

# 5 SIMPLE STEPS

FOR BUYING YOUR BAY AREA HOME

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**ACKERMAN REALTY GROUP**  
EXPERIENCE EXCEPTIONAL RESULTS





## MAKE A SAVVY HOME INVESTMENT

FROM **SAN FRANCISCO, MARIN OR SAN MATEO COUNTY TO BERKELEY AND OAKLAND.** OWN THE PROPERTY THAT ADDS UP NOW AND PAYS OFF LATER WHEN YOU SELL.



SAN FRANCISCO



MARIN COUNTY



SAN MATEO COUNTY



BERKELEY



OAKLAND







## LOSE THE STRESS, GAIN A PLAN

Are you dabbling a bit? In the devoted exploration phase?  
Or ready to buy and move into your home right now?

In any case, you don't have to spin your wheels.

This guide gives you an elegant path to the finish line,  
at whatever pace works for you.

I'm **Craig Ackerman** and I've been at this a long time—long enough to show you a tidy, streamlined process for buying the right home for you. You'll see why I work with clients time after time, as they ask me to help them sell and move up to their next dream home.

### A SNAPSHOT OF MY CREDENTIALS

- > veteran San Francisco/Bay Area Realtor® with more than 15 years of experience
- > top 1% of San Francisco agents by sales volume with over 500 career transactions
- > creative, independent local broker not hindered by a corporate agency
- > former contractor to help you rule out problem homes and see hidden potential
- > solid professional reputation and network to give you extra clout

And, of course, you also get my highly trained client support team and vast network of resources. We'll advocate for you and make sure you're able to move quickly when it matters most.



# STEP-BY-STEP PATH TO HOME OWNERSHIP

## MAKE YOUR HOME SEARCH PRODUCTIVE

**1**

**Get your loan preapproved.** Find out what you can afford and be ready to jump on it if you find the perfect home. Preapproval is the mark of a serious buyer.

**2**

**Make your online search count.** Instead of a slow, scattered approach, focus on homes that meet your family's space and lifestyle needs in your two favorite neighborhoods. I can help you refine your search so you get the best results from Redfin, my recommended tool.

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### EXTRA ADVANTAGE STEP

**Get a contractor's insights.**  
**Tour a couple homes with me.**  
**As a former licensed contractor,**  
**I can show you how to avoid costly mistakes and find hidden gems.**

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**3**

**Get the lowdown on actual sale prices versus list prices.** Ask for a report on the last five homes sold in your target neighborhoods. Once my team and I calculate the expected cost per square foot you can get real about the home you're aiming for.

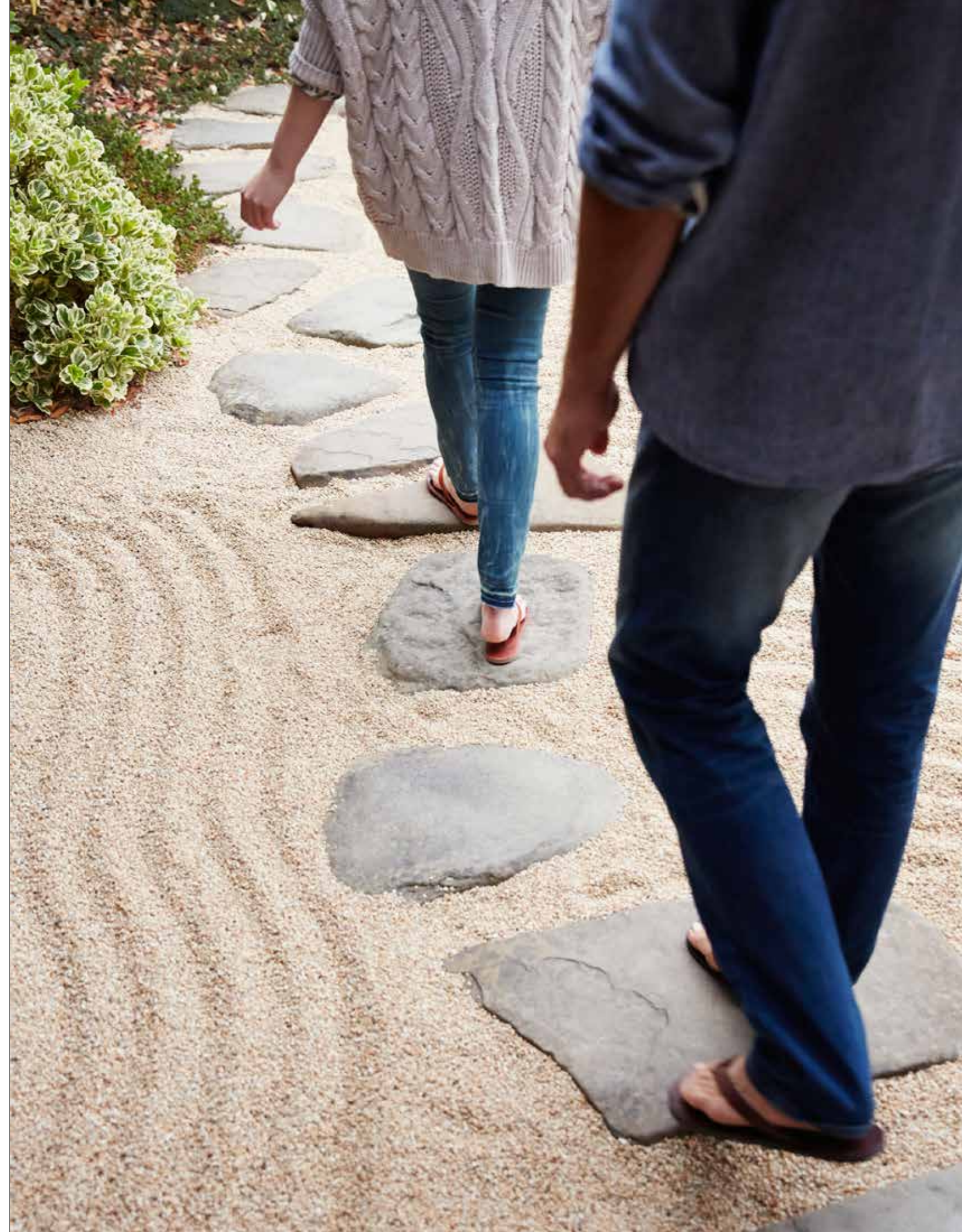
**4**

**Make an offer they won't want to refuse.** I walk you through the art of perfecting your offer and putting yourself on competitive ground. My relationships and reputation with other agents also give your offer extra sparkle.

**5**

**Rely on strategic contract terms.** Find how to reduce your risk and strengthen the contract in the seller's eyes.

**NOW LET'S GO FURTHER INTO THE CHECKLIST, CLEAR UP THE UNCERTAINTY AND HAVE SOME FUN. YOU GOT THIS! >**







## STEPS TO YOUR NEW HOME

1

### GET LOAN PREAPPROVAL

*(Already underwritten or paying cash?  
Skip to step 2.)*

#### Is preapproval enough?

Preapproval helps but consider being more aggressive and going for a fully underwritten loan. This means you submit your paperwork and the lender verifies your income, assets and employment up front.

Does this extra effort matter? Oh yes, it makes you a very competitive buyer. The seller sees that your offer is solid and promises a speedier close.

A fully underwritten approval lasts 60 to 90 days and is readily extended. By removing uncertainty about financing, you dramatically improve your chances of winning the bid.

#### Know your numbers

Are you a fully prepared buyer? Have you answered your financing questions so you can focus on the housing search? Or are you still winging it?

- > **Downpayment** – How much can you put down to start? Twenty percent is decent and will give you a good mortgage rate. More is better, less puts you at a disadvantage in a competitive market.
- > **Monthly payments** – What is your current rent payment? How does that compare to the monthly costs of the home you're pursuing, when you include property tax, insurance, etc.? What does your tax advisor say about potential tax deductions and how they'll affect home ownership costs? What mortgage type and interest rate are you considering? The Ackerman crew will partner with you to ensure you get clarity from your financing source.
- > **Post-closing cash** – Will you have enough cash after closing for minor repairs or will you be squeezed? Let's be sure we look at homes consistent with your resources, not beyond them.

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Knowing your ideal price range will save you a lot of time and energy.  
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## 2

### SHOP ONLINE EFFICIENTLY

Once you know your targeted price range, I'll help you convert it to tangible home attributes and location criteria. Number of bedrooms, neighborhood, must-have amenities.

Suddenly it becomes easier to recognize properties that suit you, and your chances of success go up exponentially!

#### Pinpoint your home segment

San Francisco and Bay Area real estate is highly segmented by number of bedrooms and bathrooms within a neighborhood, with wildly different prices in each category. I'll guide you in navigating the choices and identifying the types of homes within your reach.

#### Choose your must-haves

Determine the neighborhood(s), home configuration and amenities that best accommodate your family, lifestyle and budget. Let's take a few minutes to talk through the non-negotiables and refine a short list of must-haves, in order of importance. I can point out the less obvious variables that make a big difference.

After this, you'll be surprised by how much progress you'll make in a few weeks compared to months (or even years) of casual poking around.

Be ready! New homes enter the market every week. And occasionally one falls out of contract and comes back on market (BOM). Some listings will be canceled while others sell prior to the end of their listing period. Let us show you the opportunities in these situations so you can quickly respond.

#### Make Redfin your search tool

Redfin is one of the better real estate search engines, easy to use and up to date. Plug in your freshly focused criteria and enjoy the list of matches.

Then walk the neighborhood to observe traffic patterns, discover retail shops and gain a clear sense for whether it's the right fit.  
There's no substitute for experiencing the area.







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### EXTRA ADVANTAGE - TOUR WITH A CONTRACTOR

You certainly don't need me for every house you tour, but let's go visit one or two together and you'll never see homes the same way again. As a former contractor, I'll point out deal-breaker issues that would be costly mistakes. You can also rely on me to spot bargain homes with easily fixed cosmetic deficiencies that you might have otherwise overlooked.

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Your home criteria list will help you compare properties and assess which are closest to your ideal. Of course cost matters, and I'll help you review how the qualities you're aiming for affect the sale price.

You'll start to spot the differences between a home with problems and one that's move-in ready. Disclosure packages are revealing, but they bury you in hundreds of pages of technical, intimidating material. I'll turn you into a quick study, by speeding past all the boilerplate text and focusing on the mere seven or eight documents relevant to your decision making.

### 3

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### DON'T LOCK IN ON THE LIST PRICE

There is little correlation between list price and actual sale price of a home. The listed price is simply a starting point, and competition between interested buyers determines how much the home sells for.

#### Get the inside scoop

Ask us for a report on the most recent sales in the neighborhoods you like best. We'll calculate cost per square foot paid on each home so you know what to expect. Then you can anticipate the price you'll likely pay based on size, condition and inclusion or exclusion of specific attributes (Bay views, a yard, balcony, second parking spot, etc.).



## 4

### CRAFT A WINNING OFFER

Most buyers come to me after many months of toying with acquiring a home. They've usually viewed hundreds of houses online, half a dozen in person and perhaps been preapproved for a loan.

Often, they feel overwhelmed or misled because homes frequently sell for a lot more than their listing price. Frustrating, right?

#### How to compete with cash buyers

Let's be real. In many cases, you can't compete with the allure of cash. But if you already have a fully underwritten loan approval, and have investigated the home's condition, you're in the most favorable position and your offer will be taken seriously.

To compete aggressively for a home, I recommend holding your offer to one contingency, or even better, none. I'll make sure you're well prepared to do this.

#### When you're prepared, you have more leverage

I'll coach you so that you stand out among buyers. You have the edge when you present a fully underwritten loan preapproval, when you know your numbers, have studied the market and consulted your financial and tax professional.

#### Is the seller strong?

A seller projects strength and is ready to complete a sale for the highest possible price when:

- > their home is upgraded and tastefully staged
- > inspections have been conducted
- > a bid date is established
- > high-end videos and photography are presented online
- > the home is vacant and easily accessible

Conversely, a weak seller lists a beat-up home that's owner or tenant-occupied, somewhat cluttered and overpriced. I'll teach you the signs of seller preparedness and how it shapes your ability to negotiate a better price.



#### Your offer price

I'll advise you, but ultimately, the price you offer is up to you and has to feel right. The most effective buyers (those who don't overpay) are confident and comfortable because they're organized and willing to act decisively. You'll enjoy the process more if you're not winging it—better to be purposeful, determined and results-driven.

#### What's your offer philosophy?

We'll work in tandem to establish an offer philosophy that works for you. Here are a few perfectly valid ways to approach it:

- > a walk-away dollar amount which you will not exceed
- > a realistic purchase price of \$X per sq. ft.
- > a stretch beyond your maximum purchasing price if you feel features/benefits warrant it

Once we decide on your approach, we'll make your best and final offer the first time. Don't assume there will be a second round because often there are no do-overs.

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**And when you're touring homes, remember you're leaving an impression too.**  
**Are you presenting as a positive, confident, well-informed buyer?**  
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## 5

### CONTRACT TERMS

#### Navigating contingency use

Contingencies are conditions that give the buyer an out. The cleaner your offer, meaning the fewer contingencies, the better your chances of winning the home. The most common contingencies are inspection, appraisal and loan.

Sellers don't like them because they can leave the transaction open to delay or a potential crumbling of the sale. The more you rely on contingencies, the more likely the seller won't accept your offer.

You may choose to include a contingency in your offer if you require these assurances:

- > no costly repairs or hidden defects (inspection)
- > the home will appraise for the offer price (appraisal)
- > your mortgage will be approved (loan)

#### Inspection contingency

In many cases, the seller provides a recent home inspection in the disclosure package. With a seller-provided inspection in hand, you have several options.

- > Make your offer in accordance with the findings of the seller's inspection. We can often pose questions to the seller and/or inspector for further clarification and to create a documentation trail.
- > Seek permission to conduct your own inspection prior to submitting an offer so you feel comfortable submitting an inspection contingency-free contract.
- > Write your offer with an inspection contingency to be resolved in two to three days. Then get it done quickly!

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**Managing your risk yet writing an offer that's likely to be accepted is perhaps the most important part of our collaboration.**  
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#### Appraisal contingency

A fully underwritten loan approval still requires an independent appraisal to support your offer price. Before writing your offer, I'll arm you with comparable market analysis (CMA), aimed at forecasting the value range of the home. In my more than 15 years in residential real estate, I can only recall five times when the appraisal came in below the offer price—rare, but something to factor into your offer.

#### Mortgage contingency

Even when your loan is underwritten, issues with the property can stall the financing. If the lender balks because the heater isn't working or the HOA hasn't provided financial records, we can often help. And we work with a few mortgage lending stars who are excellent problem solvers, so ask for an introduction.





## BENEFIT FROM OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Each time I've closed one of my hundreds of Bay Area real estate transactions, it's by negotiating with an agent who is representing their client.

I've cultivated many enduring relationships with these agents (as well as other professionals in related fields). This familiarity, plus my reputation for prepping my clients, puts your offer at an immediate advantage.

But that only goes so far ... you have a role to play, too.

When touring properties, introduce yourself, always be pleasant and smile. Listing agents are very perceptive to buyer behavior. Play your part well and leave the difficult questions to me. I'll handle the heavy lifting.

I strongly suggest you draft a letter to the seller to accompany your offer. Personalize it and add a photo or two so you become more than numbers on a page. This heartfelt letter allows us to introduce you and your offer in the most favorable light.



Download Letter to Seller example [here](#). You can draw from the included list of situations to create a personal and compelling homebuying story.



# HOW TO GET STARTED TODAY

## GET A JUMPSTART ON YOUR COMPETITION

Whether you're just exploring or ready to write an offer, I invite you to sign up today for a Jumpstart meeting. We'll share a Zoom screen or conference call to:

- > discuss your goals and aspirations
- > connect you with our preferred buyer vendors (mortgage lender, CPA, others)
- > review homes of interest and set up tours
- > review disclosure packages to uncover the most relevant details

### At your pace

We'll both be more comfortable moving at your pace. I'm here to provide you with relevant information so you can make better-informed decisions.

### Choosing me as your agent

You can relax, I'm not here to push or add stress to your home search. Quite the opposite. Buyer's agents are often the most inexperienced in the business. But I've been at this for almost 20 years, representing buyers and sellers.

I understand the psychology, expectations, excitement and fears associated with making a home purchase. I led in-depth homebuyer seminars for two decades (SF Chamber of Commerce, Learning Annex, title companies, etc.) and have closed more than 500 residential real estate transactions.

Today, many of my workshop attendees come back to me to represent them on their second and third home purchases.

### A former licensed contractor

Let me give you my contractor's eye view as we tour homes. I offer you practical insights on home condition, building systems, fixtures and finishes.

I also spent 10 years in China and Singapore in commercial real estate, honing my eye for interior design and building materials. So I can be a handy guy to have around.

### Most importantly, I'll treat you like family

I want you to find the right house. I'd rather you buy nothing than a problem property. I'll gladly steer you away from money pit homes or situations that are ripe for litigation, and I can spot 'em a mile away.

### Let's have a chat

You'll be ahead of the pack if you articulate and clarify your intent:

- > the must-have features you're shopping for in your house
- > your preferred neighborhoods
- > your loan preapproval letter
- > your desired timeline, with closing and move-in dates
- > how much you can spend to update the home, if you're open to that
- > your biggest worries so we can reduce or alleviate them

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**Take a stab at creating the list above, an outline of your ideal plan. Then get in touch today and schedule your Jumpstart Zoom session or conference call. I'd love to hear your story and give you custom-tailored success strategies with no pressure or obligation.**

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Warmly,

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# GET IN TOUCH

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