BUYING · FLORIDA PANHANDLE + COASTAL ALABAMA

From findings to a decision.

A practical guide to inspections, repair requests and follow-through.

THE CLIENT COLLECTION · SEPTEMBER 2026

Gregg Costin
Practical guidance for your next real estate decision.
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SEE THE WHOLE PROCESS FIRST

Your path, from start to finish.

The full purchase path comes first. This guide concentrates on the property decisions to resolve before the relevant contract deadlines.

01 **Preapproval + the money plan**

Verify borrowing capacity before searching or touring. Select the product, payment, cash and reserve plan. Cash buyers verify funds.

02 **Search + property-specific offer**

Compare suitable homes and real ownership costs. Agree on price, protections, deposit, dates and possession.

03 **Accepted contract + calendar**

Deliver the signed contract, confirm the deposit and open the lender and closing files. Calendar every actual deadline.

04 **Investigate + decide**

Inspection, specialist estimates, insurance, title and association review run alongside the loan. Decide before rights expire.

05 **Underwriting + final conditions**

The lender reviews the borrower and property, clears conditions and coordinates disclosures and funding.

06 **Review + close + receive possession**

Review final figures, verify funds, walk through, sign and confirm the contractual conditions for keys.

07 **Own + maintain + keep records**

Complete the servicing, tax, insurance and maintenance handoff. Plan for future costs and the eventual sale.

Read top to bottom; work can overlap.

The chapters follow this order. Property, lender and closing reviews often run in parallel. Your contract, loan product, required approvals and actual circumstances set the dates.

FOLLOW THE STEPS. KEEP THE REFERENCE.

The details behind each decision.

Use the inspection period to understand condition, obtain appropriate specialist opinions and cost estimates, and decide whether the property still fits your budget and contract. An inspection, appraisal, insurance inspection, and warranty each serve different purposes.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Investigate

Order the reviews the property calls for.

Prioritize

Separate safety, cost, timing and uncertainty.

Resolve

Document the agreement and verify completion.

Use this with your team

Examples are hypothetical. Your signed contract, lender, insurer, closing professional and applicable orders govern the actual work. Keep sensitive records in verified secure channels. Page-level references link the authorities; source dates are listed individually at the back.

STAGE 1 / 7 Preapproval + the money plan

01 First: preapproval. Then: the home search.

Before we book tours, turn a possible purchase into a budget that works in real life.

The order that protects your options

01 **Set a comfortable payment**

Include taxes after purchase, insurance, association dues, maintenance and the reserve you will keep.

02 **Ask the lender to verify the file**

Use a secure application and complete income, asset and credit documents. Ask what has actually been reviewed.

03 **Agree on the search brief**

Match price, property type, closing cash and timing to the lender’s conditions and your household budget.

04 **Begin searching and touring**

Look at homes you can realistically pursue, then refresh the property-specific figures before each offer.

What happens before the first tour

01 You

Explain your move, income changes and source of closing money. Choose your comfort limit, even if approval is higher.

02 Loan officer + lender

Review documentation, identify conditions and discuss eligible products. Only the lender decides whether it can approve the loan.

03 Your agent

Turn the agreed payment and cash limits into a property brief. Flag condos, leaseholds, major repairs or an assumption for lender review.

THE HANDOFF

Ready to search: a conditional letter, a written payment/cash scenario, an expiration date and a list of outstanding requirements.

KEEP IN MIND

Why this is critical

Early review exposes documentation problems while time is flexible, prevents tours above your comfortable payment, tests whether your chosen property type fits the loan, and makes an offer’s financing terms more credible. It does not guarantee approval or reserve an interest rate.

Reference desk: CFPB: Preapproval and its conditions · CFPB: Loan types, terms and rate structures

STAGE 2 / 7 Search + property-specific offer

02 Where this review fits in the purchase

Start investigating as soon as you have a serious address. Finish the required decisions within the actual contract dates.

Use the specialist chapters in this order

01 **Before committing**
Get the property documents and initial cost assumptions. Identify questions that could make the home or intended use unsuitable.

02 **During due diligence**
The relevant professional reviews the records, investigates gaps and prices the consequences. Coordinate findings with the lender.

03 **Before protections expire**
Choose to accept, negotiate a documented solution or use an available contract right.

04 **Before and after closing**
Confirm the promised documents or work, final costs and any ownership follow-up. Keep the evidence in your property file.

The handoff for this subject

01 You + agent

Request the right evidence and decide how the findings affect the offer and your willingness to proceed.

02 Subject professional

The county, insurer, inspector, association or attorney answers the specific question within its authority.

03 Lender + closing professional

Confirm any effect on financing, coverage, title, required cash or closing conditions.

THE HANDOFF

Record the question, source, answer date, responsible person and the contract deadline it affects.

Reference desk: CFPB: Preapproval and its conditions

STAGE 4 / 7 Investigate + decide

03

Order the right reviews

Begin with your contract deadline and the property's features.

Ask the inspector what the inspection includes, what it excludes, and what conditions could limit access. Roof, structural, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, moisture, drainage, pest, pool, septic, well, and other questions may require qualified specialists. Schedule the general inspection early enough to leave time for follow-up and a written contractual response.

Different reviews, different purposes

Review / Useful question

General home inspection
What visible and accessible condition issues require attention?

Specialist evaluation
What is the cause, scope, repair method and cost?

Appraisal
Does the property support the lender's valuation and program requirements?

Insurance inspection
Does the property meet the insurer's requirements?

Survey / title review
What boundaries, access, rights and exceptions affect ownership?

KEEP IN MIND

No report guarantees a defect-free home

Read limitations, inaccessible areas and recommendations. A "not inspected" component is unresolved, not confirmed acceptable.

Reference desk: VA: Buying with a VA-backed loan · Florida OIR: Homeowners insurance

STAGE 4 / 7 Investigate + decide

04 Sort findings by consequence

The most expensive item is not always the first priority.

An action-oriented triage

Category / Next step

Immediate safety concern
Ask a qualified professional for prompt evaluation

Active damage or water entry
Identify cause, extent, remediation and continuing risk

Financing or insurance condition
Confirm the lender/insurer requirement and timing

Near-term replacement
Obtain cost and expected planning horizon

Maintenance or cosmetic issue
Decide what you can accept and budget after closing

Ask the inspector to explain which observations are material and which are routine maintenance. Avoid converting a report into a list of demands without understanding the cause or cost. Conversely, a short report is not proof of low risk if important areas could not be accessed.

YOUR WORKING NOTES · CONFIRM WITH THE RESPONSIBLE PROFESSIONAL

One row per material issue

Issue / photo / report page:

Specialist / scope / written estimate:

Effect on safety, insurance, financing or use:

Decision deadline / responsible person:

KEEP IN MIND

Obtain permission before invasive work

Testing that opens walls, removes materials or changes the property needs the required consent and qualified handling. Coordinate access through the transaction professionals.

Reference desk: The Costin Team planning framework; numerical examples are hypothetical.

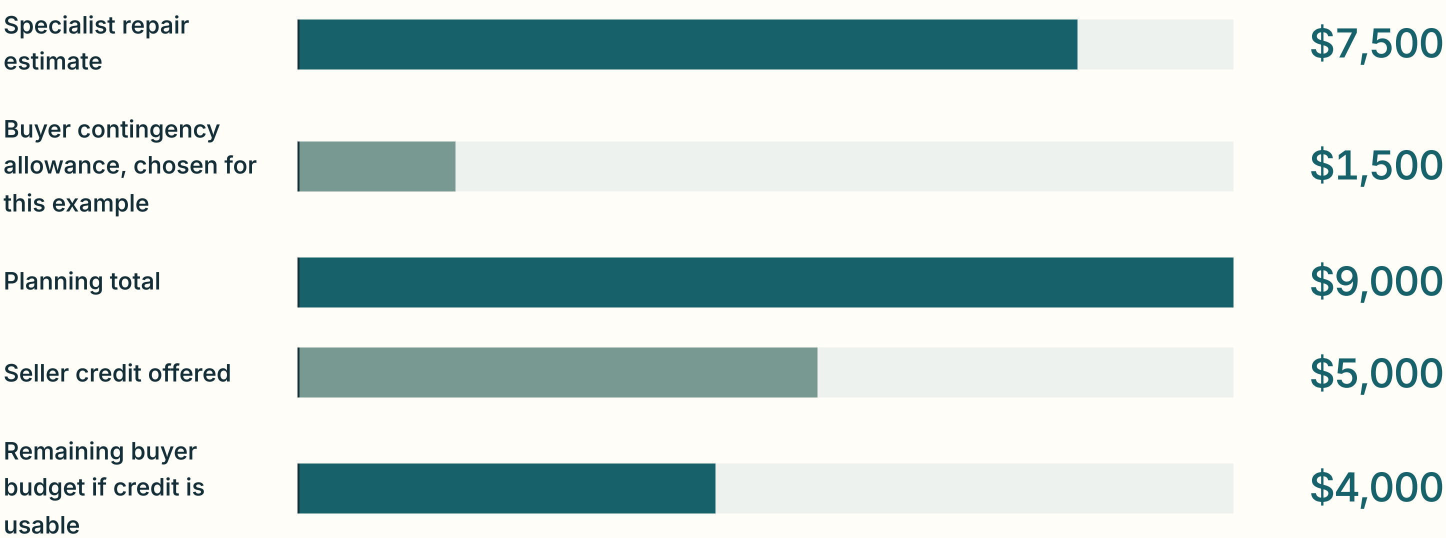
STAGE 4 / 7 **Investigate + decide**

05 Turn findings into realistic numbers

A credit is useful only if the transaction permits it and the work is manageable.

Hypothetical repair decision

Item / Example



Bars start at zero. Values are the stated example inputs.

An example credit does not establish lender eligibility or cash available for repairs. Loan limits on credits and actual closing costs can restrict the benefit.

A seller repair, price adjustment, closing-cost credit, or decision to accept the condition can produce different outcomes. Ask whether a credit is allowed, whether the lender requires the work before closing, and whether you have cash and time to complete it.

A price reduction does not automatically put the same amount of cash in your repair account.

KEEP IN MIND

Define a repair precisely

Identify scope, required permits, contractor qualifications, completion date, invoices, warranties, and any reinspection. “Fix roof” is much less useful than a clear agreed scope based on a qualified evaluation.

Reference desk: The Costin Team planning framework; numerical examples are hypothetical.

STAGE 4 / 7 Investigate + decide

06

Close the loop before closing

A negotiated promise needs evidence of completion.

Confirm the repair file

- ☐ Signed agreement describing responsibilities and dates.
- ☐ Invoices, permit or inspection records when required, and transferable warranties.
- ☐ Photos or access for reinspection of material repairs.
- ☐ Lender and insurer confirmation for their conditions.
- ☐ A final walkthrough consistent with the contract.
- ☐ A written solution for incomplete work through the appropriate professionals.

At the walkthrough, compare the property with the agreement and look for agreed repairs, included items, new damage, possession conditions and utilities needed for verification. It is not a substitute for the original inspection. Report discrepancies immediately so the closing professionals can address them before signing or funding as appropriate.

KEEP IN MIND

Do not rely on an informal escrow promise

Any holdback or post-closing repair arrangement needs approval from the necessary parties, including the lender when applicable, and clear written terms. Your agent and closing professional should coordinate it.

Reference desk: The Costin Team planning framework; numerical examples are hypothetical.

STAGE 6 / 7 Review + close + receive possession

07 Your inspection decision record

Turn the research into a documented decision.

Save the dated documents supporting your decision with the transaction file. Write down who confirmed each open issue and when the answer is due.

If the answer affects affordability, financing, insurability, legal use, or resale, resolve it while your contract still gives you the relevant choices. Your agent coordinates the process; the lender, insurer, association, government office, or closing professional confirms the fact within its role.

YOUR WORKING NOTES · CONFIRM WITH THE RESPONSIBLE PROFESSIONAL

Your decision record

Material findings / accepted conditions:

Agreed repairs or credit / signed document:

Specialist evidence / lender / insurer clearance:

Walkthrough date / unresolved issue / next action:

Before removing a contingency

- ☐ Review the actual documents and written estimates, including exclusions and assumptions.
- ☐ Separate recurring costs, immediate cash needs, and possible future liabilities.
- ☐ Confirm unresolved items, the person responsible, and the contractual response deadline.
- ☐ Ask whether a new fact changes your price, terms, financing, or decision to proceed.

KEEP IN MIND

A useful question for every professional

What would make this estimate or approval change before closing, and what evidence would tell us that has happened?

Reference desk: Florida OIR: Homeowners insurance

FOLLOW THE EVIDENCE

The original guidance.

Consult the source before relying on a changing amount, deadline, policy or contact. Individual source review dates appear below.

01

CFPB: Preapproval and its conditions

https://www.consumerfinance.gov/owning-a-home/explore/get-a-preapproval-letter/
Reviewed 2026-09-08

02

CFPB: Loan types, terms and rate structures

https://www.consumerfinance.gov/owning-a-home/explore/understand-the-different-kinds-of-loans-available/
Reviewed 2026-09-08

03

VA: Buying with a VA-backed loan

https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans/home-buying-process/
Reviewed 2026-09-06

04

Florida OIR: Homeowners insurance

https://floir.gov/property-casualty/homeowners-insurance
Reviewed 2026-09-06

Apply the rule to your situation

This is an educational resource. Your lender, closing professional, insurer, property appraiser and installation offices confirm matters within their roles. No government agency, military installation or lender sponsors or endorses this publication. Source review dates change only after actual verification.

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RECOGNITION

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List-to-price ratio
Seller clients

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Average price reduction
Buyer clients

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RENE®	Real Estate Negotiation Expert
MRP®	Military Relocation Professional
MCA®	MORE Certified Agent
SRS®	Seller Representative Specialist
HFR®	Home Finance Resource
FMS®	Florida Military Specialist
FAA	Part 107 Certified

Let's plan your next move.

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Performance figures provided by Gregg Costin, September 6, 2026.
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