



Homebuying Guide

*Helpful tips and essential information
for every potential homeowner*

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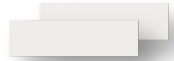
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Is Now the Right Time?

“The best time to prepare for homeownership is before you think you’re ready.”



There isn't one “perfect” market to buy in, only the right time for you. Instead of trying to time the market, focus on your personal readiness:

- Stable income
- Comfortable with a monthly payment
- Planning to stay a few years
- Ready for the responsibilities of owning a home

Myths That Hold Buyers Back

“I need 20% down.”

There are loan programs that require far less than that.

“My credit must be perfect.”

No one has perfect credit. Many programs work with average scores.

“Rates are high, so I should wait.”

You can often refinance later. Waiting can also mean paying more if prices rise.

“I should wait until I earn more.”

Many buyers are surprised by what they already qualify for today.

Ana's Advice

Don't wait until you feel “ready.” A short conversation today can uncover options you didn't know existed – even if you don't plan to buy for another year. Let's build a plan!



Can I Qualify?

“You don't need a perfect financial story. You simply need the right plan for wherever you are today”

Every lender reviews the same five building blocks – the stronger each one, the stronger your application.



Income



Credit



Employment



Assets



Debt

Documents to Gather



Identification

Photo ID & Social Security number



Income

Pay stubs, W-2s, tax returns (as needed)



Assets

Bank & investment account statements



Employment

Employer name & contact info

Ana's Advice

Don't pay off collections or close credit cards without asking me first – it can sometimes lower your score or affect approval. Let's build a strategy together before making changes.

Building Your Budget

“A mortgage payment should give you peace of mind, not take it away.”

The better question isn't “how much house can I afford,” it's “what monthly payment lets me enjoy my life?”



Illustrative example – your actual breakdown depends on your loan program.

Find Your Comfort Zone

Rather than shopping for the highest price you qualify for, think in ranges:

Comfortable

LOW STRESS

Easy to manage, with room to save and live.

Stretch

MODERATE STRESS

Doable, with careful monthly budgeting.

Maximum

NOT RECOMMENDED

Your approved amount – not your target.

Ana's Advice

Your lender can tell you what you qualify for. Only you can decide what feels comfortable. My goal is to help you find that sweet spot – not the maximum.

Your Loan Options

“The best loan isn't the one with the lowest rate. It's the one built around your life.”

There isn't one “best” loan — only the one that fits your goals, budget, and timeline.

Conventional

BEST FOR:

Great for buyers with good credit and at least 3% down

FHA

BEST FOR:

Flexible guidelines, lower down payment

VA

BEST FOR:

For Veterans and eligible spouses

USDA

BEST FOR:

Eligible rural & suburban areas

Jumbo

BEST FOR:

Higher-priced homes above conforming limits

Non-QM

BEST FOR:

Self-employed buyers & investors, as well as unique income situations

Which Loan Fits You?

If you...

Explore...

Are buying your first home

FHA, Conventional

Have excellent credit

Conventional

Served in the military

VA

Are buying in an eligible rural area

USDA

Are buying a higher-priced home

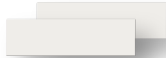
Jumbo

Own your own business

Non-QM

Ana's Advice

The lowest rate isn't automatically the best loan. Payment, down payment, closing costs, and your future plans all matter – we'll look at the full picture together.



Down Payment Myths

“Waiting for 20% down has kept more people renting than any market ever has.”



⊗ MYTH

“I need 20% down.”

✓ FACT

That's one option — not the only one. Many buyers put down far less.

⊗ MYTH

“The bigger, the better.”

✓ FACT

A larger down payment helps, but draining your savings isn't always smart. Keep an emergency fund.

⊗ MYTH

“I can't use gift money.”

✓ FACT

Many programs allow gift funds from family toward your down payment or closing costs.

⊗ MYTH

“Closing costs = thousands more.”

✓ FACT

Closing costs are separate from your down payment and there are ways to reduce them.

⊗ MYTH

“I should wait until I save more.”

✓ FACT

Waiting isn't free — prices and rents may rise while you save.

Ana's Advice

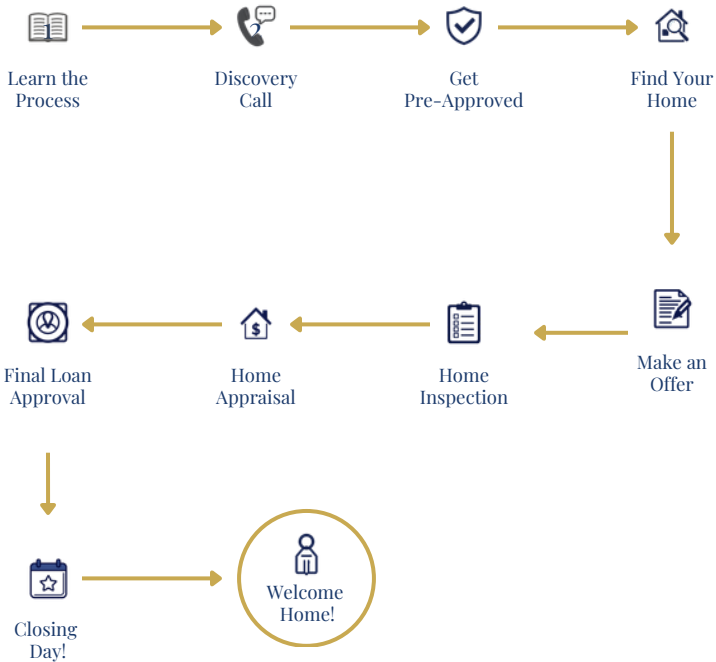
I never want a client to feel “house rich and cash poor.” Buying your dream home is exciting — keeping money available for life's surprises is just as important.



Your Homebuying Roadmap

“Every homeowner starts as a first-time buyer. The map just makes the road shorter.”

From your first conversation to your keys – ten steps, one guide.



Ana's Advice

You'll always know where you are, what's next, and what to expect. My job is to guide you through every step – you're never navigating this alone. Let's get your home!

Mistakes to Avoid

“Most closing delays aren’t caused by big mistakes — they’re caused by small surprises.”



Financing a car or big purchase

Even a small new payment can affect your loan approval.

Opening new credit cards

Even unused, new credit can affect your file.

Changing jobs without asking

Timing matters — talk to me before accepting or starting a new role.

Making large, undocumented deposits

Large deposits need a documented, explainable source.

Missing bill payments

Keep every account current until after closing.

Co-signing for someone else

This creates a new obligation that can affect your approval.

Quitting your job

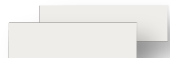
Stable employment matters through closing — talk to me first.

Ignoring document requests

Quick responses keep your closing on schedule.

Ana's Advice

Before making any financial changes, please reach out if you're unsure how they might affect your loan. A quick conversation now can help prevent delays and keep your loan on track.



Your Checklist

“Confidence comes from knowing exactly what's next.”

1. Getting Ready

- Schedule your Discovery Call
- Review your budget
- Avoid new credit accounts
- Gather ID, income & asset docs

2. Pre-Approval

- Complete your application
- Upload documents
- Receive your pre-approval

3. House Hunting

- Meet your Realtor
- Tour homes within budget
- Make an offer

4. Under Contract

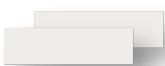
- Schedule inspection
- Order appraisal
- Finalize insurance
- Avoid financial changes

5. Closing

- Review Closing Disclosure
- Confirm wire instructions directly
- Final walkthrough
- Sign & get your keys

6. After You Move In

- Change the locks
- Set up utilities
- Update your mailing address
- Create a maintenance calendar



Frequently Asked Questions —

“There’s no such thing as a silly question when it’s the biggest purchase of your life.”

Do I need perfect credit?

No — many buyers qualify with average credit.

How much money do I need?

It depends on your loan program. I'll give you a personalized estimate.

How long does it take?

Most purchases close in about 30-45 days after an accepted offer.

Can I use gift money?

Often, yes – for down payment and/or closing costs.

I’m self-employed – can I qualify?

Absolutely. We'll review your tax returns and find the right program.

What if I’m not ready yet?

That’s okay – many clients start planning months or years ahead.

Will checking my options hurt my credit?

I'll explain exactly what to expect before we pull anything. No surprises.

What happens after I close?

I'm still here – for questions, reviews, refinancing, and your next home.

Meet Ana Cortez

“I don’t just want to help you close your loan. I want to earn your trust for life.”



I was born in Mexico and moved to California with my family at the age of 13—an experience that instilled in me the values of hard work, resilience, and creating opportunities through education.

With more than 20 years in the financial services industry, including the last decade in mortgage lending, I’ve built my career around one simple belief: buying a home should be an exciting milestone, not an overwhelming experience.

My Promise to You

- Honest advice
- Clear communication
- Personalized guidance
- Education without pressure

Let’s Stay Connected!





Your Next Step

“Homeownership doesn't start with a house. It starts with a decision.”

Congratulations!

By reading this guide, you've already done something many buyers never do.

You've taken the time to learn before making one of the biggest financial decisions of your life.

Whether you're planning to buy in the next few months or simply exploring your options, you don't have to navigate this journey alone.

You don't need to know every answer. You simply need a trusted guide.

If you're ready for your next step, I'd love to help you!

Together, I'll:

- Answer your questions
- Review your goals
- Explore your financing options
- Create a personalized homebuying plan
- Move forward at your pace

Let's Build Your Homeownership Plan Together!

Ana Cortez

Mortgage Loan Officer

"Educating. Guiding. Empowering Homebuyers"