Utah Home Buyer Guide

The complete step-by-step roadmap

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Welcome

Buying a home is the largest financial decision most people make. After 23 years and more than 1,400 Utah transactions, I have boiled the Utah home buying process down to 12 clear phases. Use this guide as your roadmap. If you have questions, call me at 801-999-8005 - initial conversations are free and no obligation.

Phase 1: Get Pre-Approved (Before You Do Anything Else)

Before you shop for a home, get a real pre-approval letter from a Utah-licensed lender. Not pre-qualification (a soft estimate) - full pre-approval with verified income, credit pull, and asset documentation. Without this, sellers will not take your offers seriously in any competitive Utah market.

Phase 2: Define Your Search Criteria

Price range, city, school district, commute time, must-haves vs. nice-to-haves. The most common buyer mistake in Utah is searching too broadly - house-hunting fatigue sets in after 20-30 showings if criteria are not tight.

Phase 3: Pick a Utah Realtor Who Knows Your Market

Your Realtor should know your target submarkets cold - pricing trends, builder reputations, HOA quirks, school boundaries. A generalist Realtor working all of Utah is rarely as effective as one who specializes in your area.

Phase 4: Tour Homes Strategically

See 5-8 homes the first weekend. After that, narrow ruthlessly. Most buyers find their home within the first 10-15 showings if criteria are well-defined.

Phase 5: Make a Strong Offer

In Utah, offers typically include: purchase price, earnest money (1-3% of price), inspection contingency window, financing contingency, appraisal contingency, closing date, and any seller concessions requested. The strongest offers in competitive markets often waive or shorten contingencies - risky, so weigh carefully.

Phase 6: Under Contract - Due Diligence Period

You typically have 7-14 days to inspect, review HOA docs, get appraisal ordered, and finalize financing. Use this window aggressively - once you waive contingencies, your earnest money is at risk.

Phase 7: Inspection and Negotiation

A licensed Utah home inspector should walk the property within the first 3-5 days. Common Utah issues: radon (test always), foundation settling (especially older Salt Lake homes), roof condition (snow load), HVAC age, and water intrusion in basements.

Phase 8: Appraisal

Lender orders the appraisal. If it comes in low, you can negotiate price down, increase down payment, or walk. Utah appraisals are coming in at value about 92-95% of the time in current market conditions.

Phase 9: Final Loan Approval

Underwriter reviews everything one final time. Do NOT open new credit lines, change jobs, or make large purchases during this phase - it can blow up your approval.

Phase 10: Final Walk-Through

24-48 hours before closing, walk the property to confirm condition and that agreed-upon repairs were completed.

Phase 11: Closing Day

Utah uses title companies (not attorneys) for residential closings. You will sign 40-60 pages of documents at the title company office. Bring your driver license and a cashier check for closing costs (or wire ahead). Keys are usually delivered same day after recording.

Phase 12: Post-Closing

Set up utilities, update voter registration, file homestead exemption (Utah saves you about 45% on property tax for your primary residence), and review your title insurance policy for record-keeping.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does buying a home in Utah typically take?

From pre-approval to closing, plan on 30-60 days for a typical Utah purchase. Cash offers can close in 7-14 days; FHA/VA loans typically need 35-45 days; conventional 30-day closes are common.

What credit score do I need to buy in Utah?

FHA: 580 minimum (3.5% down). Conventional: 620-680 minimum. The lower your score, the higher your rate. 740+ qualifies for best pricing.

How much should I save for closing costs in Utah?

Plan on 2-3% of purchase price for buyer closing costs, plus your down payment. On a $600K Utah home, that is $12-18K in closing costs plus down payment.

Should I waive the home inspection in a hot Utah market?

Rarely a good idea. If you must compete aggressively, shorten the inspection window or do a pre-offer inspection - but do not skip it entirely. Hidden defects can cost five figures to fix.

What if I am buying my first home?

Utah Housing Corporation (UHC) offers first-time buyer programs with down payment assistance up to 6%. FHA loans require only 3.5% down with 580+ credit.

Ready to talk?

Whether you are ready to start your Utah home search today or are still 6-12 months out, the right first conversation saves time and money. Initial consultations are always free.

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