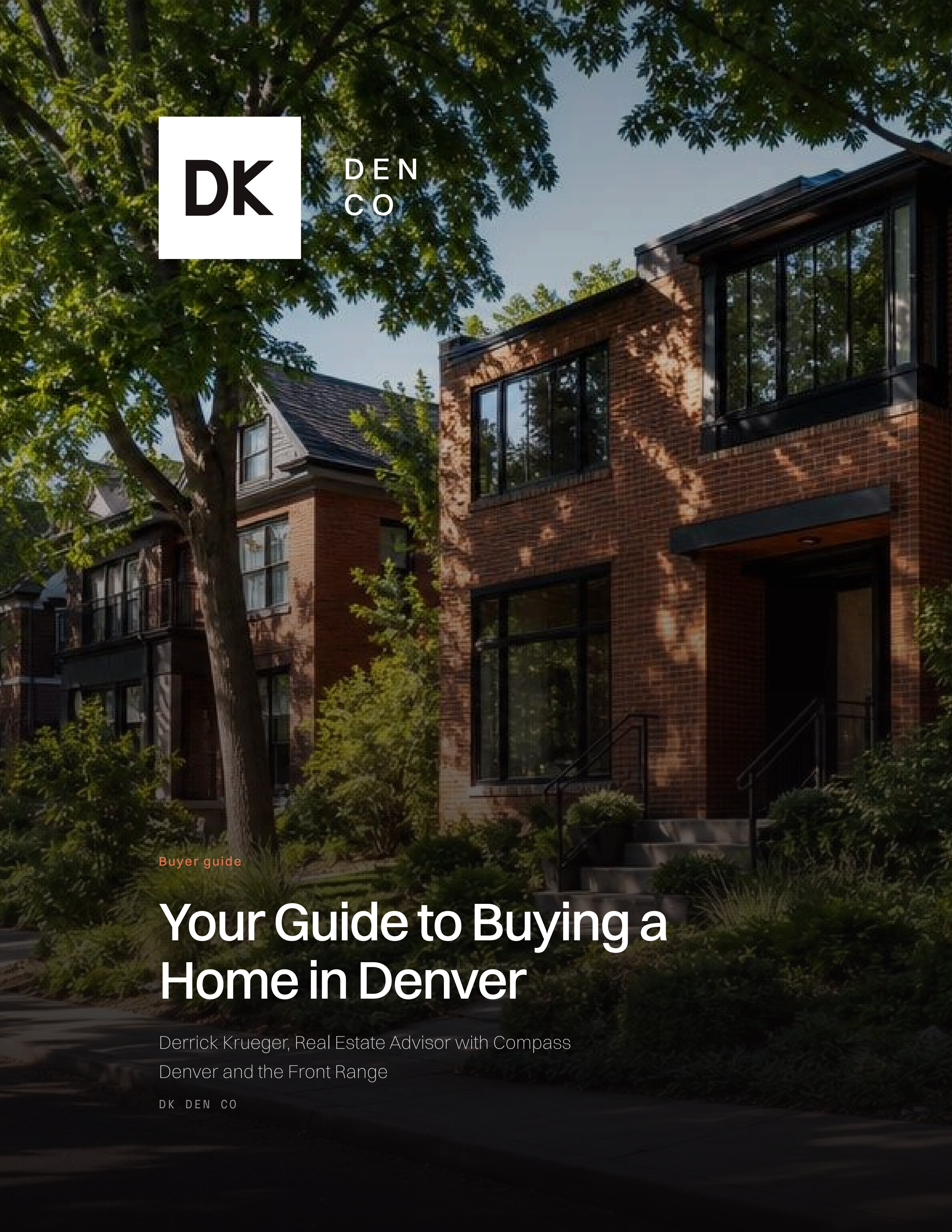

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Buyer guide

Your Guide to Buying a Home in Denver

Derrick Krueger, Real Estate Advisor with Compass
Denver and the Front Range

DK DEN CO

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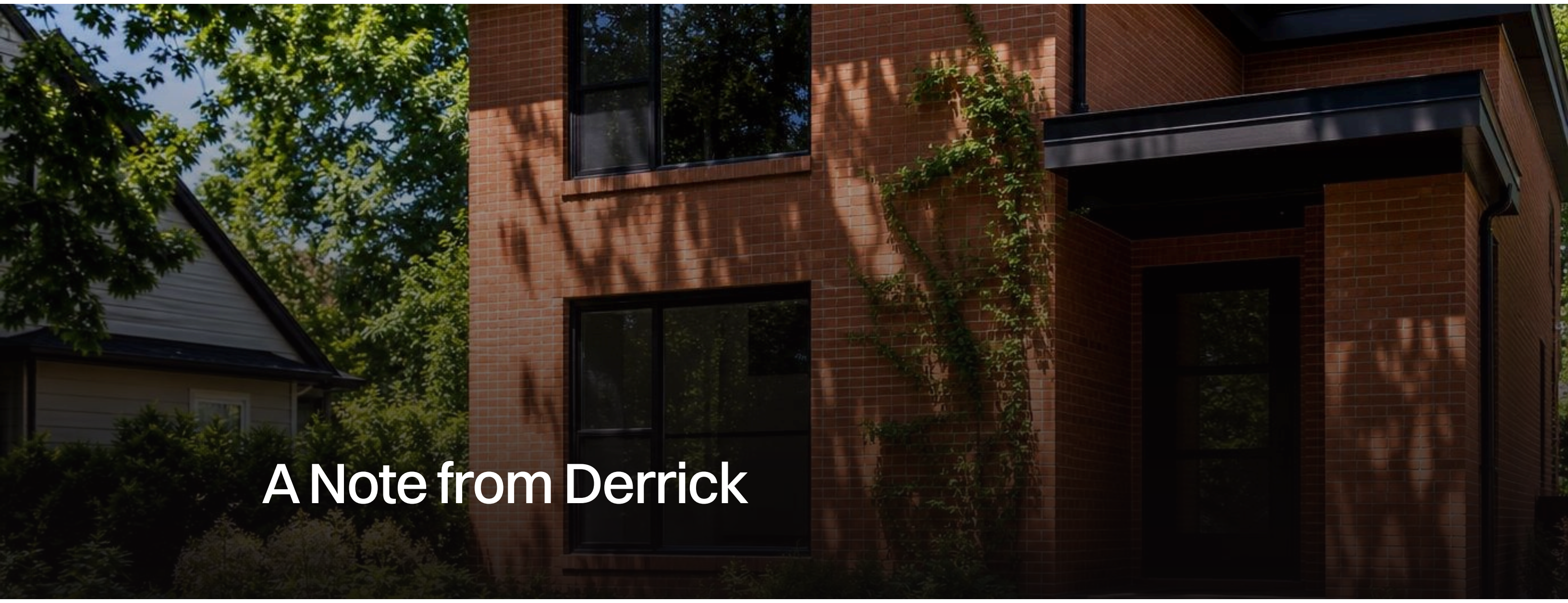

A Note from Derrick

I grew up in Butte, Montana. A copper mining town where people say what they mean, shake on it, and follow through. That is how I work here too, even though Denver moves faster and the numbers are bigger.

Buying a home is one of the most significant decisions you'll make. It shapes how you wake up in the morning, how you unwind at night, and how your life unfolds in the years between. It is worth more than a rushed process and a stack of paperwork.

I wrote this guide so you'd know exactly what to expect. How to prepare, what each phase looks like, and how we'll work together to find the right home for the life you're building.

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Part 1

Before You Start Looking

Understanding What You're Really Looking For

Before we walk a single listing, I want to understand how you actually live.

What does a typical Saturday morning look like for you? Do you cook or walk to a coffee shop? Do you work from home three days a week, or are you gone by seven? Is there a dog that needs a yard, a partner who needs a studio, a school run you want to keep short? Are you buying purely for yourself and your family, or does investment potential factor into the decision?

I ask because the answers shape which neighborhoods we look at, what property types make sense, and how we evaluate every home we walk through. Two people with the same budget can have completely different answers, and those answers lead to completely different homes.

I look at every house two ways: **how it feels and how it functions.** You want somewhere you are glad to walk into, that still works for you once the newness of moving in has worn off.

Getting Financially Ready

Getting your finances sorted early does more than qualify you for a loan. It means that when the right house comes up, you already know your number and can move on it.

Check Your Credit Early

Your credit score directly impacts the interest rate you'll qualify for. Even a modest improvement can save tens of thousands over the life of a loan. If your score needs some attention, that's perfectly fine. I would rather you spend a little longer getting ready than feel rushed into something you are not ready for.

Get pre-approved before you start looking

Pre-qualification is a rough estimate based on what you tell the lender. Pre-approval means the lender has actually looked at your income, savings, debts and credit, and confirmed what you can borrow. Those are different things, and sellers know the difference.

In Denver's market, a pre-approval letter is essential. It tells sellers you're a serious, capable buyer. It gives us a clear budget to work within. And it keeps you from falling for a house you cannot actually buy.

If you don't have a lender you trust yet, I'll connect you with people I do. Good people who do good work.

The True Cost of Buying

The purchase price is the headline number, but it's not the whole picture. Here's what to plan for:

- **Down payment:** Typically 3-20% of the purchase price, depending on your loan type and financial goals
- **Closing costs:** Usually 2-5% of the loan amount, covering lender fees, title insurance, recording fees, prepaid taxes and insurance
- **Earnest money deposit:** Typically 1-2% of the purchase price, submitted with your offer as a good-faith commitment. This goes toward your purchase at closing
- **Home inspection:** $400-$700+ depending on property size and age
- **Appraisal fee:** $500-$800, ordered by your lender to verify the property's value
- **Radon test:** $150-$200. Standard in Colorado given naturally elevated levels
- **Sewer scope:** $150-$300. Important in Denver's older neighborhoods with aging clay lines
- **Moving costs, immediate repairs, and a cushion for the unexpected**

If that list feels like a lot, that is exactly why we go through it together. I will walk you through all of it on our first call, using your actual price range rather than general numbers.

Loan Options at a Glance

There's no single right mortgage for everyone. Your lender will tailor recommendations to your situation, but here's a quick orientation so you're not walking in cold:

Loan Type	Best For	Down Payment	Key Detail
Conventional	Buyers with strong credit	5-20%	Mortgage insurance required if you put down less than 20%
FHA	First-time buyers, more flexible credit	3.5%	Lower barrier to entry, mortgage insurance required
VA	Veterans and active military	0%	No mortgage insurance, and rates are usually very good
USDA	Rural and some suburban areas	0%	Income and location restrictions apply
Jumbo	Higher-priced properties	Varies	For loans above the standard limit, which changes each year

Part 2

Understanding the Denver Market

A City Built on Neighborhoods

Denver is really dozens of neighborhoods, each with its own architecture, its own pace and its own direction. Two houses at the same price in different parts of the city can add up to completely different lives, so knowing the differences is most of the work.

I like the older parts of town, where you can still see how a building was put together, even if the coffee shop next door opened last month. I work across the whole Front Range, and I know these areas from walking them.

Here's a sense of the landscape:

RiNo and Cole

Old warehouses turned into something else, murals on half the walls, and a lot of the city's better restaurants and galleries within walking distance. It changes fast, which some people love and some people do not.

Berkeley / Sunnyside

Tree-lined streets and genuine neighborhood feel. Bungalows, Tudors and new builds all on the same block. Tennyson Street is the kind of main drag every neighborhood wishes it had.

Cheesman Park and Congress Park

Some of the oldest and best-built houses in Denver, on streets with full-grown trees. If you want to feel the age of the city around you, this is where it is.

Wash Park and Platt Park

People move here and then stay for thirty years, which is the clearest thing you can know about a neighborhood. The park, the trees and the walkability keep demand steady, so values hold up well.

Highlands and LoHi

Mountain views, restaurants you can walk to, and old bungalows sitting next to new infill. It is one of the most in-demand parts of the city, and the prices reflect that.

Baker and South Broadway

Independent shops, a lot of personality, and houses that run from Victorians to brand-new builds on the same street.

Boulder and the Front Range

If you are looking outside Denver proper, these are their own markets with their own pricing and their own pace. Worth understanding before you commit to one.

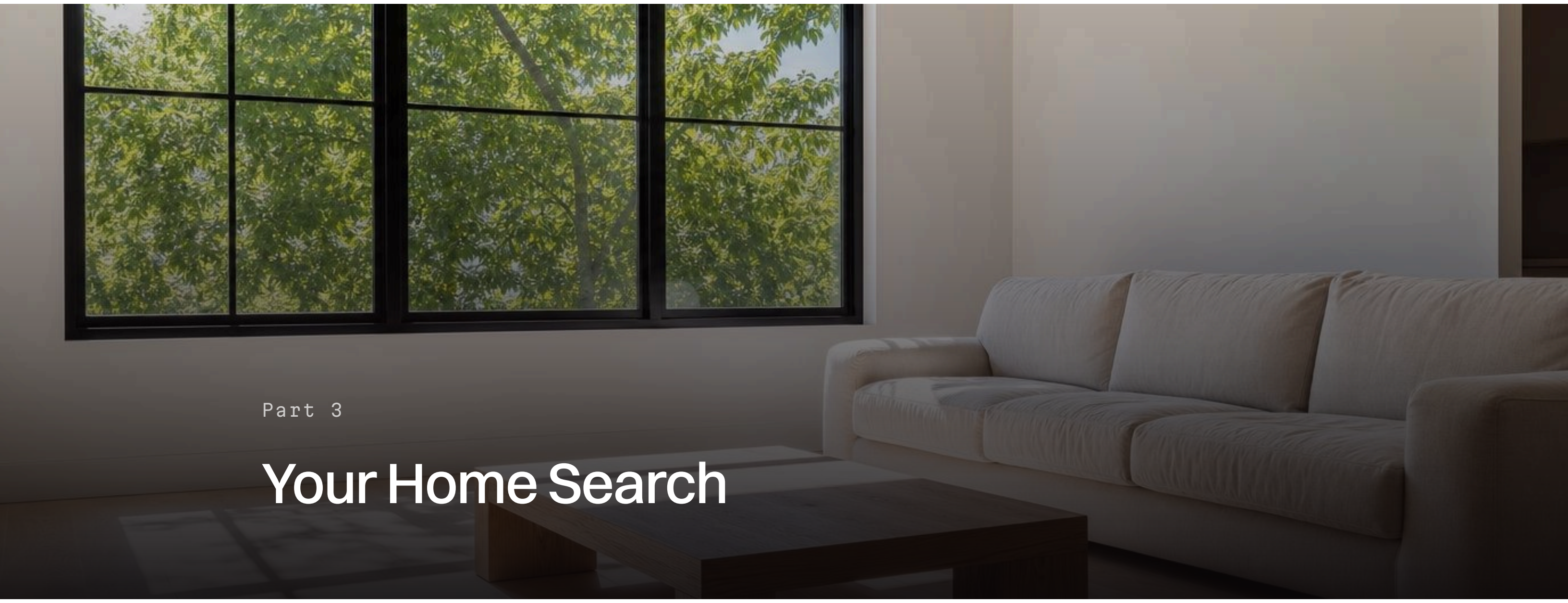
When we sit down, we will work out which neighborhoods actually fit how you want to live and what you want to spend.

How I Read the Market for You

Denver's market shifts season to season, and a snapshot in a guide like this would be outdated before you finish reading it. So rather than throw numbers at you, here's what you can count on from me:

- **A market briefing** when we start. What is available, what things are selling for, how long they are taking, and what that means for your search.
- **Updates as things move,** so you are deciding on what the market looks like this week.
- **A straight read.** I will tell you when conditions favor buyers, when they favor sellers, and when it is more complicated than either.

The numbers matter, and so does knowing what a block is actually like at four in the afternoon. I use both.



Part 3

Your Home Search

How Your Search Works

After we have talked it through, I set up your search around what you told me and around what I picked up between the lines. If you mentioned loving morning light and needing a quiet space to work from home, I'm not going to send you a ground-floor unit facing a busy intersection.

Here's what that typically looks like in practice:

You get a short list. I send you houses I would walk through myself, and every one comes with the reason I sent it. Maybe it's the south-facing living room, or the lot's development potential, or the fact that the neighborhood is about to get a new transit line.

You hear the concerns too. I will tell you what I like about a house and what worries me about it, in the same conversation.

You get early access. Through the Compass agent network, I can surface Private Exclusive listings. These are homes being marketed within the Compass network before they appear on the MLS, Zillow, or Redfin. In a competitive market, a few days head start is sometimes the whole difference.

You get a second opinion on what a house could be. Sometimes the best house on the market is the one with good bones and bad staging, or the one where moving a single wall changes how the whole floor works. I will tell you when I see that.

What I'm Looking at During Tours

When we walk through homes together, I'm paying attention to more than finishes and curb appeal. Here's what's going through my head alongside your reactions:

- **Structure and systems.** Foundation, roof condition, HVAC age, electrical panel, plumbing. The stuff that doesn't show up in listing photos but determines whether a home is truly sound.
- **Light, flow, and livability.** How does the space actually feel? Where does the morning light land? Does the floor plan work for how you'll actually use it, or just for how it photographs?
- **What can change and what can't.** Paint, flooring, fixtures, landscaping: all changeable. Ceiling height, lot orientation, load-bearing walls: those are permanent. I'll help you see past cosmetic distractions to what's really underneath.
- **Where the neighborhood is heading.** Pending development, zoning changes, schools, walkability, transit. You are buying the block as much as the house.
- **The investment side.** Resale value, rental potential, long-term appreciation. Even if this is purely a personal purchase, it's worth understanding. And if investment is part of the picture, I own rental property myself, so we can talk about it from experience.

When You're Ready to Make an Offer

When the right house shows up, you want to move quickly and know your number is defensible. Here is how we get there:

What the house is actually worth

I pull recent sales, what is under contract and what is listed now, and we land on a number we can defend.

How we structure the offer

Every offer is built around the specific situation. We will think through:

- Where to price it relative to list price and recent sales

- How much earnest money shows you are serious without putting more at risk than you should
- Which contingencies protect you (inspection, appraisal, financing) while keeping things competitive
- When tools like escalation clauses, appraisal gap coverage, or flexible timelines make sense

Negotiation

I approach negotiation the same way I approach everything else: prepared, honest, and steady. The goal is the best outcome for you while keeping the working relationship with the other side intact. That relationship matters more than people realize. When things get complicated (and they sometimes do), the agents' ability to work together is often what holds the deal together.

Part 4

Under Contract to Closing

The Inspection Period

Once your offer is accepted, the inspection period is your chance to understand exactly what you're buying. I'll help coordinate the process and make sense of the results.

Inspections I typically recommend in Denver:

- **General home inspection** (I strongly recommend this on every property)
- **Sewer scope** (especially important in older Denver neighborhoods with aging clay sewer lines, where replacement can cost tens of thousands)
- **Radon testing** (Colorado has naturally elevated levels. Testing is standard and I recommend it for every property)

- **Specialized inspections as needed:** structural engineering, roofing, HVAC, electrical, mold, or environmental

Making Sense of the Findings

Every home has an inspection report full of items. That's normal. My job is to help you sort through it: what's routine maintenance, what's cosmetic, and what's a real concern that should affect your decision or your negotiating position.

From there, we negotiate. That might mean asking for repairs, requesting credits at closing, adjusting the price, or, if something serious comes up, exercising your right to walk away. We'll figure out the right call together.

The Appraisal

Your lender orders an independent appraisal to confirm the property's value supports the loan. If it comes back at or above the purchase price, we keep moving.

If it comes in low, we have options:

- Renegotiate the price based on the appraised value
- Cover the gap out of pocket if you choose to
- Provide more recent sales to support the price we agreed on
- In some cases, walk away under the appraisal contingency

I'll be honest about what each option looks like for your specific situation.

Title, Escrow, and Final Steps

The title company verifies the property has a clean title (no unresolved liens or disputes) and manages the escrow account holding your earnest money until closing.

Final Walkthrough

The day before or morning of closing, we walk the property one more time:

- Is it in the condition you agreed on?
- Have any negotiated repairs been completed?

- Are all fixtures and inclusions still there?
- Has anything new come up since the inspection?

This is your last look before the home becomes yours.

Closing Day

You sign the loan documents, move the money, and get the keys. It usually takes a couple of hours at the title company.

Bring with you:

- Government-issued photo ID
- Certified funds for closing costs and down payment
- Any final documentation your lender has requested

A note on wire fraud: This is real and it happens more than people think. You will never receive legitimate wire instructions by email alone. Always verify wiring details by calling the title company directly at a number you've confirmed independently. If something about the instructions feels off, stop and call me.

Part 5

After You Close

Your First 30 Days

The keys are in your hand. Here's what I'd focus on first:

Change the locks. You don't know how many copies of the old keys are out there. Just do it.

Get your services set up. Utilities, USPS forwarding, employer address, bank and insurance records, vehicle registration. The boring stuff that makes a house run.

Check your homeowner's insurance. Make sure coverage actually matches your property and its contents. In Colorado, pay attention to hail damage coverage, wildfire proximity, and whether you're in a flood zone.

Start a maintenance routine. Your furnace wants attention before winter. Your gutters need clearing in fall. HVAC filters should be swapped every 90 days. The water heater gets flushed once a year. None of this is exciting, but it protects what you just invested in and keeps small problems from becoming expensive ones.

Take a breath. This is yours now. Enjoy it.

What Happens After

I am still around after closing. Call me with whatever comes up after you move in, and with whatever comes up three years from now.

Need a contractor for a bathroom project? Want to know what your home is worth today? Thinking about refinancing, or renting out a room, or making your next move? Just call.

The best part of this work is that people I have worked with send me their friends and their family. That is the part I actually care about.

Part 6

Questions I Hear Often

"What makes working with you different?"

I pay attention to how a house is designed and how it will hold up, and to where the neighborhood is heading, alongside the price and the square footage. I own rental property myself, so when the investment side comes up I have actually done it rather than read about it.

"Can you find things I can't find on Zillow?"

Yes. I have access to Compass Private Exclusives, which are homes shared inside the Compass network before they are published anywhere online. I also hear about homes through my local network before they're formally listed. Access is part of it. The bigger part is context. Listing photos will not tell you about the construction permit next door, the rezoning proposal two blocks over, or the fact that the seller would take a later closing. I will.

"How long does this usually take?"

From pre-approval to closing, most buyers are in their new home within 45 to 90 days, depending on what is available and how fast you want to move. Some move faster. Some take longer because they are waiting for the right house, which is usually the right call.

"What if I need to sell my current home first?"

I work with buyers and sellers, and I can coordinate both sides. If you need to sell before you buy, I'll build a timeline that protects you from getting caught between two closings without a plan.

"What if we lose a bidding war?"

It happens, and it is frustrating. We talk about what happened, adjust if we need to, and keep going. Most buyers I work with end up somewhere they like better than the one they lost.

"I'm relocating to Denver and don't know the city."

That is one of my favorite situations. I moved here from Butte, so I remember what it is like to not know a city yet. I will show you the neighborhoods and what living in each one is actually like, alongside what is for sale.

Your Buying Roadmap

1. Review your credit and financial position
2. Get pre-approved with a trusted lender
3. Schedule a conversation with me
4. Talk through your priorities: neighborhoods, property type, must-haves, dealbreakers
5. Start your search
6. Tour properties and refine what you're looking for
7. Find the right home and put together an offer
8. Complete inspections, negotiate as needed
9. Appraisal and final loan approval
10. Final walkthrough
11. Close and get your keys

Let's Talk

The right home changes everything. Whether you're ready to move or just starting to think about it, I'd love to hear what you're looking for.

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