

Things to know as a first-time homeowner

First, understand that the process of buying your first home can be stressful, frustrating and emotional. You're making a major purchase and you'll probably look at a lot of houses before you find the right one for you. It won't happen overnight.

- **Take a look at your current budget and savings.** Can you afford a house payment and all the expenses that go with owning a home? Talk to a mortgage consultant about what you can afford.
- **Have a price range in mind, but be willing to be flexible.** The monthly payment difference on a \$205,000 vs. \$200,000 30-year loan in today's market is less than \$6. (Rates vary, so ask your Realtor® or Mortgage Consultant to run the numbers with the latest rates.) Ask your Allen Tate Mortgage consultant about opting for a lower interest rate over paying points at closing. It could save you money in the long run.
- **Start your search with location, location, location.** It's the most important thing. Consider your commute, nearby schools, the neighborhood, the community and the people who live there. You can change a lot about your home, but you can't change where it is located. Research taxes, recently sold properties and zoning/land use changes. Sign up for Market Report at allentate.com for the areas you're most interested in. Visit the neighborhood you're considering at different times of the day.
- **Overestimate everything.** Small repairs can add up. Even if the home is in good shape, consider expenses such as window treatments, decorating, rugs or landscaping. Include higher utility bills in your budget and build up your savings for unexpected expenses.
- **Be honest with yourself.** Don't buy a fixer-upper if you don't enjoy "surprises" or have a knack for home improvement projects – or a referral to a trustworthy, efficient contractor. (If you do love the idea of turning a run down home into exactly the home you want, consider a 203(k) mortgage, a renovation/rehab loan program that combines a traditional home mortgage with a home repair loan, giving you the flexibility to buy a home that needs repair and fold the cost of those repairs into a single mortgage.)
- **A newly built or new construction house may be right for you.** New housing is available in all price ranges.
- **If you hate yard work, consider a townhouse or condo.** There are many options, but only you can determine what's best for you.
- **Bring a pen and paper, camera and tape measure** when looking at houses. Bring a friend or family member for an objective opinion. Don't rely on your memory – if you look at a lot of homes it can be confusing.

Allen Tate Exclusive Insider's Tips:

- **Talk to the neighbors.** Ask how long they've lived there, what they enjoy about the neighborhood. Ask them what they wish they'd known before they moved in.
- **Don't buy if you can't stay put for at least a few years.** You need time to build equity.
- **Talk to your Allen Tate Insurance agent.** Get an idea of the difference in rates from area to area, single-family vs. condo and find out what they'll need from you. This will save you time when you're anxious to close the transaction on your first home

Remember, it's never too late to turn back. Spending time with a Realtor doesn't obligate you to buy a home. You might get into the process, only to find that owning a home really isn't right for you. Being concerned is one thing; after all, it's a big step. But if you have real concerns about the commitment you're making or any aspect of buying, remember that you're in charge. Talk to your Realtor about your concerns and whether now is the right time for you. You may change your mind. It's perfectly OK to do that.

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