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FREE BUYER'S GUIDE

Common **mistakes** to avoid when building or buying a new home

Avoid these and you could save thousands of dollars, plus a lot of time and frustration.

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Information is general and not legal or financial advice.

READ THIS BEFORE YOU VISIT A MODEL

Building is exciting. It's also different.

Deciding to build or buy a brand-new home is exciting, but it can come with plenty of stress. Most new construction buyers have bought and sold homes before, yet buying from a builder is a different process, with its own contracts, timelines and decisions.

Many buyers also have a home to sell, and that raises its own questions. What is my home worth? How fast will it sell? What if it doesn't sell in time? What's the best way to buy and sell at the same time?

1**Know your numbers**

Start with what your current home is likely to sell for, and how fast. We'll prepare a detailed pricing analysis so you can see your likely net proceeds and timeline.

2**Talk to a lender**

Even if you end up using the builder's preferred lender, check your credit and confirm your income and debts support the price range you have in mind.

3**Then shop builders, communities and plans**

With a plan in place, you can sort through the options with confidence instead of guesswork.

You don't have to go it alone. We focus on helping buyers find the right new construction home and community across Cumberland, Dauphin, York and Perry counties, and on helping them sell their current home for top dollar. We've guided many clients through this process. Read the 10 mistakes that follow, then reach out for a free, no-obligation consultation.



01

MISTAKE #1

Walking into a model before you know your numbers

FYI #1: FIRST SEE YOUR AGENT

Before you set foot in a model, know how much house makes sense for you. If you own a home, figure out your net proceeds from the sale so you know how much cash you'll have to work with. That takes a sharp-pencil analysis that includes every likely selling cost, not a guesstimate.

If you're a first-time buyer, get pre-approved first so your income, credit and budget are nailed down before you fall in love with a floor plan.

JOSH'S TIP Model homes are usually decorated with upgrades. Know your number before you see the finishes.

02

MISTAKE #2

Assuming the builder's sales rep is on your side

FYI #2: PUT EXPERIENCE ON YOUR SIDE

The friendly sales rep in the model home **represents the builder**. Some are builder employees; others are licensed agents working for the builder. Either way, their job is to look out for the builder's interests. Pennsylvania's Consumer Notice explains these different business relationships. Without your own agent, no one at the table is representing you.

We make it our business to understand the new home process: contracts, warranties, financing, differences in price and quality, even lot selection, so you get the best value and fewer headaches when it's time to resell.

JOSH'S TIP Some builders ask that your agent be with you, or registered, on your very first visit. Ask before you go.

Learn more: Does the builder's sales rep work for me?

centralpanewconstruction.com/new-construction-faq/builder-sales-rep-work-for-me/



03

MISTAKE #3

Thinking all builders are the same

FYI #3: NOT ALL BUILDERS ARE CREATED EQUAL

Some builders are known for craftsmanship. Others for smart use of space, value for the money, strong financing incentives, building in a particular area or school district, or attentive service during construction and after move-in.

No one builder is all of these. Because we work in both resale and new construction across Central PA, we can help you match the builder and the community to what matters most to you.

04

MISTAKE #4

Skipping the homework on the builder

FYI #4: GET THE WHOLE STORY

Check the builder's reputation, reviews and track record. Get the spec sheets for the home, covering everything from the floor plan and included features to energy-efficiency details, and ask exactly what's standard and what's an upgrade.

Then ask about timing. Does this builder usually hit completion dates, or does it have a history of delays? A missed date can cause real problems if you're coordinating the sale of your current home.

JOSH'S TIP Get the included-features list, the warranty and the estimated timeline in writing before you sign.



05

MISTAKE #5

Not looking under the hood of the community

FYI #5: LOOK UNDER THE HOOD

Learn about the community and its amenities. Then look past the entrance sign.

■ What else is planned nearby?

Ask the township or borough planning and zoning office, especially if the community borders farmland or vacant land. A lot of Central PA's new construction is going up on former farmland, and the view behind your lot may not stay the same.

■ Which school district is this lot in?

In Cumberland, Dauphin, York and Perry counties, district lines don't always follow the community name, township name or mailing address. Confirm the district for your exact lot, by parcel, with the county or the district.

■ When will the community be finished?

Many communities here are built in phases over several years. Are you OK with construction traffic and noise until the final phase is done? If not, you may not want to be first to pick a lot in a new phase. Then again, being early may get you *the best* lot.

Read the HOA documents before you sign

The declaration, bylaws and rules spell out what you can and can't do, and you don't want to find out after the fact. Common questions:

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| ■ Pets: any limits on number or type? | ■ Awning, pergola or roof over the deck? |
| ■ Fences: allowed styles, heights and locations? | ■ Exterior colors, solar panels, parking for a boat or RV? |
| ■ Above-ground pool, shed or play set? | ■ Dues, any capital contribution due at closing, and whether the builder still controls the HOA. |



06

MISTAKE #6

Choosing options without a plan

FYI #6: CHOOSE YOUR OPTIONS CAREFULLY

Add the base price and every upgrade together, then ask whether the final price makes sense for the neighborhood. As a rule of thumb, you may not want to be the most expensive home on the street. Make the most of builder incentives, which often come as upgrades or a credit toward the price or closing costs.

Upgrades raise the quality of builder-standard finishes like flooring, cabinets, fixtures and appliances. **Options** are items the builder adds during construction. Options that add usable space, like a sunroom, morning room or home office, tend to matter most at resale. A fireplace, first-floor powder room, extra full bath and built-in storage are generally good values. Some items, like a deck, finished basement or landscaping, can often be added later, sometimes for less.

07

MISTAKE #7

Assuming the price isn't negotiable

FYI #7: NEGOTIATE WITH THE BUILDER

Many buyers don't realize there may be room to negotiate on price, upgrades, options or closing costs. Much depends on the market and the home. A nearly finished, unsold quick move-in home often gives you the most leverage. In a strong seller's market the builder, like any seller, has more control and can simply move on to the next buyer.

You'll also have your best shot when you help solve a problem for the builder. Say one of the last lots in a phase has a steeper back yard and buyers keep passing on it. If you're fine with it, a price reduction or another concession may be possible, and you've helped the builder close out the community.



08

MISTAKE #8

Forgetting about resale value

FYI #8: GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO RESALE VALUE

Even if you never plan to move, life happens. New construction resales can be tricky: you may be competing with the builder's brand-new homes nearby, and resale buyers may not pay extra for the same things you did.

Take **lot premiums**. Builders often add thousands of dollars for a lot they see as more desirable, such as a wooded back yard, a cul-de-sac, a walkout basement or an open view. At resale, buyers and appraisers look at comparable sales and usually won't pay you back for the premium itself. Put your money where resale value is more predictable: finished living space, extra bathrooms and similar features.

09

MISTAKE #9

Relying on one source for new construction info

FYI #9: HOW TO FIND NEW CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

Many new construction homes are listed in the MLS like any other home, but not every plan, lot or to-be-built option shows up there, and each builder's website only shows its own homes.

To see the bigger picture in one place, explore communities, builders, plans and current listings across Cumberland, Dauphin, York and Perry counties at **centralpanewconstruction.com**. Want help comparing? Contact us and we'll connect the dots.

Learn more: Browse communities and listings
centralpanewconstruction.com/communities/



10

MISTAKE #10

Shopping before you understand your financing

FYI #10: IT ALL STARTS WITH LEARNING YOUR FINANCING OPTIONS

Just like with a resale home, line up your financing and learn your options before you shop: loan programs, down payment and closing costs, and how rate locks work on a home that takes months to build. You may not be able to lock anything in until you're deeper into the process, but you'll get valuable insight into decisions like whether you need to sell your current home before you close, and you'll learn your price range.

Builders often offer incentives for using their preferred lender. Compare that offer with at least one other lender so you see the full picture, and get the terms of every incentive in writing.

JOSH'S TIP Too many buyers wander into a model before they have a plan that covers all ten of these points. Don't be one of them.

HOW WE CAN HELP

- ✓ We specialize in guiding buyers through new construction, from the first model visit to closing and the warranty period.
- ✓ We can introduce you to local lenders who handle new construction and construction-to-permanent loans, so you're pre-approved before you visit models. You're always free to choose your own lender.
- ✓ We'll point you to the best sources on builders, communities, plans and pricing, starting with centralpanewconstruction.com.
- ✓ We'll visit model homes with you and sit with you when you choose your options and selections. We'll help you weigh choices and pricing and make sure you ask about every incentive the builder is offering.
- ✓ Have a home to sell? We'll price, market and sell it, and help you coordinate both timelines.



STRAIGHT ANSWERS

How buyer-agent compensation works

Since the 2024 NAR settlement, the way buyer agents are paid has changed, and we want you to understand it upfront.

- In Pennsylvania, you'll sign a **written buyer agency agreement** with us. It explains our services and how we're paid.
- **Many builders offer to pay buyer-agent compensation**, but each builder sets its own policy, and policies can change.
- **Compensation is negotiable.** It isn't set by law.
- We'll walk you through all of it, in writing, before we start working together, so there are no surprises.

Ask any builder whether its pricing or incentives differ with or without a buyer's agent, and get the answer in writing. We'll help you ask.

Learn more: Who pays the buyer's agent on new construction?

centralpanewconstruction.com/new-construction-faq/who-pays-buyers-agent-new-construction/

Quick recap: the 10 mistakes.

1. Walking into a model before you know your numbers
2. Assuming the builder's sales rep is on your side
3. Thinking all builders are the same
4. Skipping the homework on the builder
5. Not looking under the hood of the community
6. Choosing options without a plan
7. Assuming the price isn't negotiable
8. Forgetting about resale value
9. Relying on one source for new construction info
10. Shopping before you understand your financing



YOUR NEXT STEP

Let's put your plan together.

Set up a free, no-obligation consultation. Call or text me and we'll schedule a quick call to talk about your timeline, your current home and the communities you're considering. I'll show you exactly what to do next, and how to do it.



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Schedule your free consultation →

Thanks for reading. I look forward to talking with you!

Josh Schoenly

SERVING NEW CONSTRUCTION BUYERS IN CUMBERLAND, DAUPHIN, YORK & PERRY COUNTIES, PA



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