

BUYER RESOURCE

Sarasota and Manatee Home Buyer Guide

A practical framework for preparing, searching, evaluating and purchasing a home with confidence.

- 01 Clarify your goals
- 02 Prepare financially
- 03 Search with purpose
- 04 Evaluate the property
- 05 Navigate contract and closing

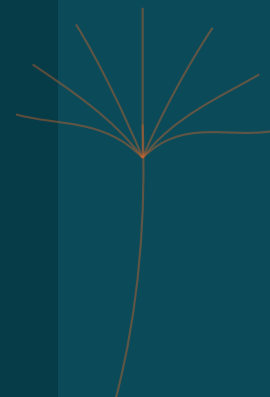
FOR HOMEBUYERS THROUGHOUT SARASOTA AND MANATEE COUNTIES

Jim Smith, REALTOR®

James Smith PLLC | Florida Real Estate License #SL3588733

Michael Saunders & Company - Licensed Real Estate Broker

jimsmith.homes | (631) 316-0400





Begin with your life and your goals

A productive home search begins before opening a listing portal. We first define how you want to live, what the property must accomplish and which compromises are acceptable. This keeps the search focused and makes later decisions easier.

Your priorities

- ☐ Preferred timing and any date you must meet.
- ☐ Primary residence, second home, investment or future retirement use.
- ☐ Target communities and acceptable travel patterns.
- ☐ Property type, bedrooms, bathrooms, size, parking and accessibility needs.
- ☐ Lifestyle priorities such as boating, beaches, walkability, golf, schools or privacy.
- ☐ Condition preferences: new construction, renovated, move-in ready or improvement opportunity.
- ☐ Absolute requirements, strong preferences and items you can trade.

Representation and communication

- ☐ Review the buyer-broker relationship and responsibilities before touring.
- ☐ Understand how professional compensation will be addressed in the agreement and transaction.
- ☐ Choose the communication method and response time that fit your search.
- ☐ Discuss confidentiality, negotiation strategy and how listing-agent relationships differ from buyer representation.
- ☐ Confirm who will participate in decisions and how documents will be signed.

Search notes



Prepare financially

Whether you are financing or paying cash, credible financial preparation strengthens your decisions and your offer. Determine a comfortable range rather than treating the maximum available amount as the target.

If financing

- ☐ Speak with a qualified lender before serious touring.
- ☐ Review estimated payment, cash to close and reserves.
- ☐ Ask how taxes, insurance, flood coverage, association fees and assessments affect qualification.
- ☐ Understand pre-qualification versus a documented pre-approval.
- ☐ Avoid opening credit, changing jobs or moving large funds without consulting the lender.
- ☐ Refresh documentation as requested and before writing an offer.

If paying cash

- ☐ Obtain current proof of funds in a form that protects account privacy.
- ☐ Decide how much liquidity you want after closing.
- ☐ Budget separately for inspections, title-related expenses, insurance, association fees, improvements and moving.
- ☐ Discuss whether appraisal or financing flexibility still has strategic value.
- ☐ Keep funds accessible and confirm wire-transfer timing with your financial institution.

Estimate the complete ownership picture

- ☐ Purchase price and financing costs, if any.
- ☐ Property taxes and applicable exemptions.
- ☐ Homeowners, wind and flood insurance where applicable.
- ☐ HOA, condominium or club fees and known assessments.
- ☐ Maintenance for roof, HVAC, pool, landscaping, seawall, dock, elevator or other major systems.
- ☐ Immediate repairs, furnishings and improvements.



Search and tour with purpose

Online photos identify possibilities; they do not establish condition, insurability, value or fit. Use each tour to compare the property against the same decision framework.

Before touring

- ☐ Confirm current criteria and price range.
- ☐ Review maps, access routes and nearby land uses.
- ☐ Note flood-zone and evacuation information for later verification.
- ☐ Review association rules or age, leasing, pet and vehicle restrictions when relevant.
- ☐ Identify questions the listing information does not answer.
- ☐ Respect showing instructions and seller privacy.

During and after the tour

- ☐ Look past decor and study layout, light, storage and function.
- ☐ Observe visible maintenance, drainage and signs of prior repairs without attempting your own inspection.
- ☐ Note roof, HVAC, windows, electrical, plumbing and other major-system ages when available.
- ☐ For waterfront property, flag seawall, dock, lift, depth and access questions for verification.
- ☐ Record your reaction immediately and rank the property against alternatives.
- ☐ Do not rely on verbal representations; identify material facts requiring documentation.

Property comparison

Property	Strengths	Concerns	Next step



Evaluate local property considerations

The right due diligence depends on the property. These issues are not automatic deal-breakers; they are items to understand, price and document before you commit.

Single-family homes

- ☐ Roof age, permit history and available wind-mitigation documentation.
- ☐ HVAC, electrical, plumbing, windows and visible drainage conditions.
- ☐ Flood zone, elevation information and insurance availability.
- ☐ Pool, septic, well, irrigation and pest considerations where applicable.
- ☐ HOA documents, restrictions, fees and approval requirements.
- ☐ Additions, enclosures and improvements that may require permits.

Condominiums and villas

- ☐ Declaration, bylaws, rules, budgets, financial statements and meeting minutes.
- ☐ Current fees, reserves, insurance responsibilities and pending or approved assessments.
- ☐ Milestone inspection and structural reserve information where applicable.
- ☐ Leasing, pet, vehicle, renovation and hurricane-protection rules.
- ☐ Unit boundaries and maintenance responsibilities.
- ☐ Application, interview, approval and right-of-first-refusal requirements, if any.

Barrier-island and waterfront questions

- ☐ Evacuation access, flood exposure and insurance options.
- ☐ Seawall ownership, age, condition and maintenance history.
- ☐ Dock and lift permits, dimensions, condition and responsibility.
- ☐ Water depth, bridge clearances, navigational access and vessel suitability.
- ☐ Salt-air exposure and maintenance of exterior systems.

Schools: Verify assignments directly for the specific property address. Boundaries, programs and enrollment policies can change.



Build and evaluate the offer

The strongest offer is not always the one with the highest price. Its structure should reflect the property, competition, your risk tolerance and your ability to close.

Offer decisions

- ☐ Price and escalation strategy, if appropriate.
- ☐ Deposit amount, timing and handling.
- ☐ Financing terms or proof of funds.
- ☐ Inspection period and other due-diligence rights.
- ☐ Appraisal provisions, if applicable.
- ☐ Requested credits, concessions, furnishings or personal property.
- ☐ Closing date, occupancy and possession.
- ☐ Association or sale-of-property contingencies, if applicable.
- ☐ Items included, excluded or requiring clarification.

Offer comparison

Term	Your offer	Alternative / concern
Price		
Financing or cash		
Deposits		
Inspection		
Appraisal		
Closing / occupancy		
Other terms		

Before signing, read the complete offer and ask questions about every blank, deadline, contingency and obligation you do not understand.



From contract to closing

Once an agreement is effective, the contract controls. Keep the timeline visible, respond promptly and avoid making financial changes without consulting the appropriate professional.

Milestone	Date / deadline	Completed
Effective date		
Initial deposit		
Additional deposit		
Inspection period		
Loan application / approval		
Appraisal, if applicable		
Association approval, if applicable		
Final walk-through		
Closing		

Your transaction team may include

- ☐ Buyer representative and transaction coordinator.
- ☐ Lender and loan team, if financing.
- ☐ Home inspector and property-specific specialists.
- ☐ Insurance professional.
- ☐ Title or closing professional.
- ☐ Attorney, accountant or other adviser when appropriate.



Inspection appraisal and insurance

These are separate evaluations serving different purposes. None should be treated as a guarantee of future condition, value or coverage.

Inspection

- ☐ Choose qualified inspectors appropriate to the property.
- ☐ Attend when practical and focus on material findings.
- ☐ Consider specialists for roof, pool, seawall, dock, elevator, mold, pests, septic or other systems when warranted.
- ☐ Review reports promptly within contractual deadlines.
- ☐ Decide whether to proceed, request a permitted remedy or exercise contractual rights.
- ☐ Retain reports and paid receipts.

Appraisal and insurance

- ☐ The lender may order an appraisal to support collateral value; it is not a home inspection.
- ☐ Respond promptly to lender requests and do not interfere with appraiser independence.
- ☐ Begin insurance inquiries early, especially for older roofs, coastal locations and flood exposure.
- ☐ Confirm coverage, deductibles, exclusions and binding requirements directly with the insurer.
- ☐ Provide lender and closing professionals with required insurance evidence.

Association and title review

- ☐ Complete association applications promptly and track approval deadlines.
- ☐ Review required condominium or HOA documents within applicable contractual periods.
- ☐ Respond to title or closing requests and review identified exceptions or defects with the appropriate professional.
- ☐ Confirm how surveys, estoppel information, municipal lien searches and title insurance will be handled.



Final walk-through and closing

The final walk-through is generally an opportunity to confirm the property is in the expected condition and agreed work or removal has occurred. It is not a substitute for an inspection or a new negotiation period.

Before the walk-through

- ☐ Confirm agreed repairs and request receipts when applicable.
- ☐ Review included and excluded items.
- ☐ Verify the seller has removed personal property as required.
- ☐ Test agreed items or systems as appropriate.
- ☐ Document material concerns immediately.

Before closing

- ☐ Review the closing disclosure or settlement statement when provided.
- ☐ Confirm identification and signing requirements.
- ☐ Independently verify wiring instructions using a trusted telephone number.
- ☐ Arrange utilities, access, insurance and moving.
- ☐ Bring required funds only through verified instructions.
- ☐ Retain the signed contract, closing documents, survey and title policy.

Wire fraud warning: Never rely solely on emailed wiring instructions. Confirm them directly with the closing professional using a telephone number you independently know to be correct.

After closing

- ☐ Secure keys, remotes and access credentials.
- ☐ Change locks and security codes as appropriate.
- ☐ Confirm utilities and services.
- ☐ Store closing and property records securely.
- ☐ Apply for eligible homestead exemption and consult the appropriate professional about deadlines.
- ☐ Create a maintenance calendar for major systems and association obligations.



Ready to plan your purchase

A successful purchase starts with clarity, preparation and advice tailored to the property and your goals. I would be glad to help you compare options, investigate the details and move forward with confidence.



SCHEDULE A BUYER CONSULTATION

Jim Smith, REALTOR®
James Smith PLLC | Florida Real Estate License #SL3588733

Michael Saunders & Company - Licensed Real Estate Broker
Broker: Michael Saunders
61 S. Blvd. of the Presidents, Sarasota, FL 34236

Mobile: (631) 316-0400
Email: JimSmith@michaelsaunders.com
Office: (941) 388-4447
Website: jimsmith.homes

This guide provides general educational information and is not legal, tax, insurance, inspection, lending, appraisal or title advice. Contract terms, deadlines, property conditions, association requirements and financing options vary. Consult the appropriate qualified professional for advice about your situation.