



# The Advantages of Working With a Realtor

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**W**hether you are a “long-timer” or “new-in-town,” Austin provides many options for purchasing a home. A multitude of choices are available in established areas and new communities and infill home sites provide opportunities to purchase a new home from either a production or custom builder.

With so many options available, buyers should establish criteria that are most important for them. Most home buyers retain a Realtor through a referral from a friend or relative. That, of course, is the best way. However, it is important to ask the questions that set expectations both for you and the Realtor in terms of what level of service will be provided to enable you to complete a home buying transaction. An experienced Realtor will identify their client’s needs by asking the right questions and

narrowing the focus, thereby making the process more efficient. The time spent answering your Realtor's questions up front and establishing priorities can save days and weeks of searching — getting out and driving from one home to another without having established priorities can create confusion.

For a home buyer who is interested in a custom-built home, a Realtor can be helpful if the Realtor understands the custom home building process, knows what differentiates one builder from the

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other — such as quality of construction (what's behind the wall that no one sees after the walls are up), customer service (comes back after the sale to make corrections), and understands what final ingredients are necessary to make the building process a success for everyone involved.

Choosing the right Realtor for your buying experience is essential, and chance should not be an element of the process. Real estate transactions involve one of the largest financial investments most people experience in their lifetime. If you had an income tax or legal issue, would you attempt to deal with it without consulting a CPA or lawyer? Working with a "Professional Realtor" who truly understands the "Home buying industry" can mitigate the challenge a buyer might have in purchasing a home from a builder that might be more "sales and merchandising oriented" than providing the "quality and service" that is promised.

There are a few factors to consider when choosing a Realtor:

- How many years experience does the Realtor have and what is their specialization, i.e., neighborhoods, price of homes, etc.?



- How knowledgeable are they about new home construction?
- How many homes do they sell per year?
- Do they have an assistant?
- Are they part of a Realtor team?
- Are they in the business full time or part time?
- Do they run their business in a professional manner?
- Do materials and printed information they provide look professional and well done?
- Are they timely?
- Are they willing develop a "home search game plan" with you?
- Finding property that is not actively advertised in the market
- Providing local community information on utilities, zoning and schools
- Negotiate on your behalf
- Provide up-to-date information on what is happening in the marketplace, pricing, financing and terms and condition of competing properties
- Providing names of reliable movers
- Providing referrals of interior designers or decorators and other service providers.
- Helping to choose a builder who can identify home sites that will work within established parameters

Realtors should be retained because they are the professionals for the job. Just as a selling agent provides the selling client with a marketing strategy, your buyer's agent should develop a strategy for you as well.

According to Kay Andrews of Avenue One Realty, in the past, a Realtor represented only the seller, but things have changed. "Legislation has been passed allowing buyers to have representation. A buyer's agent is available to access market conditions and educate consumers about the area in which they are interested," Andrews said. In addition, a buyer's agent can research and advise about issues that may impact the property as well as help negotiate the price. A Realtor may also have information on sites of which the general public are not aware.

There are also additional services that a Realtor can provide:

- Identifying financing resources
- Determining your buying power

Realtors works at their own risk — you don't typically pay for any services up front — agents are paid on the back end. That means you and the seller have no out-of-pocket expenses. Therefore, it's in your agent's best interest to work quickly, diligently, and use all of their resources to help you meet your goals. Otherwise, there is no payday, another important reason to sign a buyers agent agreement. Wouldn't you expect the same if your time and money were on the line? ▲

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