nestlewood REALTY

FREE GUIDE

THE HICKORY AREA HOME BUYER'S GUIDE

A step-by-step guide to buying a home in Hickory, Newton, Granite Falls and the Charlotte area, in plain English.



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WELCOME

LET'S GO HOME.

Buying a home is one of the biggest decisions you'll ever make, and it should feel exciting, not overwhelming. This guide walks you through every step, from figuring out your budget to getting the keys, so you know exactly what to expect.

01 How much home can you really afford?

02 Getting pre-approved (and why it wins offers)

03 Touring homes like a pro

04 Making an offer that stands out

05 Due diligence, inspections and appraisal

06 Closing day, explained

07 Your first home tour checklist



HI, I'M NOLAN.

Real estate wasn't a family business for me. I got my start emailing brokers out of high school until one gave me an internship. Today I help buyers and sellers across the Catawba Valley and Charlotte area. Questions as you read? Call or text me anytime at **828-404-5335**.

STEP 01

HOW MUCH HOME CAN YOU AFFORD?

Your budget is more than the price of the house. Your monthly payment usually includes four parts:

PART	WHAT IT IS
Principal	The money you borrowed, paid back over time.
Interest	What the lender charges you to borrow.
Taxes	Property taxes, often collected monthly by your lender.
Insurance	Homeowners insurance, plus mortgage insurance on some loans with a smaller down payment.

Also budget for: your down payment, closing costs, moving costs, and a cushion for repairs and furniture.

> **Tip:** Use the mortgage calculator on my website to play with prices and down payments, then talk to a lender for your real numbers.

STEP 02

GET PRE-APPROVED

A pre-approval is a letter from a lender saying how much they're willing to lend you, based on your income, credit and savings. Get it **before** you start touring.

- **You'll know your real budget**, so you only fall in love with homes you can buy.
- **Sellers take you seriously.** Many won't consider an offer without one.
- **You can move fast** when the right home hits the market.

What lenders usually ask for: recent pay stubs, W-2s or tax returns, bank statements, and a photo ID. I'm happy to connect you with lenders I trust.

STEP 03

TOUR HOMES LIKE A PRO

Before we start, make two lists: **must-haves** (bedrooms, school area, commute) and **nice-to-haves** (a big yard, a garage, a lake view). It keeps us focused.

- **Look past the decor.** Paint and furniture are easy to change. Layout, location and the roof aren't.
- **Visit at different times.** Drive by at night and during rush hour to see traffic and noise.
- **Take photos and notes.** After five showings, homes start to blur together.
- **Think about resale.** Even if it's your forever home, location and layout protect your investment.

STEP 04

MAKE AN OFFER THAT STANDS OUT

When you find the one, I'll pull recent sales nearby so we know what the home is really worth. Then we build an offer that's strong and smart. Price matters, but so do the terms:

- **Your pre-approval letter** shows you can close.
- **Earnest money** is a deposit that shows you're serious. It's held in a trust account and usually goes toward your closing costs.
- **Due diligence fee:** in North Carolina, buyers often pay this directly to the seller for the time to inspect the home. It's typically non-refundable but usually credited toward your purchase at closing.
- **Closing date and flexibility** that fit the seller's plans can win over a higher offer.

> **Tip:** In a competitive market, the best offer isn't always the highest price. It's the one the seller is most confident will close.

STEP 05

DUE DILIGENCE & INSPECTIONS

Once your offer is accepted, the **due diligence period** begins. This is your time to make sure the home is right for you.

- **Home inspection:** a licensed inspector checks the roof, foundation, plumbing, electrical, HVAC and more. Plan to be there for the end so they can walk you through it.
- **Other inspections:** depending on the home, we may also order a termite (wood-destroying insect) inspection, a survey, or septic and well checks.
- **Repairs:** if the inspection finds issues, I'll help you negotiate repairs, a credit, or a lower price.
- **Appraisal:** your lender orders an appraisal to confirm the home is worth what you're paying.
- **Final loan approval:** keep your finances steady. I'll track every contract deadline for you. Don't open new credit cards, finance a car, or change jobs before closing without talking to your lender.

STEP 06

CLOSING DAY

In North Carolina, closings are handled by a real estate attorney. Here's what to expect:

- **A day or two before:** we do a final walk-through to make sure the home is in the condition we agreed on.
- **Your closing numbers:** you'll get a Closing Disclosure from your lender. We'll review it together.
- **Bring:** a photo ID and your funds to close. Wire or cashier's check, per your attorney's instructions.
- **Sign, record, and get the keys.** Welcome home!

> **Wire fraud warning:** always call your attorney's office at a phone number you know is real to confirm wiring instructions. Never trust instructions sent only by email.

STEP 07

YOUR HOME TOUR CHECKLIST

Bring this to every showing. Check things off as you go.

OUTSIDE

- ☐ Roof: missing shingles, sagging, stains
- ☐ Gutters and drainage away from the house
- ☐ Foundation cracks
- ☐ Siding, trim and windows
- ☐ Driveway and walkways
- ☐ Yard size and slope
- ☐ Neighbors and street noise

KITCHEN & BATHS

- ☐ Water pressure and hot water
- ☐ Leaks under sinks
- ☐ Age of appliances
- ☐ Cabinet and storage space
- ☐ Ventilation fans work

INSIDE

- ☐ Water stains on ceilings or walls
- ☐ Floors: soft spots or squeaks
- ☐ Doors and windows open and close
- ☐ Enough outlets and natural light
- ☐ Closet and storage space
- ☐ Smells: musty, smoke, pets

SYSTEMS

- ☐ Age of the HVAC system
- ☐ Age of the water heater
- ☐ Electrical panel
- ☐ Septic or city sewer
- ☐ Well or city water
- ☐ Internet options

MY NOTES

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READY TO START?

Whether you're buying your first home or your next one, I'd love to help. Let's go home.

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This guide is general information, not legal, tax or financial advice. Every transaction is different. Talk with your lender, attorney and agent about your situation. Equal Housing Opportunity.