water for water and sewer in the city, and an internet provider such as Spectrum or AT&T.
- **Locks and codes.** Re-key or replace locks and reset garage and alarm codes on day one.
- **Address changes.** Update your license, USPS, banks, and subscriptions.

INSURANCE TO PLAN FOR

- **Homeowners insurance** is required if you are financing. Roof age and wind-mitigation features can lower your premium.
- **Flood insurance** is separate and only needed in certain areas. Check your address on the FEMA Flood Map Service Center, since some lower-lying parcels near creeks fall in a flood zone.

PROTECT THE INVESTMENT

Service the HVAC twice a year, keep gutters clear, and check the roof after storms. A small maintenance habit prevents the large repair. If you qualify by age, disability, or veteran status, ask the county about property tax relief programs.

> A TIP FROM TIM
>
> *"I stay a resource after closing. Need a contractor, a handyman, or a second opinion down the road? Reach out anytime."*

Flood zones and tax-relief eligibility should be verified with FEMA and the county.

SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

A Closer Look at Schools

For many families, schools are among the most important factors in choosing a home, and school assignment can shape both daily life and long-term value. Knowing how assignment works for a specific address helps you decide with confidence.

WHAT TO LOOK INTO

- Which schools serve which neighborhoods, and how assignment is determined
- Commute and accessibility from home to school
- Enrollment timelines and any application, magnet, or choice deadlines

HOW I CAN HELP

"Boundaries and assignments change, so I pull current, source-based school information for any address you're considering. Want a personalized look for the homes on your list? Let's set up a short call."

FROM A LOCAL EXPERT

Bonus Tips & Next Steps

WHAT LOCAL KNOWLEDGE ADDS

- **Neighborhood knowledge.** Upcoming developments, community character, and amenities a listing won't tell you.
- **A trusted network.** Inspectors, contractors, lenders, and movers I work with regularly and can introduce you to.
- **Avoiding common mistakes.** Don't skip inspections, overextend your budget, or rush a decision under pressure.

YOUR NEXT STEPS

- **A buyer consultation.** A short conversation to map available homes in Greater Charlotte that fit your budget and must-haves.
- **Market updates.** New listings and local insight as they come, sent straight to you.

> A TIP FROM TIM
>
> *"Even if you're early, getting pre-approved and knowing your market puts you ahead of most buyers before you ever tour a home."*

QUICK REFERENCE

Terms Worth Knowing

- **Pre-approval**
  A lender's conditional commitment based on verified finances. Stronger than a pre-qualification estimate.
- **DTI**
  Debt-to-income ratio. Your monthly debt payments divided by gross monthly income.
- **PITI**
  Principal, interest, taxes, and insurance. The full monthly housing payment.
- **Comps**
  Recent sales of comparable homes, used to gauge value and price an offer.
- **Contingency**
  A condition that must be met for the contract to proceed, such as financing or appraisal.
- **Due diligence fee**
  A negotiated, generally non-refundable fee paid to the seller in NC for the right to investigate the home.
- **Due diligence period**
  The negotiated window to inspect, appraise, and finance, during which you can terminate and recover earnest money.
- **Earnest money**
  A good-faith deposit held in escrow. Refundable during due diligence, at risk after.
- **Escrow**
  Neutral third-party holding of funds or documents until conditions are met.
- **Appraisal**
  A licensed appraiser's opinion of market value, ordered by your lender to support the loan.
- **Appraisal gap**
  The shortfall when a home appraises below the agreed price. Covered, renegotiated, or split.
- **Escalation clause**
  An offer term that automatically raises your bid up to a set cap if competing offers come in.
- **Seller concession**
  An agreed amount the seller applies toward your closing costs, capped by loan type.
- **Closing disclosure**
  The final statement of your loan terms and closing costs, provided before closing.
- **Title insurance**
  Protection against defects in the property's ownership history.
- **PMI**
  Private mortgage insurance, often required with less than 20 percent down, removable as equity grows.

KEEP THIS HANDY

Your Home-Buying Checklist

The whole journey on one page. Print it, check off as you go, and bring your questions to our next conversation.

BEFORE YOU SHOP

- [ ] Get pre-approved with a lender
- [ ] Set a comfortable monthly budget
- [ ] Gather pay stubs, W-2s, returns, statements
- [ ] Check your credit and DTI

HOUSE HUNTING

- [ ] Choose two or three target neighborhoods
- [ ] Separate must-haves from nice-to-haves
- [ ] Tour three to five homes for perspective
- [ ] Watch for red flags on each showing

UNDER CONTRACT

- [ ] Pay due diligence fee and earnest money
- [ ] Schedule inspections within 48 hours
- [ ] Order Charlotte-specific inspections as needed
- [ ] Review the appraisal with agent and lender
- [ ] Negotiate repairs, credits, or price
- [ ] Avoid new credit and large purchases

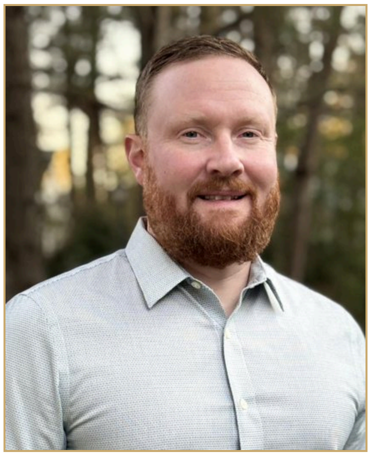
CLOSING AND AFTER

- [ ] Do the final walkthrough within 24 hours
- [ ] Review the closing disclosure in advance
- [ ] Confirm wire instructions by phone
- [ ] Sign, fund, record, and collect keys
- [ ] Set up utilities, insurance, and locks

ABOUT

Working *With Me*

Most people see a house. *Tim sees a financial decision.*



TIM PETRINEC, REALTOR®

That distinction shapes every conversation. When Tim works with a buyer, he is evaluating the neighborhood trajectory, the exit potential, and what the real cost of ownership looks like over time, not just whether the layout works. When he works with a seller, he is thinking about what buyers in the current market will actually pay, which improvements move the needle, and how to create the kind of early momentum that drives stronger offers.

Before real estate, Tim spent years at Edward Jones as a Financial Advisor, learning how to evaluate investments in terms of long-term value, risk, and return. He later built and led the Sales and Service division of a digital agency inside a medical device company. Those two experiences gave him a way of thinking about pricing that goes beyond what a typical market report shows. He understands it as strategy.

Since 2020, Tim has closed more than 200 transactions across the greater Charlotte region and nearby South Carolina communities. He also invests actively in real estate, with firsthand experience in property acquisitions, flips, long-term rentals, and short-term rentals. That experience changes how he evaluates every property he walks through.

His practice is built on a one-on-one model. Every client works directly with Tim, from the first conversation through closing. No handoffs, no team assistants handling the parts of the process that matter most. That is a deliberate choice, and it shapes everything about how he works.

Tim has called Charlotte home since 2007. Eighteen years of watching this city grow has given him a depth of knowledge about how its neighborhoods work, how they have changed, and what those changes mean for buyers and sellers making decisions today.

Outside of real estate, his favorite way to spend time is anything with his wife, stepson, their dog, and their friends. They love checking out different restaurants around Charlotte and exploring hiking trails around the region. On Sunday mornings, you can usually find them at Mecklenburg Community Church. In the fall, they enjoy getting their hopes up for a Buffalo Bills Super Bowl run. With family spread across Mexico, Indiana, New Jersey, and Buffalo, they treasure the time they get to visit.

Ready when *you are*.

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