



TOP 10 REASONS TO BUY A HOME NOW

"Is now the time to jump into the housing market or should I hold off for a better deal?" This seems to be the question of the moment in San Diego. Making the move into homeownership continues to be one of the most important decisions that most of us will ever make. It is a choice that requires thoughtful discussion with your financial advisor, family and other trusted individuals.

For the thousands of San Diegans trying to weigh the pros and cons of owning vs. renting, here are some important factors to consider in the current housing environment:

1. No bubble trouble: There is no reason to sit on the sidelines waiting for a dramatic drop in price. While double-digit appreciation may no longer be the norm in San Diego and the Inland Empire, the market is not crashing. Buyers sitting on the fence will miss out on the long-term appreciation gains and the tax advantages of homeownership.
2. It's an investment you can live with: Unlike stocks, homes have utility value. You have to live somewhere so make your investment work for you by building up equity while you benefit from the tax breaks.
3. The bidding wars are over: Homes are realistically priced to move. There is no need to rush into a purchase. But when you do find that dream house, act with conviction and don't miss out on it.
4. The Fed has taken a breather: Interest rates remain at near-historical lows and that equates to good buying power. The Federal Reserve has paused in its interest rate hikes so now is a good time to make your move.
5. Mortgage lenders want your business: The mortgage business has slowed along with housing sales. Most lenders are offering a veritable supermarket of loan types and have plenty of money to lend. One of them is sure to have a payment structure that fits your needs.
6. Pre-approvals put you firmly in the driver's seat: It's still a good idea to get pre-approved for a mortgage and lock in your interest rate. You'll have more negotiating power with the seller and the ability to speed along the closing process.
7. Cash is on the table: Sellers, eager to entertain your offer, are more than likely to make a deal that includes working with your lender to buy down your interest rate or covering the closing costs so you can put more money down. Some sellers also may consider prepaying a year's worth of homeowners' association dues to make your monthly payment more affordable.
8. Makeovers are all the rage: Facing a competitive market, sellers are sprucing up their properties so buyers don't need a lot of cash for repairs, renovations and upgrades. New landscaping, new appliances and new paint make the perfect housewarming gift from the seller. And buyers save money for furnishings and other move-in costs.
9. Lots of choices, lots of options: A greater selection of homes currently on the market means a greater chance of finding the one that fits your lifestyle.
10. There's no time like the present: The most important fact for a buyer is to get in the game. Housing is a medium- to long-term investment. Over the past two decades, housing in San Diego has appreciated an average of 8 percent a year. How many stock portfolios or savings accounts can make the same claim?