

BUYING A NEW

home





# Hello!

“

Thank you for choosing to put your trust in me for the process of buying a home. Every member of my team is committed to ensuring that ALL of your real estate needs are not just met, but exceeded! I've created this book for your convenience and I hope that it will be a valuable resource. While the entire process is outlined for you here, please know that I will be staying in constant contact with you throughout the process. Your experience will be unique and I will adjust our service according to your wants and needs. My focus is on your complete satisfaction.

*Cindy Bennett*

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WWW.CINDYBENNETT.NET

# MEET THE TEAM



*Allie Wilckens*

**REAL ESTATE ASSISTANT AND  
TRANSACTION COORDINATOR**

Born and raised in Goochland County, Allie graduated from Virginia Tech with a bachelor's degree in management and real estate in May of 2021. She's known she wanted to pursue real estate in Richmond since middle school. Allie provides an additional level of support and communication to ensure that your needs are addressed promptly throughout the process of selling your home. She helps pay attention to the many details involved in the sale so you don't have to.

In her free time, she loves spending time with friends and family, relaxing with a good book (from start to finish if she can), and making sweet treats from time to time. She loves music, and many genres ranging from mainstream pop to country. (If you were to make her choose a favorite artist, it would be hands down Taylor Swift!)

She looks forward to working with you when you choose Cindy to represent you with your real estate needs.

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# STEPS TO CLOSING

01 FIND THE RIGHT AGENT

02 PREPARE FINANCES

03 GET PRE-APPROVED

04 START HOME SHOPPING

05 MAKE AN OFFER

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# 01 FIND THE RIGHT AGENT

Buying a home is one of the most significant purchases in your lifetime. It is essential to have an experienced agent in your corner, always looking out for your best interest. A buyer agent's fiduciary responsibility is to represent the buyer and to ensure that their interests are protected.

After all, a seller has someone in their corner. A listing agent has an allegiance to the seller. Their goal is to get the seller top dollar for their home. There is incredible value in having someone working for YOUR best interests (and only yours) when buying a home.



## QUESTIONS TO ASK AN AGENT WHILE INTERVIEWING:

1. HOW MUCH ARE ALL YOUR FEES?
2. HOW LONG IS YOUR CONTRACT?
3. CAN I CANCEL THE CONTRACT EARLY?
4. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS?
5. CAN I ASK FOR SOME REFERENCES?
6. HOW MANY CLIENTS ARE YOU SERVICING RIGHT NOW?
7. BEFORE LOOKING AT HOMES, DO YOU FIRST REQUIRE A CLIENT TO GET A PRE-QUALIFICATION LETTER FROM A LENDER?
8. HOW DO YOU ASSIST BUYERS IN CLOSING THE DEAL?
9. HOW CAN I COMMUNICATE WITH YOU?
10. WHAT ARE YOUR HOURS?

# MY COMMITMENT TO YOU



1

## GETTING YOU IN THE DOOR

We'll narrow down the homes that fit your unique wants and needs to get you started! Looking at dozens of homes every week, I can help with questions or concerns you may have (and those you may not know you have!)

2

## HANDLING CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

When repairs or changes in price need to be made, I will be your guide and handle those negotiations with the sellers.

3

## STAYING ON TOP OF THE PAPERWORK

Buying a home involves many types of documentation. I have the experience and knowledge to navigate real estate contracts and all of the other steps involved in a sale. That means ensuring that nothing is overlooked and that you truly understand what a document means before ever signing on the dotted line.

4

## ON YOUR SIDE

A buyer's agent will represent your best interests. With a pulse on the local market and a sound understanding of how various features affect the value of a home, we will make sure we submit a competitive offer on the right home for you.

5

## NEIGHBORHOOD EXPERT

Working daily (and for many years!) in neighborhoods with inspectors, contractors, and negotiating with sellers, I have the market knowledge you need to get the best results from your purchase. Understanding the local real estate market can go a long way when it comes time to make an offer on a house.

6

## PROBLEM SOLVER

I will work hard to protect all of your interests and help take on any issues that may arise throughout the entire process. My goal is to make your home buying process not only stress free, but fun.

# 02 PREPARE YOUR FINANCES

Mortgage lenders recommend you do not stretch yourself beyond buying a home that is more than 3 to 5 times your annual household income. If you are not purchasing a home with cash, you will need a mortgage pre-approval provided by your mortgage lender.

A lender will work with you to get a loan that meets your needs, so make sure you not only have a budget in mind and a solid idea of what downpayment you can manage, but what feels comfortable monthly as well.

## FINANCIALS AND MORTGAGE PAYMENT

- Study your credit report. Make note of any errors you see and talk to your lender about them.
- Compile necessary documents, including pay stubs, bank statements, and past tax returns.
- Determine how much of a payment you are comfortable with. (Don't forget you will have taxes and insurance on top of your base mortgage payment!)

## SAVE CASH FOR A DOWN PAYMENT & OTHER EXPENSES

In order to make your dream of buying a home a reality, you'll need to save cash for your down payment, earnest money, closing costs & inspections. (You'll probably want furniture, too!)

- A Down Payment can be between 3.5% & 20% of the purchase price, depending on your loan type.
- Earnest Money is money you put down at the contract signing to show you're "serious." It's also known as a good faith deposit. (It counts towards your downpayment/closing costs amount, too.)
- Closing Costs for the buyer run between 2% & 5% of the loan amount.
- A (standard) Home Inspection usually costs \$300 to \$500. Remember, you're responsible for all inspections, so if you want/need additional inspections (radon, HVAC, etc.) you'll want to factor those costs in as well.





# 03 RESEARCH LENDERS AND GET PRE-APPROVED

Credit score and financial documents in hand, you're ready to start researching options for your home loan.

I always recommend talking to at least a couple of lenders, and I'm a huge proponent of local lenders, rather than megabanks or online options. I have some terrific lenders I can refer you to, that have great track records of closing on time, being responsive, and giving not only great rates but great service, to my clients. You may qualify for a special loan, such as a Veterans Affairs (VA) loan or any special home buying financing options through state or federal programs.

Make sure you get that mortgage preapproval letter — it'll make you a more competitive buyer.

Note: Being pre-approved, unlike being pre-qualified, means you've actually been approved by a lender for a specific loan amount. You will need to provide documented financial information (income, statements, assets, debt & credit reports etc.) to be reviewed & verified by the lender.

## RESEARCH MORTGAGES AND LENDERS

- Find out if you qualify for a special loan, such as a VA, FHA, or HUD home buying program.
- Request quotes from multiple lenders and comparison shop for loans.
- Get preapproved for a mortgage and receive your letter



### LET'S GET STARTED!

- Get a head start by compiling your home wish list (we've got some great checklists for you!)
- Spend time in each area, imagining yourself living there. Think lifestyle, and not "just" the style of the home.
- Find properties in your price range in your preferred neighborhoods.
- Schedule showings or attend open houses to start the process

Make a list of the things you'll need to have in the house. Ask yourself how many bedrooms and bathrooms you'll need and get an idea of how much space you desire. How big do you want the kitchen to be? Do you need lots of closets and cabinet space? Do you need a big yard for your kids and/or pets to play in?

Don't forget to think about the kind of neighborhood you want, the types of schools in the area, the length of your commute to and from work, and the convenience of local shopping. Take into account your safety concerns as well as how good the rate of home appreciation is in the area. Remember, location is the one thing you cannot change, so make sure your "must-have" home is attainable WHERE you want to live.

### TIPS

My biggest tip? We don't say, "Location, location, location," just for fun. If it's the greatest house, but you don't love your neighborhood, it's too far, or you feel unsafe, you're not going to be happy.

There are many things you can change about a house- updating the kitchen over time, redoing bathrooms, paint, flooring, etc, but moving the whole thing?

Well, that's another story.

Evaluate the neighborhood and surrounding areas.

- Are the surrounding homes well maintained?
- How much traffic is on the street?
- Is it conveniently located to schools, shopping, restaurants, & parks?

# MAKE AN OFFER

# 05

Your finances are in order, your ideal neighborhoods identified — next up is finding that "perfect" property and making a competitive offer. More importantly, one that is accepted over other offers, if there are multiple offers. As more and more people are looking to become homeowners, it's important to prepare yourself for the mortgage process, home search, bidding wars, and what you'll do next if you do not get this home of your dreams. (Spoiler alert- there is no "perfect" house, and I've been doing this long enough to know that we WILL find you one that you love, even if the first one doesn't work out.)

*Here are my 6 strategies to getting your offer accepted!*

01

## COMPETITIVE OFFER

A good rule of thumb, specifically in a seller's market, is to start strong. To do this, we will assess the property's market value with a CMA and determine what it's worth in the current market.

02

## EARNEST MONEY

This deposit signals how serious a buyer you are. Try doubling the amount that the seller requests or that is customary (generally 1% of the price.)

Why does this matter to the seller? You'll lose your earnest money if you back out for no reason, so a higher figure really shows you're "earnest."

03

## GIFT OF TIME

Express your willingness to work with the sellers' timetable to go to closing. We can ask the sellers when their ideal closing date would be, and if they'd like a "rent back" period, so the offer will make them feel like they are winning!

04

## MAKE A CONNECTION

Tell the seller why you love their home. Is it the neighborhood park or access to top-rated schools? Maybe the kitchen size and design is everything you've dreamed of? Speak up!

Establishing rapport with the sellers can tug at their emotions. So, help them to remember your name when they review potential offers.

05

## LIMIT CONTINGENCIES

Contingencies can complicate and add time to the negotiation process.

They're beneficial to buyers, but can be a nuisance to sellers who are ready to move on fast.

It's key to avoid any unnecessary contingencies.

In short, the offer with the fewest contingencies is often the most attractive.

06

## REMEMBER THE APPRAISAL

In a competitive market, the appraisal process takes on a different meaning. If you escalate your offer over the listing price, we need to consider the appraisal, and if you have funds to "bridge" the gap between that sales price and the appraised value. Every home is different, but we'll look at the likelihood of an appraisal issue when we offer.



# THE OFFER PROCESS

## After Making an Offer

### First Offer Submitted

In a perfect world, the seller will accept your first offer. Since we don't live in a perfect world, there are other options. If the offer does not feel worth negotiating with them, they may decline it. More often than than, they'll counter.

### Counter

A counteroffer is when the seller offers you different terms or a different price. If this happens, you can choose to:

- ACCEPT THE COUNTEROFFER
- DECLINE THE COUNTEROFFER

### Repeat

You can negotiate back and forth as many times as needed until you reach an agreement or someone chooses to walk away.

### Accepted

Once all parties agree on all the terms, you are officially under contract!

CONGRATULATIONS!

# ORDER AN INSPECTION

A home inspection can help identify deficiencies in a home you're purchasing. If the inspection reveals problems or repairs are needed, you may be able to negotiate with the seller to fix those issues.

During the inspection period, we will schedule an inspection with a reputable home inspector to do a thorough investigation of the home. Once this is complete, the inspector will provide us with a list of findings.

*The things we are concerned with here are primarily health and safety items.*



# AGAIN, WE NEGOTIATE

Here are your options after we receive the home inspection report:

## 07

1. Ask the seller to have repairs made
2. Ask for credit toward your closing costs
3. Ask the seller to reduce the sales price to make up for the repairs
4. Move forward with the deal (Do you want this home badly enough to take it without repairs?)

In order to negotiate for repairs or credits, we start by getting an estimate from a local contractor or construction professional for how much the repairs will cost. We will complete the negotiations on your behalf to ensure everything is done (or not done) to your satisfaction.

*Remember, a keyword during these negotiations is COMPROMISE. Everything can be fixed. It's just a matter of who fixes it, how much it costs, and who is paying for it.*



# 08 APPRAISAL ORDERED

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When you are under contract (if you are getting a loan), you can't move forward with the sale until an appraisal is done on the home you're purchasing. The outcome can affect whether or not you make it to closing and sometimes, whether the price in the offer is the price you'll end up with on settlement day.

The appraisal is done for you, \*kind of.\* It's really done for your lender, and they're not going to give a mortgage loan without one. The appraiser is an independent set of eyes assuring the lender that they're making a good investment, and that if their borrower defaults, they're not going to be stuck with a home that they have more money in than it is worth.

In a normal market, this can mean the price gets renegotiated if the appraisal comes in low. In a seller's market, competitive offers often state the buyer will cover any "gap" between the appraised value and the sales price in cash.

This is definitely important to the seller when they are choosing between multiple offers. Knowing they will actually get the price agreed upon at contract makes a huge difference.



# SCHEDULING YOUR MOVE

## AFTER SIGNING

- FINALIZE MORTGAGE
- SCHEDULE HOME INSPECTION
- DECLUTTER! SORT THROUGH EVERY DRAWER, CLOSET, CUPBOARD & SHELF, REMOVING ITEMS YOU NO LONGER NEED OR LIKE. DONATE OR SELL ITEMS THAT ARE IN GOOD CONDITION
- GET COPIES OF MEDICAL RECORDS AND STORE THEM WITH YOUR OTHER IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS
- CREATE AN INVENTORY OF ANYTHING VALUABLE THAT YOU PLAN TO MOVE
- GET ESTIMATES FROM MOVING COMPANIES

## 4 WEEKS TO MOVE

- GIVE 30 DAYS NOTICE IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY RENTING
- SCHEDULE MOVERS/MOVING TRUCK
- BUY/FIND PACKING MATERIALS
- START PACKING

## 3 WEEKS TO MOVE

- ARRANGE APPRAISAL (LENDER WILL DO THIS)
- COMPLETE TITLE SEARCH (TITLE COMPANY WILL DO THIS)

## 2 WEEKS TO MOVE

- SECURE HOMEOWNER'S INSURANCE
- SCHEDULE TIME FOR CLOSING
- CONTACT UTILITY COMPANIES (WATER, ELECTRIC, CABLE)
- CHANGE ADDRESS: MAILING, SUBSCRIPTIONS, ETC.
- MINIMIZE GROCERY SHOPPING
- KEEP PACKING

## 1 WEEK TO MOVE

- OBTAIN CERTIFIED CHECKS FOR CLOSING (OR GET WIRING INFORMATION)
- SCHEDULE AND ATTEND FINAL WALKTHROUGH
- CLEAN AND FINISH PACKING
- CONFIRM DELIVERY DATE WITH THE MOVING COMPANY.
- PACK ESSENTIALS FOR A FEW NIGHTS IN NEW HOME





# 10 CLOSING DAY

## CLOSING DAY

Closing is when you sign loan, ownership, and insurance paperwork, and when you receive the keys to your new home! Typically, it takes four to six weeks from contract to closing.

## FINAL WALKTHROUGH

We will do a final walkthrough of the home within 24 hours of closing to check the property's condition. This final inspection takes about an hour. We will make sure any repair work that the seller agreed to make has been done, and that the home is in at least as good a condition as it was at contract signing.

We will be sure to:

- Make sure all appliances are working properly
- Run the water in all the faucets and check for any possible leaks
- Open and close garage doors with opener
- Flush toilets
- Run the garbage disposal and exhaust fans

## CLOSING TABLE

Who will be there: Generally speaking, I will attend your closing, primarily to catch any last-minute issues that may arise, or answer any questions you have. On occasion, your loan officer will be there as well. In the Richmond area, neither the seller nor the seller's agent, attend your closing.

## BRING TO CLOSING

- Government-issued photo ID
- Cashiers check (or previously wired funds)

## RECEIVE YOUR KEYS

Congratulations! It was a lot of hard work but you are now officially homeowners!! Time to throw a party and get to know your new neighbors!



# HOMES TOURED

ADDRESS

PRICE

HOW MUCH DID YOU LIKE THIS HOUSE?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



# CINDY BENNETT

*client compliments*

“

"I 1000% recommended Cindy to be your representation if you are in the market to buy or sell a home. Cindy made herself very available to us when we were selling our home, answering questions, explaining the steps in the process, and guiding us on where our money would be best spent for the maximum return at sale. If you are looking for the best agent to be in your corner for your real estate needs, Cindy is the one."

”

"I have had Cindy Bennett as my Realtor for the past 20 years and I have been extremely lucky to have found her. She is the ultimate professional who's always gone above and beyond for me. She is the best Realtor in Virginia and I would and have recommended her to all my friends and family."

**"As always, Cindy was great to work with throughout the entire process of selling our house and buying another house. We have worked with her as our agent several times over the years, and she is always extremely professional, knowledgeable and hands-on. Cindy was highly responsive and worked very hard to ensure that everything went smoothly on both our sale and our purchase. She provided great advice and always had our best interest at heart. We highly recommend Cindy!"**

# CINDY BENNETT

*client compliments*



"Whip smart, great communication and availability- excellent planning, organizing, realistic advice and practical help prior to listing. Intelligent and professional negotiating and provided thoughtful recommendations during duration of listing."



"Cindy was recommended to me by a close friend who had helped him as his family buy/sell homes for years. She helped recommend the right contractors to fix up my home to get it ready for the market. She is very responsive, and always went above and beyond to make the process as painless as possible! I would highly recommend her to anyone looking to buy or sell a home in the Richmond/Central VA area!"

**"Cindy has an excellent knowledge of the Richmond market and has fantastic negotiation skills. She is extremely patient and flexible in working with her clients. I would highly recommend working with her as a realtor and would definitely work with her again."**

# MAKE NOTE

*Your Thoughts Here*





# Cindy Bennett

## Associate Broker, ABR, GRI, GREEN

The Richmond area is a great place to live and work, which is why Cindy Bennett chooses to call it home. Born and raised in Chesterfield, Cindy has lived there, in the City of Richmond, and now makes her home in Henrico County.

Real estate is a passion for Cindy, but seldom because of houses. She loves helping people achieve their real estate goals. Whether that's buying the perfect first home, finding a great "step down" home, or anything in between; beginning or adding to an income-producing portfolio, or selling a home to get ready for new adventures.

Cindy has been a part of the Maison family since 2019, but she's been in real estate since 2003. She loves Richmond and all the surrounding areas, and has been involved in the community, and making connections in it, for many years.

When Cindy isn't selling real estate, you can find her exploring RVA's great restaurants, working out, or meeting new people.

### CREDENTIALS

BACHELOR'S DEGREE, 1997  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*

ASSOCIATE BROKER, 2006

### SAVING TIME

By spending time in our consultation getting to know your wants & needs in a home, we can head into the search process laser-focused.

### VAST NETWORK

My access to targeted search software & properties before they even go on the market - helps to put you ahead from the start. I work with the most qualified inspectors & contractors who can help assure that you are making a smart investment.

### EASY PROCESS

I can help you navigate the complexities of the real estate transaction - from contract to close so you can enjoy a seamless experience.

### MORE EXPERTISE

My years of experience knowing market trends, local neighborhoods, & what to pay attention to - helps to ensure you're on track to finding the right home before you make an offer.

# 20

Years In Business

# 246

Clients Served

# 61

Repeat Clients

# 31

Clients Served in 2022

## Connect With Me

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[www.cindybennett.net](http://www.cindybennett.net)