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Homes

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John A. Holmes III
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Before listing, add curb appeal to your property

Many people are familiar with the idea that a strong first impression can go a long way. While that idea is most often referenced in regard to personal interactions, it's also applicable to real estate.

When selling a home, homeowners who emphasize curb appeal may find it far easier to sell their homes. Curb appeal refers to the impression a home's exterior makes on people seeing the home for the first time. In 2014, the online real estate database Zillow® surveyed real estate agents and found that curb appeal was one of the five most important factors when selling a home.

Projects that improve curb appeal can be vast undertakings or simpler projects, and the following are a handful of projects to improve a home's curb appeal that run the gamut from simple to complex.

Clean up the yard

Cleaning up the yard is among the simpler yet most effective projects to improve a home's curb appeal. When selling their homes, homeowners should clear the yard of any clutter, including kids' toys, grass clippings or items that might be scattered throughout the yard. A cluttered yard suggests homeowners do not care much about their home's appearance, and that may lead buyers to think that indifference extended to maintaining the home's interior as well. Many buyers will ignore properties without any external aesthetic appeal, but cleaning up the yard does not require much effort or expense on the part of sellers.

Make the main entryway more inviting

Creating a more inviting entryway won't be as simple as cleaning up the yard, but it can help create a strong first impression without breaking the bank. To begin, remove plants and fur-

niture from the front porch or area surrounding the doorway, as such items can create a cluttered feel. If the front door is old, replace it. Custom doors may be expensive, but they might add the wow factor buyers are looking for. If a new door is beyond your means or just unnecessary, repaint the door, ideally in a color that complements the color of your home and the surrounding landscape.

Address pavement problems

Paving problems are not necessarily an expensive fix, but the cost of repairing driveways and walkways can add up if it's been awhile since these areas were refurbished. Still, one of the first things buyers will notice when getting out of their cars is the ground they're walking on, so patch and repair or even replace driveways and walkways that have fallen into disrepair.

Add or upgrade outdoor living spaces

Outdoor living spaces also can set a property apart from others on the market. A recent study from the National Association of Realtors found that buyers would not hesitate to pay asking price for homes with outdoor living spaces. When adding or upgrading outdoor living spaces, try to depersonalize the spaces as much as possible, as buyers want to picture themselves, and not the sellers, enjoying these areas. Include some comfortable furniture, adequate lighting and a dining area in your outdoor living space as well.

Curb appeal can add a lot to a home, while lack of such appeal can make a home difficult to sell. Homeowners who want to sell their properties for asking price or more should address curb appeal before putting their homes on the market.

An inviting entryway free of clutter can add substantial curb appeal to a property.



What \$250,000 buys in..

EAST PROVIDENCE



18 BICKNELL AVE.

This home features a new kitchen with upgraded cherry cabinets, granite countertops and stainless steel appliances. Beautifully maintained, the focus of the home is a lovely four-season room with gas stove and skylights. Fenced-in yard with deck. Located in a great family neighborhood.

- Built: 1995
- Living space: 2,256 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 9,147 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 1.5
- List Price: \$255,000
- Sold Price: \$245,000

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What \$250,000 buys in...

WARREN



5 TERRACE AVE.

This Cape Cod style home is deceptively roomy and perfect for entertaining. A large kitchen leads to a deck overlooking the Kickemuit River. With hardwoods throughout, this home boasts a first floor master suite. Finished lower level could be a home office or possible in-law suite.

- Built: 1935
- Living space: 2,233 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 6,403 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 3
- List Price: \$264,900
- Sold Price: \$255,000



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TIVERTON



62 EAST DEMELLO DRIVE

This spacious, three-bedroom Contemporary sits on a large, 1.3-acre lot with deck and in-ground pool, two-car garage and open floor plan. It needed some updating but is in a great location.

- Built: 1993
- Living space: 2,822 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 60,325 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 1.5
- List Price: \$259,999
- Sold Price: \$257,000

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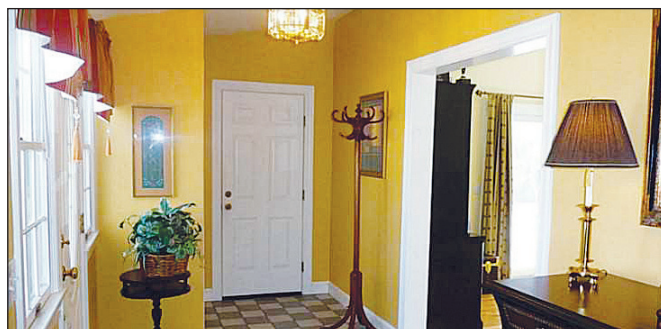
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What \$500,000 buys in...

BARRINGTON



126 RUMSTICK ROAD

This fabulous colonial in a desirable Rumstick location on a corner lot features an oversized, sunny family room, gleaming hardwoods, granite eat-in kitchen, three-season porch, master en suite and two-car garage.

- Built: 1952
- Living space: 3,283 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 59,242 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 3.5
- List Price: \$529,500
- Sold Price: \$517,000
- Property Taxes: \$7,366



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What \$500,000 buys in...

BRISTOL



87 KICKEMUIT AVE.

This custom Contemporary is situated on 1.3 acres with beautiful private grounds. The home has an amazing floor plan with tremendous space. Enjoy an updated kitchen with stainless steel appliances and granite countertops. Enjoy an impressive floor to ceiling fireplace in the living room and hardwood floors throughout the home. It includes a master suite on first floor and a great deck for outdoor entertaining.

- Built: 1988
- Living space: 3,283 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 59,242 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 3.5
- List Price: \$529,500
- Sold Price: \$517,000
- Property Taxes: \$ 7,263

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What \$500,000 buys in...

LITTLE COMPTON



31 OLD FARM ROAD

Perfectly situated down a private lane near the Town Commons sits a quaint country Cape Cod style coastal home with custom finishes and an open layout. Beautiful hardwood floors and attention to detail are evident throughout this meticulous home. Enjoy summer days on the raised patio or deck overlooking the spacious backyard and lovely in-ground pool.

- Built: 1975
- Living space: 1,910 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 90,169 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 2
- List Price: \$525,000
- Sold Price: \$500,000
- Property Taxes: \$ 2,109


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What \$750,000 buys in..

BARRINGTON



4 DEEP MEADOW ROAD

This custom-designed contemporary Cape Cod style home has been newly renovated and features a gourmet kitchen, tall ceilings and sunny exposure. Spacious at more than 5,000 square feet of living space, there is a first-floor master suite and a guest or au pair suite on the second floor with its own private entrance. The fenced-in yard is beautifully landscaped.

- Built: 1990
- Living space: 5,183 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 38,092 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 5
- Bathrooms: 3.5
- List Price: \$779,000
- Sold Price: \$687,500
- Property Taxes: \$11,851

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What \$750,000 buys in...

PORTSMOUTH



75 ADAMS DRIVE

Enjoy breathtaking views of the Sakonnet River from this Sandy Point Farm home, which includes a beautiful kitchen with center island, granite and stainless appliances. Guests will be comfortable in a gorgeous apartment with a private entrance. The Colonial has a three-car garage, very private yard, outdoor patio and shower. It's a short walk to Sandy Point Town Beach, town recreation fields, polo grounds and walking trails.

- Built: 1988
- Living space: 4,261 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 33,977 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 4
- Bathrooms: 3.5
- List Price: \$720,000
- Sold Price: \$700,000
- Property Taxes: \$10,234

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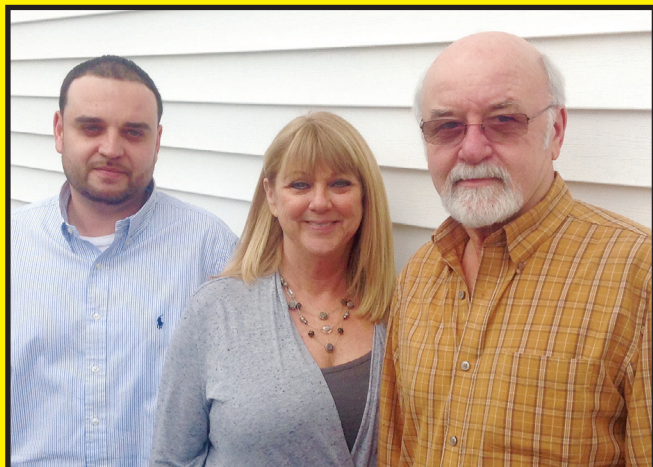
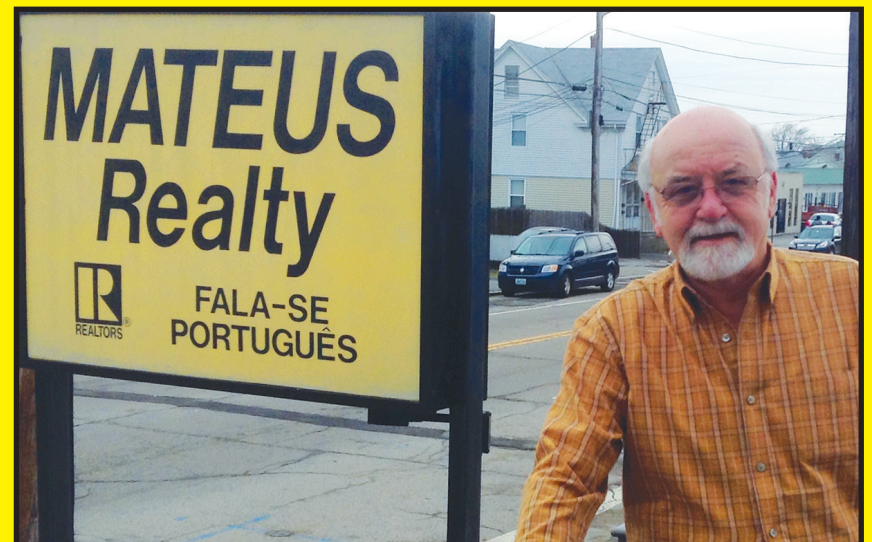
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What \$750,000 buys in...

WESTPORT, MA



41 DAVID ROAD

Love waking up every day at this home on the east branch of the Westport River. Enjoy beautiful views from just about every room of this two-level contemporary. From your front yard, enjoy kayaking, canoeing, shellfishing and boating, with easy access to Buzzard's Bay and the islands.

- Built: 2002
- Living space: 2,828 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 21,360 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 2
- List Price: \$720,000
- Sold Price: \$710,000
- Property Taxes: \$5,108

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What \$1,000,000 buys in...

BRISTOL



131 HOPE ST.

This spectacular, Contemporary waterfront home is a short walk to downtown Bristol. This home has a sun-drenched interior with tasteful renovations that were completed in 2013, including granite countertops in the kitchen and new bathrooms. Enjoy the convenience of a first-floor master suite overlooking the water. Keep your boat out the front door at a private dock and mooring.

- Built: 1920
- Living space: 3,098 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 7,114 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 4
- List Price: \$1,050,000
- Sold Price: \$931,700
- Property Taxes: \$9,528

What \$1,000,000 buys in...

BARRINGTON



66 ALFRED DROWN ROAD

This luxurious Barrington estate in the sought after Alfred Drown neighborhood blends Old world charm with modern amenities. The home features a high-end designer kitchen and mudroom with radiant flooring. There are two fireplaces and a fabulous master suite as well as Au Pair or guest quarters. Enjoy the beautiful brick patio overlooking park-like grounds. It is just a short walk to Narragansett Bay and the beach.

- Built: 1871
- Living space: 3,245 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 15,987 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 5
- Bathrooms: 3.5
- List Price: \$995,000
- Sold Price: \$955,000
- Property Taxes: \$10,954

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As a lifelong resident of the East Bay, Joan Warren is an agent with the knowledge and experience to help with all your real estate needs. A strong and steady pulse on the local market, Joan's intimate ties to the community is an asset she shares with her clients. Whether buying, selling or renting Joan will work hard for you and get the job done.



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The property encompasses 4.2 acres and includes a wonderfully charming 4 BR barn/cottage nestled in its own yard. There are rare and lovely plantings interspersed about the sweeping lawn and a 25' right of way down to the Westport River. A tranquil retreat near the shore.



Ellie Wickes

508-636-3100 Mobile: 508-493-4545

Ellie.Wickes@raveis.com Website: <http://myagent.raveis.com/EllieWickes/>

What \$1,000,000 buys in...

LITTLE COMPTON



24 SAKONNET POINT ROAD

Nature and comfort are the recipe for this well maintained Cape Cod-style home on three acres on Sakonnet Point Road. This home is light and airy, with cathedral ceilings in the combined living and dining area that overlooks the gardens and in-ground pool.

- Built: 1999
- Living space: 2672 sq. ft.
- Lot size: 130,680 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 3
- List Price: \$1,090,000
- Sold Price: \$970,000
- Property Taxes: \$4,845

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Add value to your home with these renovations

Homeowners choose renovation projects for a variety of reasons. Although many improvements are made to increase functionality and comfort of a home, several others are seen as worthwhile investments. These investments can add up to a higher resale value when the time comes to sell a home.

Certain projects have a history of providing a greater return on homeowners' investments than others. The following renovation tips can add beauty to your home and generate great returns when you put the home up for sale.

Invest in your kitchen

Kitchen remodels are a safe bet when it comes to putting money into improving a home. Residents tend to spend a great deal of time in the kitchen, but a dated, poorly functioning kitchen can detract from the value of a home, even if the rest of the home is in good shape. It's possible to recoup between 60 and 120 percent of your kitchen remodel investment, especially if the kitchen matches up well with the rest of your home. Homeowners should know that a deluxe renovation may not be necessary, as relatively moderate improvements can create a whole new look for a kitchen.

Look to paint

One of the least expensive improvement materials, but one that has a significant impact, is paint. Neutral, modern colors can easily liven up any space. If you paint with low-VOC paint, you also can advertise an eco-friendly home, which is very desirable these days.

Put in another bathroom

Multiple bathrooms are an attractive selling point, particularly in older homes that may not have been equipped with more than one bathroom. Finding extra space for a bathroom

can be tricky, but consider closets, areas under stairs or even taking some space away from another room. Popular home-improvement television channel HGTV advises that half-bathrooms require at least 18 square feet of space, while full baths need 30 to 35 square feet for a stand-up shower or bathtub.

Renovate the HVAC system

Aesthetic improvements aren't the only ones that add value to a home. Many home buyers are eager to purchase a home that has a new heating and cooling system, as buyers understand that furnaces and air conditioning units are substantial investments that can last for years. Other improvements, such as adding attic insulation or replacing older windows and doors with more energy efficient options, also are smart bets.

Add illumination to rooms

A dark home is a dreary home. Adding light can mean including more overhead and accent lighting. Under-cabinet task lighting is a nice touch. Inclusion of skylights and sun tubes can bring natural light into rooms that may not have south- or west-facing windows.

Put a deck addition outdoors

Outdoor living spaces have become more desirable, especially as the "staycation" has grown in popularity. Decks and patios can make backyards more appealing. The scope of your investment will depend on the size of the deck and design. Doing the work yourself can cut the cost of decks in half, but only if you have the specific tools or experience to tackle such a project.

Improve curb appeal

Adding attractive landscaping and freshening up the entryway



A kitchen remodel can be the smartest way to invest in your home and add value when you sell.

to a home can add considerable value to your home, as buyers judge homes by their exteriors. Completely renovated interiors may never be seen if buyers pass up your home because of a less attractive exterior. Classy, subtle changes, like well-placed shrubbery and a green lawn, can work wonders. An inviting front door and well-lit entryway also add curb appeal to a home.

Before making improvements, homeowners should determine if a given project will provide a solid return on their investment.

Finding space to install an extra bathroom in a home can be a worthwhile investment.



Let a professional help organize your home and life

Many people routinely find themselves confronted with situations that could be made simpler if they were just a little more organized. Whether it's lost keys, cramped cabinets or misplaced documents, minor yet inconvenient situations can be mitigated if not eliminated if men and women simply commit to being more organized.

Men and women who struggle with organization may be surprised to learn just how much time and productivity they lose to disorganization. For example, a survey from Ikea found that men and women routinely spend six minutes just looking for their keys. When added up, that's a substantial amount of time that can be put to better use.

Becoming more organized is a popular resolution come New Year's Day, and many people benefit from hiring professional organizers to make their resolutions a reality.

Professional organizers can help men and women reduce clutter in their homes and offices and regain control over their surroundings. Such professionals also can help solve organization problems,



Professional organizers can help get your home or office in order.

and that can help men and women reduce stress.

Professional organizers know which strategies work, but men and women should know that not all organizers are the same. Some organizers may work as a hobby or be part of a larger cleaning company, while others are certified in organization. When searching for an organizer, determine if he or she belongs

to the National Association of Professional Organizers and/or if an organizer has been certified by the Board of Certification for Professional Organizers®. While certification may not be necessary to help you organize your home or business, certified organizers may have more experience.

Organizers may specialize in certain areas. Some deal with corporate and

business organization, while others help with real estate staging. Look for one who has experience working with people of your ilk.

Organizers will want to examine clients' situations before they develop a plan of action. Therefore, do not feel the need to prepare for the organizer's arrival by cleaning up, as doing so may only mask the problems you're having. The organizer will walk through your home or business and assess your needs. Many organizers will suggest you work with them to learn organizational strategies that you can implement on your own so you remain organized for years to come.

Check with the organizer to see what type of packages he or she offers. Some packages may be detailed, while others may just provide a foundation for you to become more organized.

Getting organized is more than just having a clean space. It's about taking control of your environment and improving your quality of life. Professional organizers can help accomplish that goal and keep you organized for years to come.



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Home trends to expect in the year ahead

Trends in home remodeling and decor tend to come and go. Something that is popular for a little while can fall out of favor when the next new idea comes along. New trends are always on the horizon, and 2016 may encourage homeowners to try something new.

Metallics and metals are back

Although stainless steel accents in the kitchen have long been popular, the glistening look of metal and metallic shades are back in a big way. Inspired by the 1950s and 1970s, brass, gold and metallic finishes are popular right now.

Texture

Texture is a big component of interior design. Furniture and accessories featuring faux fur and natural fibers are becoming popular. Pieces adorned with cozy materials can seem more inviting. Organic shapes, such as tables looking like the tree trunk they were cut from, also are expected to become more popular.



Don't be surprised to notice a resurgence of metallic shades and metals incorporated into home designs in the year ahead.

Artisanal touches in accessories

It's all about getting back to basics, with homeowners desiring pieces that are one-of-a-kind and handmade rather than mass-produced. Expect to see more accessories that are made by hand or in small batches, like pottery or handwoven textiles, as homeowners are

increasingly turning to independent artists and artisans when decorating their homes. Homeowners can even support independent artists when choosing art for their homes.

Fabric on the walls

Walls also will be covered in texture and pattern. Textiles will increasingly

turn up on walls and in places they haven't traditionally been seen. Patterns may lean toward floral, tropical and indigenous artisan weaving designs.

Pinks and blues

Expect to see pale pink and blue in various design applications. These colors pair well with mid-tones, like browns and greens, as well as the increasingly popular metallics.

Smart homes

Technology is changing the way people look at their homes. Water-resistant music systems for the bathroom, wirelessly operated Bluetooth devices that turn on lights or appliances from a smartphone and even fixtures that use technology to self-clean are turning up more and more.

Home decor trends are always changing, adding new life to homes and keeping armchair interior decorators on their toes.



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Make the most of your home appraisal

When homeowners think about renovating their properties, many first need to secure some funding to finance such projects. Some may tap into the equity of their homes by refinancing an existing mortgage, while others may apply for home equity loans. Taking the latter approach may require certain steps, including an assessment of how much the home and property is worth.

Home appraisals compare your home to neighboring properties to determine your home's current market value. Homeowners can facilitate the process by having certain information readily available for the appraiser. When preparing for appraisers, homeowners should consider and collect the following information:

- If your home was built on the largest lot in the community.

- If you have made significant upgrades since it was last appraised, such as installing a new roof or siding. Don't overlook smaller renovations, like extra insulation added or sealing drafty windows, which can increase a home's value.

- Proof that you have used sustainable resources or if you participated in any energy-savings programs.

Naturally, any expansion projects, such as adding another bedroom or extending the footprint of the home, should be mentioned.

A real estate appraiser is a certified, licensed professional who will do his or her best to determine the value of your home. The appraisal provides banks with information that can tell loan officers if the house is worth the loan amount. Expect to pay a fee for the appraisal, which is generally included in your closing costs.

The appraiser gathers information for the appraisal report from a number of sources, but the process often begins with a physical inspection of the property, both inside and out. He or she also will compare your home against a few others in the neighborhood, which are known as comparables, or comps. Appraisals will be based on recent prices of comparable properties as well as other factors.

Apart from the improvements done to the home, there are other ways to get a higher appraisal amount. The appraiser may consider the overall maintenance of the home and property. It is wise to consider curb appeal and ensure the home is clean and maintained when the



Be cooperative with an appraiser to get the most out of your appraisal.



appraiser arrives. Minor repairs or common maintenance can impress the appraiser. Removing clutter and cleaning up the home's interior can make the home appear larger, possibly increasing its value as a result.

It may be worth it to invest some more money into the property before having an appraisal done. A study sponsored by the National Association of Realtors says wood floors, landscaping and an enclosed garage can lead to a more favorable appraisal.


An appraiser will spend roughly 30 minutes in a home. Try to give that person space to do his or her job. Following the appraiser around during an inspection can raise a red flag that something is wrong with the house that you don't want to be seen. Turn lights on throughout the house, make sure the heating or cooling system is functioning at full capacity and keep pets locked away. Move items that can impede access to basements or attics.

An accurate assessment of the value of your home will give banks the information they need to determine loan amounts for future renovation projects. Providing background information on the home and having a well-maintained property can improve the chances of a favorable appraisal.

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Tips for first-time home buyers

Buying a home for the first time is an exciting period in a person's life. Deciding to buy a home often indicates buyers are ready to establish firm roots in a community where they can see themselves living for years to come.

The process of buying a home is rarely easy, and first-time buyers may feel overwhelmed at times. Such feelings are perfectly normal and felt by first-time buyers regardless of their budgets or home preferences. But there are a few ways to make buying a home more enjoyable than it is nerve-racking.

Examine your finances

The first step toward buying a home has nothing to do with deciding if you prefer a craftsman- or Tudor-style home. Before you even begin your search for a home, carefully examine your finances to determine how much is coming in and how much is



Get pre-approved before getting serious about buying a home

going out of your household each month. Figure out how much debt you are currently carrying, be it student loan, automotive, consumer or any other types of debt. Order a credit report so you can see how prospective lenders are likely to see you, and address any errors you find on the report before meeting with any lenders. Peruse past bank statements to track your spending habits, looking for areas where you might be

able to scale back if need be.

Be prepared when visiting lenders

Prospective borrowers can make the home-buying process go smoothly by having all of the necessary documentation ready when visiting potential lenders. Many mortgage lenders will want to see some recent pay

stubs (from both borrowers if buying with a spouse or partner), a couple years' worth of W-2s and tax returns, as well as your recent bank statements. You can always call ahead and ask lenders what they need to see when applying for a loan. Having these materials ready in advance means you will spend less time at the bank and more time finding the right home for you.

Secure financing before you begin house hunting

Many first-time home buyers might not realize the benefits of securing financing before they begin looking for a home. Mortgage preapproval lets buyers know how much a bank will loan them, meaning they won't spend time looking at homes they can't afford. In addition, preapproval means buyers won't

lose out on their dream homes as they scramble to secure financing after making an offer.

Work with a local real estate agent

Real estate agents are an invaluable resource to home buyers and are especially valuable to those buyers who have never before purchased a home. Agents can help first-time buyers navigate the often confusing and, at times, disappointing process of buying a home. Choose an agent who is established in the area where you want to buy a home. He or she can provide information about local property taxes and schools as well as a multitude of additional issues that first-time buyers may not think of. Agents also know the lay of the land regarding home prices, which can ease first-time buyers' fears about overpaying for their first homes.



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Date, time & location to be announced.

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