Guide to Buying a Home

ROB GRAHAM



Meet Rob



Rob Graham / Broker

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REAL ESTATE EXPERIENCE, ANALYTICAL THINKING & PERSONAL SERVICE

My career at Windermere began in 2005. Over the years, I've earned certifications as an Accredited Buyer's Representative, Green Certification, and Internet Marketing Expert. I've developed a particular appreciation for the analytical side of real estate and the role that technology and data play in making informed decisions.

I believe the data shall set you free. You'll often find me pouring over spreadsheets, analyzing market trends, and looking for insights that help my clients better understand their position and opportunities. I believe an informed client is an empowered client, and I take pride in making complicated information easier to understand.

My approach to real estate is grounded in a simple belief: our greatest responsibility is to act in the best interests of our clients. Every client brings a unique set of circumstances, priorities, and goals. I see my job as understanding those needs, providing honest and thoughtful advice, and applying my experience and market knowledge to help achieve the best possible outcome. I believe lasting relationships are built through trust, transparency, and consistently putting clients first.

AWAY FROM THE OFFICE

Born and raised in New Jersey, I've called Seattle home since 1998. Before entering real estate, I earned my Master's Degree in School Psychology and spent six years working with students in the Highline and Shoreline school districts. That experience continues to shape how I approach my work today. Listening, understanding individual needs, and helping people navigate important decisions have always been central to who I am.

Giving back to the community has also been an important part of my life. I volunteered at Children's Hospital for more than ten years and have been involved with Camp Erin since 2008, serving as a Big Buddy in the teen camp and supporting children and families navigating the loss of a loved one. I'm also an active participant in the Windermere Foundation, which supports children and families in need throughout our communities.

As a former student athlete, I developed an appreciation for hard work, physical fitness, and a healthy competitive spirit. Today, I'm fortunate to be the proud dad of two amazing children, Sydney and Jace. Much of my life outside of work revolves around family, staying active, exploring the Pacific Northwest, and finding opportunities to enjoy the people and places that make life meaningful.



Guiding your purchase

When we work together on your home-buying journey, my goal is for you to stay informed, be confident and have some fun along the way. I'll listen attentively to your wants and needs so I can help you find the home that not only matches your lifestyle and investment goals but also feels right. I want you to arrive at your new home feeling successful, hopeful, and happy.

Advising you before the transaction, I'll make sure you understand all the terms, processes and documents involved. I'll provide real-time market data and helpful information so you can make informed decisions. You can be confident you have a skilled negotiator working on your behalf and assured that all action items and communications are being handled thoughtfully and professionally.

DECIDING TO BUY A HOME IS A BIG STEP.
HERE ARE SOME OF THE SERVICES I PROVIDE:

- Share actionable market intelligence
- Focus your home search
- Explain contracts and documents
- Refer you to a respected lender
- Provide resources for a bridge loan or making a cash offer
- Preview and tour homes
- Refer you to an inspector and attend inspections
- Write an intelligent offer that can win
- Negotiate purchase terms and timetables
- Coordinate the many moving parts of the transaction all the way through closing
- Answer all of your real estate questions

Getting to know you

Before I can help you buy a home, I need to know a few things about you. We'll start with a consultation, during which you'll explain what you're looking for in your new home. We'll discuss different ways to get there, based on both your specific situation and the current state of the market.

This initial conversation is about more than learning which floor plans you prefer or what your budget might be—it's also a chance for us to get to know each other as people. My practice is built on relationships, so it's important for us to build a foundation of trust and transparency as we move forward.

As you start the active home search process, I'll help you refine your search criteria, narrowing in on neighborhoods, commute times and floor plans that match your specific needs. I'll also use my personal network and Windermere's resources to keep you informed of any new and promising listings that come on the market.



A CONFERENCE CALL

A CUP OF COFFEE

AN OFFICE VISIT

Figuring out financing

NECESSARY STEPS BEFORE YOUR HOME SEARCH

To make your home search process as smooth as possible, it's crucial that you have your finances and budget in order ***before*** you start seriously looking at homes. In a competitive region and real estate market such as ours, having financing pre-approval is key to your success (unless you plan to pay cash). To get pre-approved for a loan, you'll need to connect with a mortgage lender. Who you work with on the financial side is entirely your choice, but I'm always happy to recommend some trusted and knowledgeable lenders who have been integral to my clients' success. Some lenders even offer a certified buyer program, which serves as a type of performance guarantee to a seller who is considering multiple competing offers.

About 30% of successful buyers in our region are cash buyers. If you intend to purchase with all cash, it's important to know that there is likely to be competition from other cash buyers. As a result, it's crucial that your funds be available in liquid form—this could propel you ahead of a buyer who hasn't yet converted other holdings to cash.



Financial benchmarks for buyers

PRE-QUALIFICATION:	Determination of your probability of obtaining a loan.
PRE-APPROVAL:	Lender verification of your income and credit approval. Obtaining pre-approval early in the process can give you and the seller greater confidence in your ability to close on the purchase.
PERFORMANCE GUARANTEE:	Lender certification of your ability to be issued a loan based on a combination of your financial profile and the proposed purchase price of the subject property.
CASH BUYER:	Ability to purchase the home based on verified cash holdings rather than lender financing.



Buying first and selling later?

Since a bridge loan can give you a stronger negotiating position and ease the pressure of having to sell before you buy, speak with your lender about whether they have a bridge loan product. If they don't, Windermere's exclusive bridge loan program can be the perfect solution. The approval process takes only a few days and the fee is just one percent of the loan amount. No payments are necessary on the loan before your home closes unless you choose to make a payment. The principal and interest are due when the home closes, or six months following disbursement, whichever comes first.

WINDERMERE
BRIDGE LOAN

THE WINDERMERE BRIDGE LOAN PROGRAM OFFERS YOU:

- A stronger negotiating position
- A simple application
- Fast processing
- No payments due before closing
- Competitive fees and interest rates

Determining your maximum price

Understanding how much you can afford is crucial before you start searching for a home. You'll likely work with a lender or financial advisor to calculate your max budget, but before you do, consider taking these steps:

CHECK YOUR CREDIT REPORT

It's best to check your credit report before your lender does so you can correct any mistakes you find before your lender sees them. It also gives you an opportunity to explain any blemishes that show up on your report.

KNOW YOUR CREDIT SCORE

When you check your credit report, you can also check your credit score. (This is known as a "soft credit check" and will not affect your overall credit.) Your score can impact how much lenders are willing to loan you as well as the interest rate you qualify for.

DETERMINE YOUR DOWN PAYMENT

The decision about how much of a down payment you're prepared to make is entirely up to you. The size of your down payment may impact the financing terms your lender gives you. Also, it's typical that a down payment of less than 20% will require you to purchase Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI).

WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN BORROWING MONEY

- Change jobs, become self-employed or quit your job
- Buy a car, truck, motorcycle or van
- Use credit cards more than normal
- Stop paying bills
- Spend money you have saved for closing
- Omit debts or liabilities from your loan application
- Buy big-ticket items (such as furniture)
- Originate any inquiries into your credit or apply for new credit cards
- Make large cash deposits without checking with your loan officer
- Change bank accounts
- Co-sign a loan for anyone
- Change marital status



Start touring

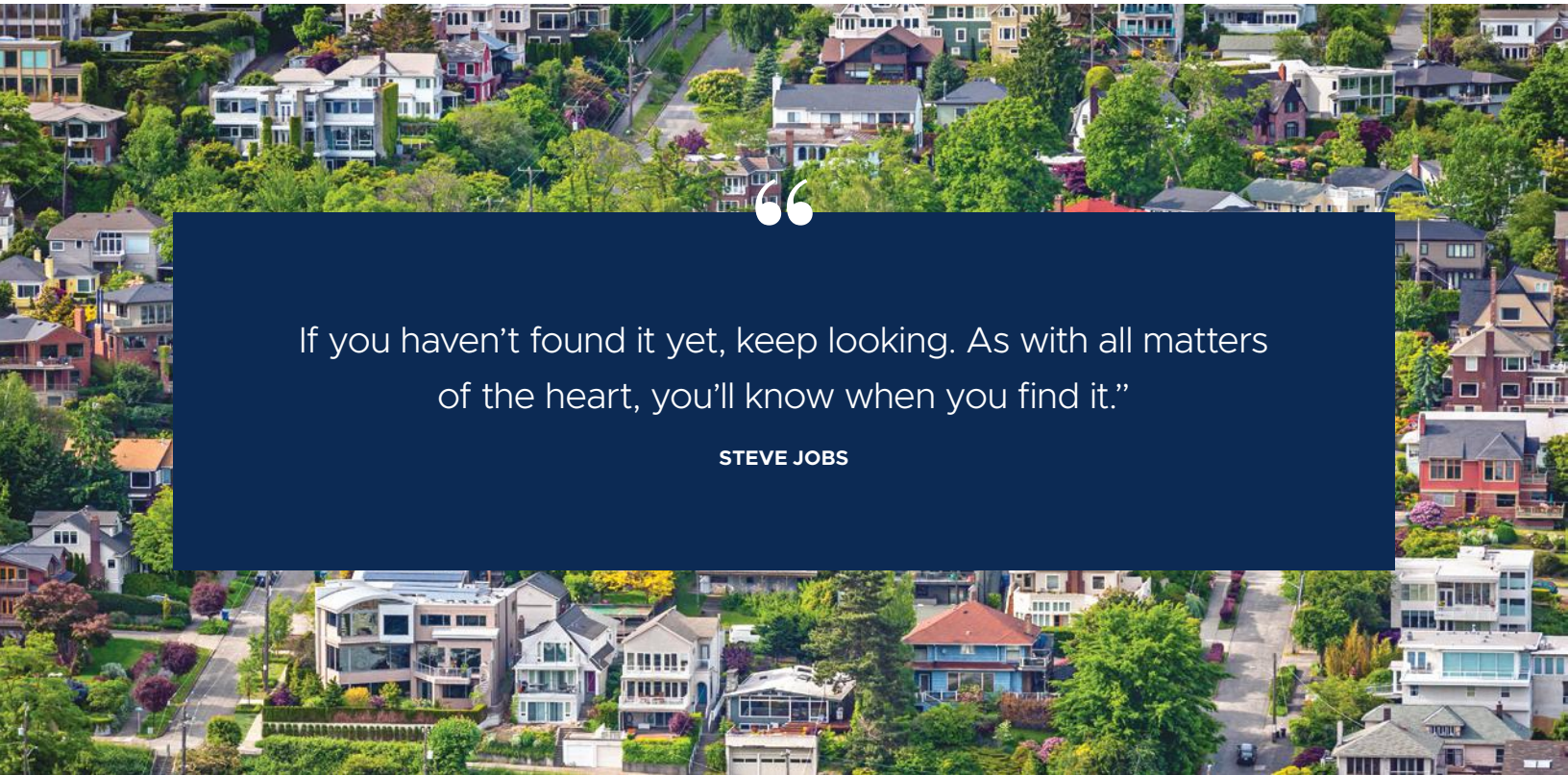
SETTING UP A SUCCESSFUL SEARCH

Once you've determined your budget and we have an idea of what you're looking for, we'll start touring listings. This process will help you get a sense of what you can expect from different types of homes, your price point and the vibe of various neighborhoods. It will also help me get a better sense of your wants and needs in order to continue refining our search.

While the market may be more competitive at certain times, I want you to feel comfortable with every decision you make. There is no right or wrong number of listings to view, nor is there a specific timeline you have to stick to during the search. To help you be confident in your selection, I'll lay out the pros and cons of each contending property. My advice will always be honest and backed up by relevant data.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU START LOOKING:

- How long do you see yourself living in your home?
- What features are most important to you in a home?
- What neighborhoods and home styles within your budget attract you the most?
- What is your commute tolerance?
- Do you have any specific lifestyle factors that your home must accommodate now?
- Considering any family or roommates, is your household likely to stay the same size?



> If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it."
>
> **STEVE JOBS**

Due diligence

LET'S TAKE THE TIME TO MAKE SURE THIS REALLY IS THE BEST HOME FOR YOU.

Work with your mortgage professional to be sure that you are comfortable with the price or monthly payment of the home.

Get your questions answered about the neighborhood (it can help to talk to neighbors).

Do a thorough inspection of the home (sewer lines, etc.).

Research schools, commute times, public transit options, etc.

Review comparative home values.

A **home inspection** benefits all parties involved by providing insight into the condition of the home, thereby making you an informed buyer.



WALKING YOU THROUGH INSPECTION

Home inspections are a critical part of the home-buying process. They can take the mystery out of buying a home and make it easier for you to imagine yourself living there. Whether commissioned by you or the seller, the inspection will look beyond the home's cosmetics to make sure its general systems operate properly. The inspector will look for large repairs that are needed and present a detailed report on the condition of the home.

As your buyer's agent, I'll help you:

— Find a well-regarded inspector
— Review a seller-procured inspection report
— Review your buyer-procured inspection report
— Help you determine your risk tolerance for required repairs
— Negotiate fair and appropriate solutions if necessary

Putting together your offer



Before writing your first offer on a home, I'll guide you through its various components, including the Purchase and Sale Agreement, state-required forms, all contingencies, and what you'll need to prepare to back up an offer financially.

PREPARING THE OFFER

When you're ready to make an offer on a specific property, I will:

- Perform a market analysis to show how the home compares in value to recent listings and sales
- Work with you to devise a comprehensive strategy for your offer
- Tailor your offer to your comfort level and to the unique circumstances of the listing

PRESENTING YOUR OFFER TO THE SELLER

Once we've written up the Purchase and Sale Agreement and all associated forms, I will:

- Call the seller's agent to inform them that your offer is coming via email
- Tell them a little about you and briefly preview the offer
- Follow up to confirm they received your offer

SECURING YOUR INTEREST WITH A DEPOSIT

Earnest money is a "good faith" deposit submitted with your offer that shows the seller you are serious about purchasing their home.

- The amount of earnest money and the terms surrounding it can make a difference in how attractive the seller finds your offer.
- In a traditional real estate market, it's rare for a buyer to lose the earnest money. If the buyer willfully decides, however, that they no longer want to buy the house and has no legal reason for rescinding their offer, then the seller has the right to retain the earnest money.
- In a very competitive market such as ours, earnest money can convey the seriousness of your commitment to purchasing the property. For example, you may authorize that your earnest money be converted into a non-refundable deposit. This signals to the seller that you are all in and willing to risk your deposit in order to secure the purchase.



Winning offer strategies

Our real estate market is a competitive one. To help you navigate the realities of this landscape when we put together your offer, I'll investigate recent sales data to anticipate the level of competition we may face. I'll also connect with the listing broker to gauge the market's reception of the particular home. Then I'll advise you on specific strategies to maximize the chances your offer will be accepted by the seller, which may include:

PRICE & ESCALATION

In a multiple-offer situation, it may be prudent to offer a price-escalation provision—or escalator clause—to strengthen your offer against competing offers. To do this correctly and confidently, you'll need to know your uppermost price tolerance for the purchase. At that point we'll discuss how an escalator can help your offer stand out, as well as any tactics that might minimize the chances a bidding war will escalate to your maximum budget.

CONTINGENCIES

When we submit an offer on a listing that is expected to receive competing offers, we'll discuss the pros and cons of waiving certain contingencies. These include the inspection, financing, appraisal and title contingencies. I'll counsel you about the impact of each contingency and the risks associated with waiving them.

EARNEST MONEY

Any offer we make will require you to commit a certain dollar amount as a good-faith deposit. In a competitive situation, the more earnest money you can commit, the more your offer may stand out to the seller. Another tactic is authorizing escrow to convert earnest money into a nonrefundable deposit upon offer acceptance. Depending on the level of buyer interest in the listing, we may discuss the benefits of such a maneuver and your tolerance for making it.

TIMING

In a competitive scenario, it may also help to offer a specific closing timeline if that's meaningful to the seller. A favorable rent-back provision may also appeal to the seller so they have more time to vacate the property. Either way, I'll work to ascertain the seller's preferences before we write the offer.

Purchase and Sale Agreement

Before you submit an offer on a home, I'll guide you through the Purchase and Sale Agreement, the contract in which you and the seller outline the details of the property transfer.

THE PURCHASE AND SALE AGREEMENT USUALLY CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Earnest money declaration
- Financing addendum
- Inspection addendum
- Optional Clauses addendum (Form 22D)
- Addendum outlining special conditions (WRE41)
- Lead-based paint notification, when appropriate
- FIRPTA (Form 22E)
- Title review

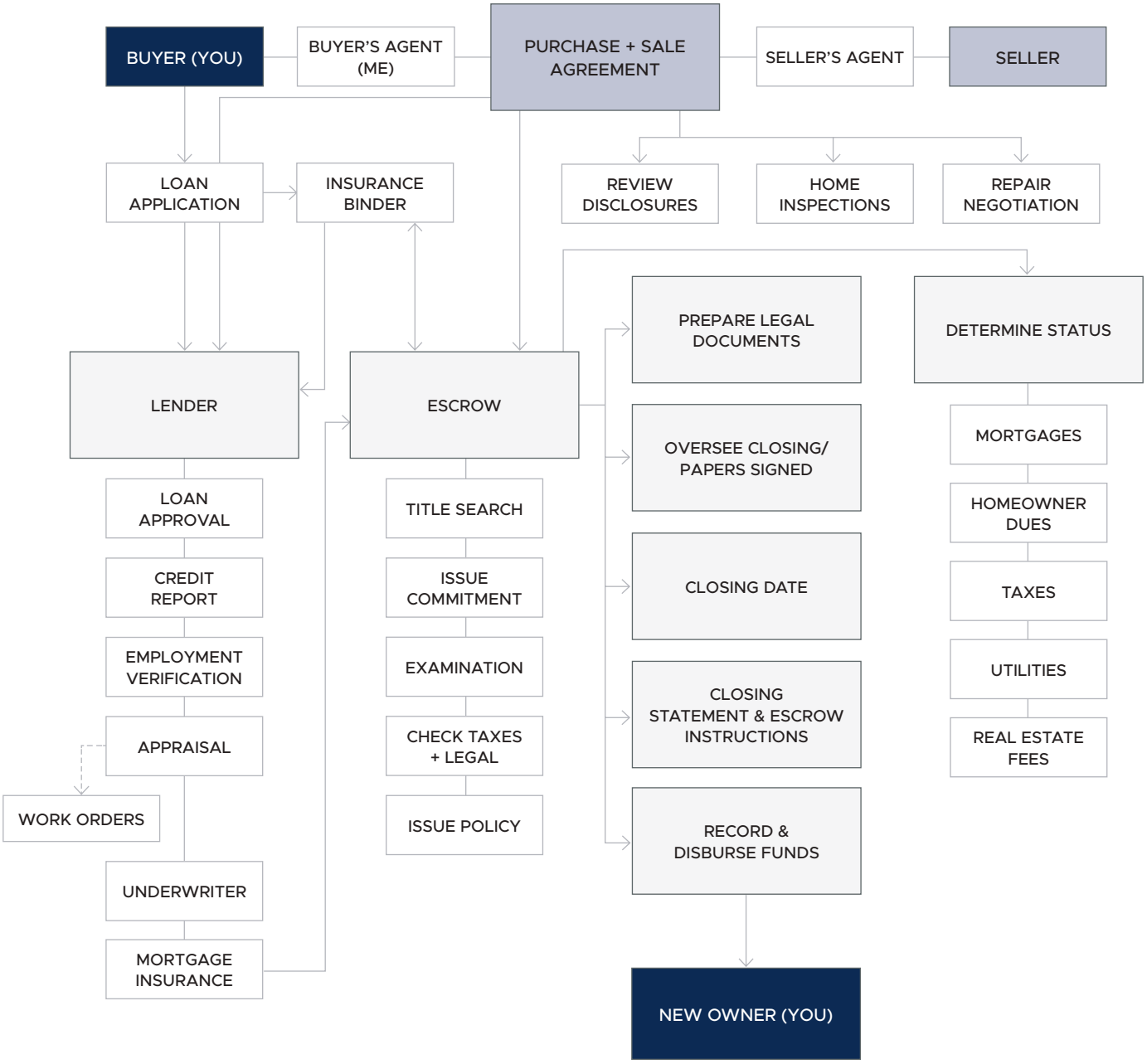
THE FOLLOWING FORMS WILL USUALLY BE INCLUDED WITH YOUR OFFER:

- Agency disclosure form
- Seller disclosure statement (Form 17)



The path to closing

Once your offer is accepted by the seller, you'll formally begin the process of closing. This period typically takes several weeks, and entails the process of opening escrow for the sale, performing inspections and transferring the title and deed of the house to you. It's a complicated process with many moving parts, but I will make sure you understand everything that's happening so you're never out of the loop.



Settlement & closing

Before mutual acceptance, a closing date is agreed upon by you and the seller. "Closing" is when you each sign all the paperwork and pay your share of the settlement fees, and the documents are recorded. Settlement obligations vary widely due to specific contract language, local laws and customs. Prior to the closing date, the escrow officer will complete a settlement statement detailing all the expenses associated with the purchase of your new home.

THE BUYER PAYS FOR:

- Down payment on the home
- Buyer's escrow fee (according to the contract)
- Lender's extended title insurance premium (ALTA)
- Document preparation (if applicable)
- Prorated property taxes (from date of acquisition)
- Prorated Homeowners Association dues (from date of acquisition) if applicable
- Recording fees for all documents in buyer's name
- Notary fees, if applicable
- Homeowner's hazard insurance premium for first year
- Inspection fees (according to contract)
- Loan fees as agreed with lender
- Interim interest on new loan, prorated from date of funding to first payment date

THE SELLER PAYS FOR:

- Seller's escrow fee (according to contract)
- Owner's title insurance premium
- Real estate service fees (according to contract)
- Payoff of all encumbrances (loans) in seller's name
- Prorated property taxes (prior to date of sale)
- Any judgments, tax liens, assessments or encumbrances placed against property title
- Any unpaid Homeowners Association dues
- Recording charges to clear all documents of record against the seller
- Excise tax, if applicable, determined by county and based on sale price

Sample buyer closing costs

± $30 **CREDIT REPORT**	± $1,300 **1/2 ESCROW FEE (ON A $900K HOME)***	± $1,000 **APPRAISAL**
± $250 **SEWER INSPECTION**	± $500 **PROPERTY INSPECTION**	20% **ESTIMATED DOWN PAYMENT**

The only out-of-pocket costs (not financed in your loan) are typically home inspections, appraisal, and your down payment. A good rule of thumb is to budget around 2.5% of your loan amount (not including your down payment) to cover these costs.

**Fees determined by sale price and/or loan amount.*



TAKING POSSESSION

You will sign your closing documents a couple days prior to closing. On the day of closing, typically the documents are recorded at the county in the late afternoon and you will have access to your new home in the early evening.

I will keep in touch to find out how things are going, and I'm always happy to answer any questions you might have. I can also provide referrals (plumbers, electricians, etc.) and give you updates on the value of your home going forward.

If you are happy with my service, I would love to help your friends and family. I always have time for your referrals!

What my clients are saying

I just had to tell you, that you were awesome. You did all the stuff realtors are supposed to do, but then you did the extras.

– Suzy O.

Rob was absolutely Amazing! The process was tiresome and frustrating, but Rob was there every step of the way.

– Michelle & Ian C.

Excellent. Rob was knowledgable and well prepared. His easy going style was great to work with but I always felt like he was looking out for me.

– Randy P.

Absolutely professional. Above and beyond the expected level of service. I could not have expected better service.

– Stephanie & Stephen L.

Rob is incredibly friendly, has great attention to detail and is very dedicated to his job. I would (and have) recommended Rob to all of my friends.

– Amber & Nate M.

I cannot recall any real estate salesman more industrious and conscientious then Rob. He looks after everything and with remarkable efficiency and promptness.

– Orly S.



I look forward to working with you

THROUGHOUT YOUR TRANSACTION, MY ROLE IS TO BE YOUR ADVOCATE, AND MY GOAL IS TO GIVE YOU AN OUTSTANDING CLIENT EXPERIENCE.

I'll work tirelessly to educate and advise you about how the current real estate market impacts your decision regarding whether and when to buy a home. When you're ready, I'll help you find the property that's a perfect fit and I'll guide you through the process of submitting an offer. Once your offer has been accepted, I'll negotiate the critical and contractual details right up until you have keys in hand. Thereafter I'll be a steady resource for you along the path of your homeownership, sharing information about how to maximize your investment from both financial and lifestyle perspectives.



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Windermere REAL ESTATE

Premier PROPERTIES

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