

HEATHER GARDENS
BROKERS

HOME BUYERS GUIDE

A comprehensive guide
to support you through
every step of the
homebuying journey.



Keys to Your Future Home *Tips*



You've likely heard it before: buying a home is one of the biggest purchases you'll ever make. Feeling a little nervous? Keep this in mind—it's also one of the smartest investments you can make.

From the pride of homeownership to the potential tax benefits, the advantages of owning a home are numerous. If you're ready to begin your journey toward homeownership, let Heather Gardens Brokers be your trusted partner. Our Homebuyers Guide is designed to familiarize you with the process and provide valuable resources, including key terms, factors to consider when choosing a home, and a comprehensive checklist to help you make informed decisions every step of the way.



Why Choose a Heather Gardens Broker?

Heather Gardens Brokers are part of a trusted network of experienced, full-time real estate professionals dedicated to delivering exceptional service. Our brokers bring years of expertise and a deep understanding of the local market, ensuring a smoother and more informed homebuying process.

What does this mean for you? It means when you work with a Heather Gardens Broker, you're partnering with a committed professional who has access to extensive resources, tools, and support—all aimed at helping you find and purchase the perfect home.

10 STEPS TO PURCHASING YOUR DREAM HOME

Choose a real estate agent who's the right fit for you.

1. Determine your budget.
2. Explore mortgage options and get pre-approved.
3. Create an account on Heather Gardens Brokers' website and start browsing homes.
4. Identify your favorite properties and schedule home tours.
5. Make an offer on the home you love.
6. Conduct a home inspection.
7. Finalize the deal and close on your home.
8. Update your utilities and transfer services.
9. Move in and enjoy your new home!

Let Heather Gardens Brokers Be Your Guide

Whether you are moving across town or across the country, navigating the real estate market can feel overwhelming.

An experienced Heather Gardens Broker can make the process seamless. Our brokers have access to the latest market data and insights, helping you make well-informed decisions about neighborhoods and properties that meet your needs. As you move through the homebuying journey, your Heather Gardens Broker will guide you through complex paperwork and, of course, assist you in finding your dream home.

Get started today by contacting Heather Gardens Brokers—we'll be with you every step of the way.

TIPS FOR CHOOSING A REAL ESTATE AGENT

Do your due diligence.

Research real estate agents online, read reviews, and ask for recommendations from friends and family. Taking the time to learn about your options will help you make a confident choice.

Choose someone you trust.

Buying a home is a personal and significant investment. It's essential to work with a real estate agent who makes you feel comfortable, listens to your needs, and respects your opinions.

Look for experience.

A seasoned real estate professional brings valuable expertise. They've navigated market fluctuations and know how to handle today's unique challenges to help you achieve your homebuying goals.

Ask These Questions to Find the Right Agent for You

Choosing the right real estate agent is key to a successful homebuying experience. When interviewing potential agents, ask these important questions:

1. How much experience do you have, and can you provide references?

Experience matters, and references offer insight into the agent's track record and client satisfaction.

2. What services and resources do you offer?

From market insights to negotiation skills, understanding what tools the agent brings to the table will help you evaluate their value.

3. How will the homebuying process work, and what's expected of me?

A great agent will clearly outline each step of the journey and explain your role in the process.

4. How much time can you dedicate to my needs, and how often will we communicate?

Knowing the agent's availability and communication style ensures they align with your expectations.

5. What types of homes are your specialty, and are you familiar with the neighborhoods that interest me?

An agent who specializes in the kind of home and location you're targeting can provide valuable insight and expertise.

6. How many homes have you helped customers buy in the past year?

This gives you an idea of their recent experience and ability to close deals in the current market.

7. What happens after we make an offer? What about after closing?

Understanding what support the agent offers beyond the offer and closing stages ensures you won't feel left in the dark during critical moments.

Communication is Key

Questions are bound to come up during the homebuying process—it's completely normal. That's why it's crucial to work with an agent who prioritizes your best interests and provides clear, timely communication to guide you every step of the way.



Get Pre-Approved

Why Getting Pre-Approved Matters

Getting pre-approved for a home loan before you start touring houses can give you a significant advantage. If you fall in love with a home, being pre-approved strengthens your offer and demonstrates to Sellers that you're serious and financially prepared.

Applying for a mortgage involves a formal application and supporting documentation. Here's what to expect when meeting with a mortgage lender:

1. Credit Score Check

Lenders will review your credit history to determine if you're a reliable candidate for a loan. Credit scores range from 300 to 800, with higher scores indicating better creditworthiness.

2. Employment History Review

Lenders will ask for details about your employment, including your current employer, how long you've been with them, and your annual income. This helps them ensure you can make regular mortgage payments.

3. Assets and Debts Review

Be prepared to provide:

- Past tax records.
- Recent bank statements.
- Current debt amounts (credit cards, car loans, student loans, etc.).

Lenders use this information to calculate your debt-to-income ratio and confirm your ability to manage loan payments based on your income.

4. Mortgage Options

There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to home loans. Mortgage options vary based on your financial situation. Programs like FHA or Freddie Mac loans can offer additional flexibility.

Your Heather Gardens Broker will work closely with you to help you understand the different loan options and find the one that fits your needs.

Starting the pre-approval process early not only makes you a stronger buyer but also ensures a smoother path to purchasing your dream home. Reach out to Heather Gardens Brokers for guidance and support throughout this important step!

Your Home Search Tips



Choosing the Right Home with Heather Gardens Brokers

As a homebuyer, you'll encounter a wide variety of home styles and designs. From single-family homes, condos, and townhomes to properties with lakefronts, acreage, or luxurious features—you have options. You can also choose between a pre-existing home or new construction.

The most important factor is selecting a home that fits both your lifestyle and your budget. To narrow down your choices:

- Know your budget and stick to it.
- Determine your desired location.
- Identify your needs for bedrooms, bathrooms, and square footage.
- Prioritize amenities into must-haves versus nice-to-haves.
- Consider outdoor space such as a yard or balcony.
- Once you've identified your must-haves, browse listings on the Heather Gardens Brokers website or work with your broker to receive tailored recommendations.
- Heather Gardens Brokers will coordinate showings for any properties you'd like to see in person.

Four Things to Consider When Viewing Homes Online

Online tools make it easier than ever to get a sense of a property before an in-person visit. Heather Gardens Brokers can provide valuable insights and additional information not always included in MLS listings. Here's what to focus on when browsing properties online:

1. Analyze the Photos

Take time to carefully review all the photos. Note the placement of windows and the amount of natural light in each room.

If the home is vacant, imagine how your furniture might fit in the space.

If the home is staged, think about how you might adjust the layout to suit your style



Your Home Search *tips*

2. Take Note of Potential Fixes or Renovations

Identify areas that may need upgrades or changes. Consider which elements of the home already work for you and which might require future renovations.

- Remember: Paint is a simple and cost-effective way to transform a space

3. Consider the Outdoor Space

Don't overlook the exterior of the property. Whether it's a small balcony or a spacious backyard, outdoor spaces add value and utility.

- Think about what outdoor furniture you may need.
- Consider seasonal maintenance, such as snow removal or landscaping.

4. Explore 3D and Virtual Tours

Many properties now offer 3D tours or virtual walkthroughs. These tools allow you to explore a home's layout and floor plan from the comfort of your own home, giving you a better feel for the space before scheduling an in-person showing.

Start your home search with Heather Gardens Brokers, where our expert team is ready to guide you every step of the way. Whether you're exploring online or touring in person, we're here to help you find the perfect fit!

Common Home Styles

Story-and-a-Half

Also known as a Cape Cod, this style features a steeply pitched roof and a clean, simple design. Dormers are often added to the roof to introduce windows and create usable space on the upper level.



Split Level

Sometimes called a split entry, this style features two short sets of stairs leading up and down from the entry level. Split-level homes may or may not have living space on the entry floor.



Single-Level

Referred to as a bungalow, this style is characterized by a long, low design with most living space on the ground level. Many single-level homes include a basement, which can be finished into additional living space. Some feature a walk-out lower level with exterior access.



Two-Story Home

A two-story home offers two full levels of living space. Typically, the ground floor contains common areas like the kitchen and living room, while the upper floor includes the primary suite and additional bedrooms. Many two-story homes also have basements.



Colonial: A type of two-story home with symmetrical design and evenly spaced windows on both the upper and lower levels.

Condominium

A condominium is an owned unit within a larger complex of multiple units. Condos typically include monthly fees for shared expenses like building maintenance and communal facilities.



Townhouse

A townhouse is an owned unit in a row of attached homes. Residents often pay an association fee for shared expenses such as exterior upkeep and communal facilities.





CHECKLIST

Bedrooms: ☐ 2+ ☐ 3+ ☐ 4+
 Bathrooms: ☐ 1+ ☐ 2+ ☐ 3+ ☐ 4+
 Dedicated Office Space: ☐ Yes ☐ No
 Central Air Conditioning: ☐ Yes ☐ No
☐
☐

Garage: ☐ 1-car ☐ 2-car ☐ 3+ car
☐ Attached ☐ Detached ☐ None
☐
☐

Kitchen Features:
☐ Gas Stove/Cooktop ☐ Gas Oven
☐ Microwave ☐ Dishwasher
☐ Walk-In Pantry ☐ Eat-In Kitchen
☐ Updated Countertops
☐ Fully Renovated
☐
☐

Bedroom Features:
☐ Walk-in Closet ☐ Master Bathroom
☐
☐

Bathroom Features:
☐ Double Vanity and Sinks
☐ Bathtub ☐ Double Shower
☐
☐

Additional Indoor Features:
☐ Gas Fireplace ☐ Wood Fireplace
☐ Mudroom ☐ Main Level Laundry
☐ Alarm System ☐ Smart-Home Tech
☐ Mounted TV or Sound System Wiring
☐ Dedicated Dining Room
☐ Basement
☐
☐

Outdoor Features:
☐ Yard Space ☐ Wooded Lot ☐ Balcony
☐ Pool ☐ Fence ☐ Shed
☐ Balcony or Deck
☐ Outdoor Entertaining Area
☐
☐



Twin Home

Also called a semi-detached home, this style consists of two single-family dwellings separated by a shared wall, often with mirror-image layouts. Twin homes usually have separate street addresses and owners. Homeowners are responsible for outdoor maintenance, including shared areas like driveways or siding.



Duplex

A duplex is a single property divided into two dwellings, either side by side or stacked vertically. Units may share a similar or mirrored layout. Duplexes typically have one street address with unit numbers and are owned by a single property owner.



Be Prepared

When You're Ready to Make an Offer

Your Heather Gardens Broker will handle the necessary paperwork and expertly negotiate the purchase price and terms on your behalf. However, there are a few key steps you'll need to take to ensure a smooth process:

1. Purchase Homeowners Insurance

If you're financing your home with a mortgage, homeowners insurance is required. Be sure to purchase enough coverage to fully protect your home and belongings in the event of a total loss.

2. Schedule a Home Inspection

Home inspections are an important part of the buying process. While they typically cost a few hundred dollars, they can uncover any major issues or concerns with the property. Most purchase agreements are contingent on the inspection results, giving you the ability to withdraw your offer if significant problems are found.

3. Check the Status of Utilities

For occupied homes: Verify that all outstanding utility bills (e.g., water, gas, electric) will be paid in full by the Sellers before closing. Make arrangements to transfer these services into your name after the sale.

For vacant or foreclosed homes: If the water or other utilities have been turned off, contact the appropriate city or service provider to have them restored. Be sure to check for potential issues like damaged or broken pipes when utilities are reconnected.

Reliable Resources

Your Heather Gardens Broker is a valuable resource throughout the buying process. Don't hesitate to ask for recommendations for:

- Mortgage lenders
- Home inspectors or appraisers
- Moving companies
- Insurance providers
- Contractors or landscapers

Tax Considerations for First-Time Homeowners

Becoming a homeowner comes with new tax benefits, such as deducting mortgage interest and property taxes. If you're unsure about what you're eligible to claim, consider consulting with a tax professional or visiting [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov).



Navigating Inspection Objections *Tips*

What is an Inspection Objection?

Once your offer is accepted, a home inspection is typically scheduled within the first two weeks of being under contract. The inspector's job is to thoroughly evaluate the property, including its systems, appliances, and structural integrity.

The inspection report will highlight issues—big or small—found in the home. It's common for Buyers to request specific repairs or credits before closing, known as inspection objections. While not every item will be addressed, Buyers and Sellers must negotiate these requests before the Inspection Resolution Deadline. If no agreement is reached, the contract may terminate.

Why Inspections Matter for Buyers

Understanding inspection objections is crucial. It helps you determine:

- What repairs are necessary for safety and functionality.
- Whether the home is a good investment based on its current condition.
- What repairs or updates may affect your long-term costs as a homeowner.

Common Inspection Objection Items

1. GFCI Outlets (Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters)

- Why it's important: These outlets are required near water sources to prevent electrical shocks.
- Common issues: Missing or malfunctioning outlets in kitchens, bathrooms, and garages.

2. Electrical Panels

- Federal Pacific (FPE) or Zinsco/Sylvania panels are often flagged for safety concerns.
- Solution: Budget for replacement if these outdated panels are present, as they pose fire risks.

3. Windows and Doors

- Locks: Ensure all window and sliding door locks are functional.
- Foggy panes: Replace broken seals that cause condensation inside double-pane windows.
- Screens: Repair or replace torn screens for better aesthetics.

4. Plumbing Issues

- Look for corroded valves, non-functioning stoppers, and faulty water diverters.
- Refresh caulking and grout in bathrooms to prevent water damage.

5. Smoke Alarms & CO2 Detectors

- Colorado law requires smoke alarms in every bedroom and CO2 detectors within 15 feet of bedrooms.
- Quick fix: Install battery-operated or plug-in models to satisfy requirements.

6. Appliances

- Inspect appliances for full functionality, including stove burners, ice makers, and dryer vents.
- Replace filters in HVAC systems and ensure remotes and controls are operational.

Navigating Inspection Objections

Tips

7. HVAC Systems

- Furnaces over 10 years old may be scrutinized. Have the system cleaned and serviced to avoid objections.

8. Radon Levels

- Basements in Colorado are prone to high radon levels. Testing and mitigation systems may be necessary.

9. Roof

- Verify roof condition, especially if not maintained by an HOA. Recent hail damage? Contact your insurance company for an evaluation.

10. Sewer Lines

- Tree roots or aging pipes can cause issues. A professional sewer scope can identify potential problems.

Tips for Buyers

- **Prepare your offer:** Being pre-approved for a mortgage strengthens your negotiating position.
- **Set priorities:** Focus on safety and major system repairs rather than cosmetic fixes.

Leverage your agent: Heather Gardens Brokers are experts in guiding Buyers through inspection negotiations.

Why Choose Heather Gardens Brokers?

Navigating inspection objections can be overwhelming, but Heather Gardens Brokers are here to help. With access to a trusted network of contractors and years of experience, we'll guide you through:



Glossary of Homebuying Terms

Understanding these terms will empower you to make informed decisions throughout the homebuying process.

- 1. Amortization:** The time period over which you repay a loan, typically up to 30 years for mortgages. Consult your lender for options.
- 2. Balanced Market:** When supply and demand for homes are equal, leading to stable prices and reasonable sale timelines.
- 3. Bridge Financing:** A short-term loan to cover the gap when buying a new home before selling your current one.
- 4. Buyer's Market:** When there are more homes than buyers, leading to lower prices and better negotiating power for buyers.
- 5. Closing:** The final step in the transaction when the property's ownership is transferred to the buyer.
- 6. Closing Costs:** Additional costs at closing, including legal and administrative fees, on top of the home's purchase price.
- 7. Comparative Market Analysis (CMA):** A report comparing similar properties to determine a home's market value.
- 8. Home Inspection:** Identifies existing or potential issues in a home and provides leverage during negotiations.
- 9. Condominium Ownership:** Ownership of a unit with shared interest in common areas like the lobby or parking. Monthly condo fees apply.
- 10. Contingencies:** Conditions in a purchase agreement, such as mortgage approval or inspection results, that must be met for the sale to proceed.
- 11. Deposit:** An upfront payment held in trust to show the buyer's commitment, applied to the purchase price at closing.
- 12. Down Payment:** The initial payment for a home, typically 3.5%–20% of the purchase price. Less than 20% may require mortgage insurance.
- 13. Equity:** The difference between the home's market value and the amount owed on the mortgage.
- 14. Fixed-Rate Mortgage:** A mortgage with a guaranteed interest rate for a set period.
- 15. Home Appraisal:** A professional evaluation of a home's market value, often required for mortgage approval.
- 16. First-Time Homebuyer Assistance:** Programs designed to assist first-time buyers with down payments or other costs. Consult your lender for details.
- 17. Land Survey:** Defines property boundaries, which can be crucial for legal or neighbor disputes. May be required by lenders.
- 18. Seller's Market:** When there are more buyers than homes, leading to higher prices and faster sales.
- 19. Mortgage Pre-Approval:** Determines how much you can borrow, locks in an interest rate, and strengthens your ability to make an immediate offer.
- 20. Title Insurance:** Protects you and your lender from financial loss due to title defects or legal issues.
- 21. Mortgage Loan Insurance:** Required for down payments under 20%, protecting the lender against default.
- 22. Offer:** A legal agreement to purchase a home, often conditional on financing or inspections.

HEATHER GARDENS BROKERS



Congratulations on taking the first step toward homeownership! At Heather Gardens Brokers, we understand that buying a home is one of the most significant investments you'll ever make. This guide is designed to provide you with the knowledge and resources you need to navigate the process with confidence.

From understanding key terms to preparing for inspections and negotiating your offer, every step brings you closer to finding the perfect home. Remember, you're not alone in this journey—our team of experienced professionals is here to guide and support you every step of the way.

If you have questions, need recommendations, or are ready to take the next step, don't hesitate to reach out. Your dream home is just around the corner, and we're honored to help you make it a reality.

Let's make your homeownership dreams come true!
Contact Heather Gardens Brokers today.

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