

**JENAI JOHNSON**

Licensed Real Estate Agent · Real Broker, LLC · Atlanta Metro

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# NEW HOME BUYER'S GUIDE

Everything you need to know. Start to close.

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(404) 849-4311 · [jenaijacquel@gmail.com](mailto:jenaijacquel@gmail.com) · [soldinatl.com](http://soldinatl.com)

**GROWING YOUR WEALTH. ONE DOOR AT A TIME.**

WELCOME TO YOUR

# Homebuying Journey.

Buying a home is one of the most significant decisions of your life — financially and personally. This guide walks you through every stage of the process so you move forward with **confidence, clarity, and zero surprises.**

Whether you are a first-time buyer or returning to the market, Jenai Johnson brings market expertise, negotiation strength, and a buyer-first approach to every transaction.



<b>7</b>	<b>30-45</b>	<b>2-5%</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>STEPS</b>	<b>DAYS</b>	<b>CLOSING COSTS</b>	<b>BUYER FEE</b>
From search to close	Typical timeline	Of loan amount	Seller pays commission

## WHAT'S INSIDE

#	STEP	TOPIC
01	Know Your Numbers	Credit, budget, debt-to-income
02	Get Pre-Approved	Loan types, docs, what to expect
03	Define Your Search	Needs vs. wants, new construction vs. resale
04	Making an Offer	Strategy, price, terms, contingencies
05	Due Diligence	Inspections, appraisal, title, insurance
06	Closing Day	Costs breakdown, what to bring
07	After You Close	First 90 days, maintenance, equity

STEP 01

# KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Credit score · Budget · Debt-to-income ratio

“ Before you fall in love with a home, fall in love with your finances.

## Your Credit Score

Your credit score determines whether you qualify for a loan, what rate you get, and how much home you can afford.

SCORE	IMPACT
760 +	Best rates — strongest buying position
700–759	Very good — competitive rates available
640–699	Fair — higher rates, limited options
580–639	FHA minimum with 3.5% down
Below 580	Rebuild first before applying



**PRO TIP**

Pull your free report at [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com) before your lender does. Know your number first.

## How to Improve Before Buying

- Pay all bills on time for at least 6 months
- Keep credit card balances below 30% of limit
- Do not open new accounts or make large purchases
- Do not close old accounts — history matters
- Dispute any errors at [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com)

## The 28/36 Budget Rule

RULE	WHAT IT MEANS
28%	Monthly housing costs should not exceed 28% of gross monthly income
36%	Total monthly debt payments should not exceed 36% of gross monthly income

**IMPORTANT**

Lender approval amount  $\neq$  what you should spend. Build in a cushion for maintenance, emergencies, and life.

STEP 02

# GET PRE-APPROVED

Loan types · Required documents · What to expect

“ A pre-approval letter is your key to being taken seriously in any market.

## Pre-Qualification vs. Pre-Approval

Pre-qualification is a rough estimate. Pre-approval is verified. Sellers only take pre-approval seriously — do not skip it.

## Loan Types at a Glance

LOAN TYPE	DOWN PMT	BEST FOR
Conventional	3%–20%	Strong credit, established buyers
FHA	3.5%	First-time buyers, lower credit scores
VA	0%	Military, veterans, surviving spouses
USDA	0%	Rural and qualifying suburban areas
Jumbo	10–20%+	Loans above \$766,550

## Documents You Need

- Last 2 years W-2s or 1099s
- Last 2 years tax returns (all pages)
- Last 2 months pay stubs
- Last 2–3 months bank statements (all accounts)
- Photo ID and Social Security number
- Proof of other income (rental, alimony, investments)
- Self-employed: P&L; and business returns

### DO NOT DO THIS

No large purchases, new credit lines, or job changes during the loan process. Any change can delay or kill your approval.

STEP 03

# DEFINE YOUR SEARCH

Needs · Wants · New construction vs. resale

“ Know what you need and cannot live without before you fall in love with the wrong home.

## Needs vs. Wants Worksheet

■ NEEDS — Non-Negotiable	■ WANTS — Nice to Have
■ Min bedrooms: ____	■ Open floor plan
■ Min bathrooms: ____	■ Large kitchen island
■ School district: ____	■ Primary suite on main
■ Max commute: ____	■ Bonus/loft room
■ Garage: Y / N / Either	■ Pool or large yard
■ Max price: \$ ____	■ New construction

## New Construction vs. Resale

	NEW CONSTRUCTION	RESALE
Timeline	Months to completion	30–45 days typically
Customization	Choose your finishes	Take it as-is
Price	Fixed builder pricing	Flexible, competitive offers
Warranties	1–10 year builder warranty	As-is or negotiated
Competition	Less bidding wars	Often multiple offers

**NEW CONSTRUCTION SPECIALIST**



Jenai works directly with builders and has inside access to upcoming communities. Ask about off-market opportunities before they go public.

STEP 04

# MAKING AN OFFER

Strategy · Price · Terms · Contingencies

“ An offer is not just a number. Every single term on that page is a negotiating tool.

## What Goes Into an Offer

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS
Purchase Price	At, above, or below list — depends on market and competition
Earnest Money	1–3% of price — shows commitment, applied to down payment at close
Contingencies	Conditions that must be met: inspection, financing, appraisal
Closing Date	When you take possession — sellers value flexibility here
Inclusions	Appliances, fixtures, or furniture you want to stay
Escalation Clause	Auto-increases your offer in set increments if competing bids arrive

## Contingencies: When to Use Them

CONTINGENCY	PURPOSE	KEEP IT?
Inspection	Right to inspect and negotiate repairs	Almost always
Financing	Protection if loan falls through	Yes — unless very strong approval
Appraisal	Protection if value comes in low	Sometimes waived in hot markets
Home Sale	Must sell current home first	Weakens offer significantly

### STRATEGY

In a competitive market, a clean offer with fewer contingencies often beats a higher price with complications. I advise you based on the specific property and seller situation.

STEP 05

# DUE DILIGENCE

Inspections · Appraisal · Title · Insurance

“ You are under contract. Now it is time to protect yourself.

## The Home Inspection

Never skip the inspection — not even on new construction. In Georgia you typically have **10 days** from contract to complete due diligence.

- Hire an independent inspector — not the listing agent's recommendation
- Attend in person — walk every room with the inspector
- Focus on structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing — not cosmetics
- New construction: schedule phase inspections during framing and rough-in
- Request a sewer scope on homes older than 15 years

APPRAISAL	TITLE	INSURANCE
Lender confirms home value. If low: renegotiate, pay difference, challenge with comps, or walk away.	Georgia is an attorney closing state. A licensed attorney conducts the title search and closing.	Required before closing. Shop at least 3 quotes. Lender requires proof of coverage.

### GEORGIA LAW

Georgia requires a licensed real estate attorney to conduct all closings. I connect you with vetted, trusted closing attorneys in the Atlanta Metro.

STEP 06

# CLOSING DAY

Closing costs · What to bring · Final walkthrough

“ The finish line. Here is exactly what to expect.

## Closing Costs Breakdown

Buyers typically pay **2–5% of the loan amount** in closing costs, in addition to your down payment.

COST ITEM	TYPICAL RANGE
Loan origination fee	0.5%–1% of loan amount
Appraisal	\$450–\$700
Home inspection	\$350–\$600
Title search and insurance	\$1,000–\$2,500
Attorney / closing fee	\$500–\$1,500
Prepaid interest	Closing date to first payment
Property tax escrow	2–6 months upfront at closing
Homeowners insurance	1-year premium due at closing
Recording fees	\$100–\$300

## What to Bring

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Government-issued photo ID</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cashier's check / wire transfer for closing funds</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Proof of homeowners insurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Any outstanding lender documents</li> </ul>

### FINAL WALKTHROUGH

24–48 hours before close: confirm agreed repairs are done, seller's belongings are gone, and nothing has changed since your inspection.

STEP 07

# AFTER YOU CLOSE

First 90 days · Maintenance · Building equity

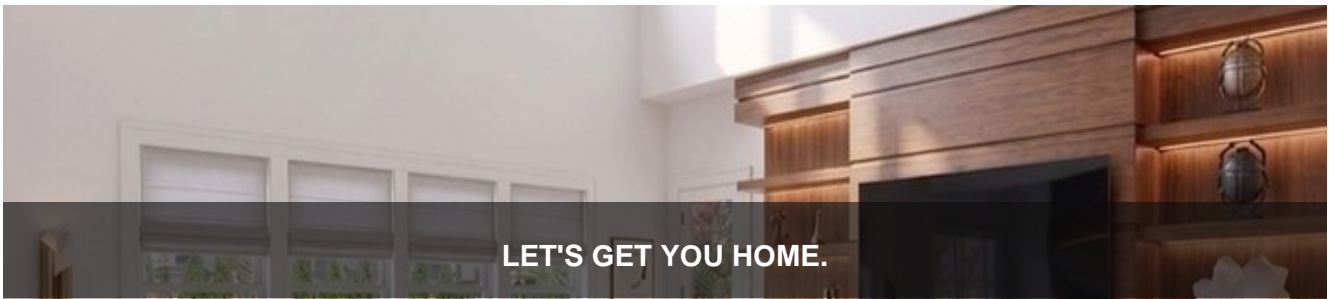
“ Congratulations. Now protect what you just built.

## Your First 90 Days

ACTION	WHY IT MATTERS
■ Change all locks	You do not know who has copies of the original keys
■ Update your address	USPS, bank, employer, insurance, DMV, subscriptions
■ Locate all shutoffs	Water main, gas, and circuit breaker panel
■ Document your home	Video walkthrough for insurance records — before you unpack
■ Build your emergency fund	Target 1–3% of home value for maintenance and repairs
■ Meet your neighbors	A good neighbor relationship is your best security system

## Annual Home Maintenance

SEASON	KEY TASKS
■ Spring	HVAC service · Inspect roof · Clean gutters · Check exterior for winter damage
■ Summer	Clean dryer vent · Inspect deck · Check attic ventilation · Service lawn equipment
■ Fall	Winterize irrigation · HVAC filter · Check weatherstripping and caulking
* Winter	Protect pipes · Check water heater · Inspect insulation · Clean chimney if applicable



Ready to start? I'm here for every question, every showing, and every negotiation.

JENAI JOHNSON	PHONE	EMAIL	WEBSITE
Licensed Real Estate Agent Real Broker, LLC Atlanta Metro & North Georgia	<b>(404) 849-4311</b>	jenaijacquel@gmail.com	<b>soldinatl.com</b>

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