

THE BUYER'S ADVANTAGE:



Buyer's

GUIDE



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REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONAL

Current Trends, Insights & What to
Expect in Spring 2026



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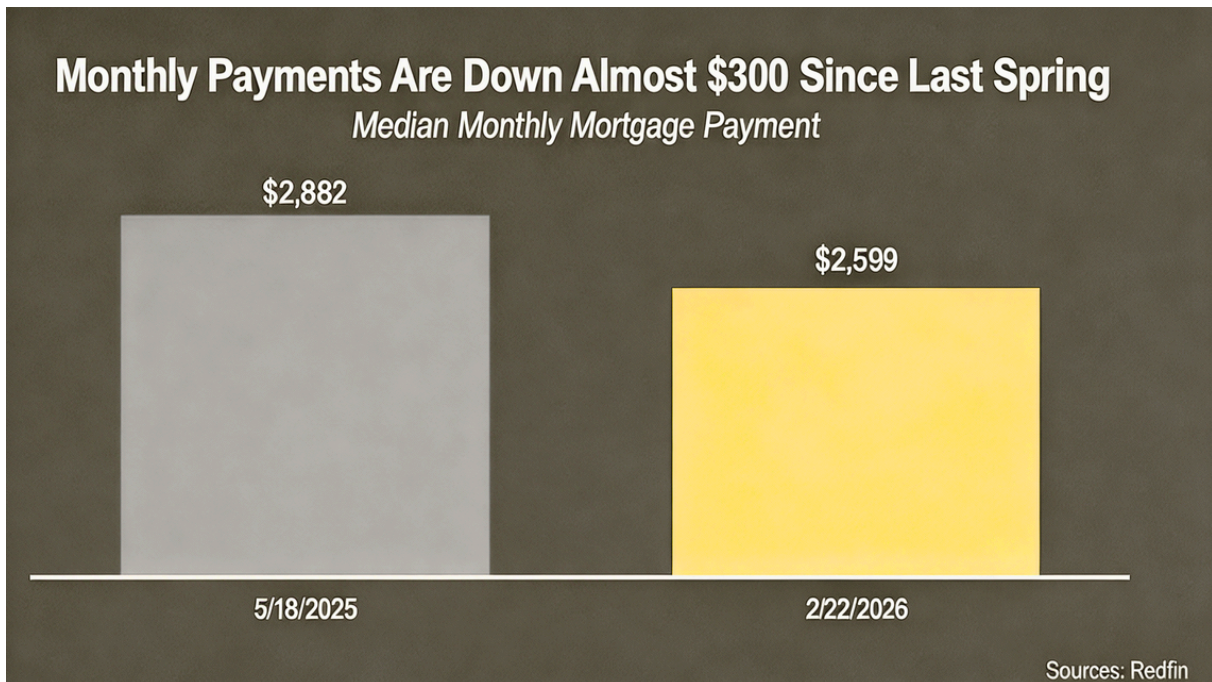
How Lower Mortgage Rates Can Benefit You in South Florida

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Mortgage rates impact more than just the total interest paid—they directly affect your monthly payment, budget, and overall buying power in South Florida's market. When rates were closer to 7%, many buyers found affordability challenging. Higher monthly payments made it harder to qualify, and some buyers—especially first-time homeowners—paused their plans.

As rates begin to ease, even small decreases can make a noticeable difference. Lower rates can reduce your monthly payment, stretch your budget further, and expand your options when searching for a home. In many cases, this shift can bring previously out-of-reach properties back into consideration and make the buying process feel more attainable.

Mortgage rates have recently reached their lowest levels in over three years, creating new opportunities for buyers in South Florida.



The Reality of Down Payments in South Florida

True:

Many buyers—especially first-time buyers—do not put down 20%.

VS

False:

The typical down payment for first-time buyers is often well below 20%.

You're not required to put that much down. Many loan programs in South Florida allow as little as 3.5% down, and some even offer 0% down options.

In fact, studies show nearly 80% of first-time buyers may qualify for down payment assistance—but only about 13% take advantage of it.

On average, these programs can provide around \$18,000 in financial support, helping make homeownership more accessible.

Even a small drop in mortgage rates can lead to meaningful savings over time. Month by month, the extra flexibility in your budget adds up, and over the course of a year, the impact becomes clear. While lower rates may not solve affordability challenges overnight, they can significantly improve your position as a buyer in South Florida.

With increased buying power, you may feel more confident making offers, exploring different neighborhoods, or considering homes that were previously out of reach. Compared to when rates were closer to 7%, this shift can open up new opportunities for many buyers.

Lower Rates May Bring More Buyers Back Into the Market

As affordability improves, more buyers are able to re-enter the South Florida market. Even modest rate decreases can expand the number of households that qualify, bringing back buyers who may have been waiting on the sidelines. For those who have been holding off, this type of rate environment can create a window of opportunity. And for active buyers, it may be a chance to move forward before competition increases.

Rates Are Only One Piece of the Puzzle

While mortgage rates are important, they're just one factor. Home prices, inventory, property taxes, insurance costs, and your overall financial situation all play a role in affordability.

That's why getting pre-approved, reviewing your numbers carefully, and consulting with a trusted lender is essential. With rates improving from recent highs, now may be a great time to reassess your options in the South Florida market.

How Changing Mortgage Rates Affect Your Monthly Payment

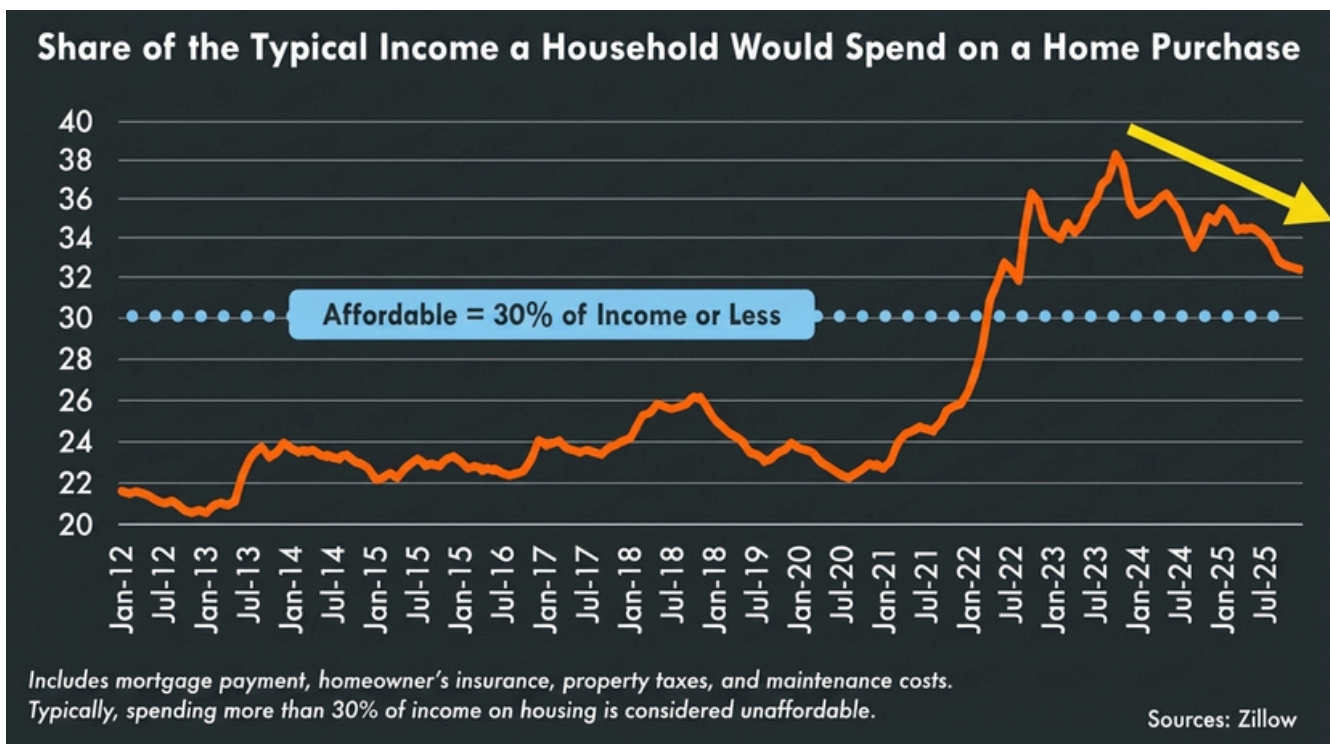
Home Loan Amount	Fixed Mortgage Interest Rate	Monthly Mortgage P&I*	Monthly Savings Compared to 7.5%
\$250,000	7.5%	\$1,748	-
	7.0%	\$1,663	\$85
	6.5%	\$1,580	\$168
	6.0%	\$1,499	\$249
\$450,000	7.5%	\$3,146	-
	7.0%	\$2,994	\$152
	6.5%	\$2,844	\$302
	6.0%	\$2,698	\$448
\$650,000	7.5%	\$4,545	-
	7.0%	\$4,324	\$221
	6.5%	\$4,108	\$437
	6.0%	\$3,897	\$648

Affordability Is Starting To Improve

One of the simplest ways to measure affordability is by looking at how much of your monthly income goes toward housing. Generally, homes are considered affordable when those costs stay at or below about 30% of your income—including your mortgage, property taxes, insurance, and basic maintenance.

In recent years, that percentage rose beyond what many buyers felt comfortable with, making homeownership more difficult to reach. The encouraging news is that conditions in South Florida are starting to improve. Today, the share of income needed to buy a home is trending in a more favorable direction compared to just a few years ago.

Affordability is still a concern, but it's gradually getting better. In some South Florida markets, conditions may even move closer to that 30% benchmark by the end of the year.



This shift matters because inventory plays a major role in the overall buying and selling experience in South Florida. When more homes are available, buyers gain more options, more time to make decisions, and often more flexibility in negotiations. When inventory is limited, the market tends to feel fast-paced, competitive, and more stressful.

Over the past few years, low inventory made the South Florida market feel rushed and overwhelming for many buyers. As more listings continue to come on the market, conditions are gradually improving. While it's not a full return to pre-pandemic levels, it's a clear move toward a more balanced and buyer-friendly environment.



More South Florida Markets Are Returning to Normal

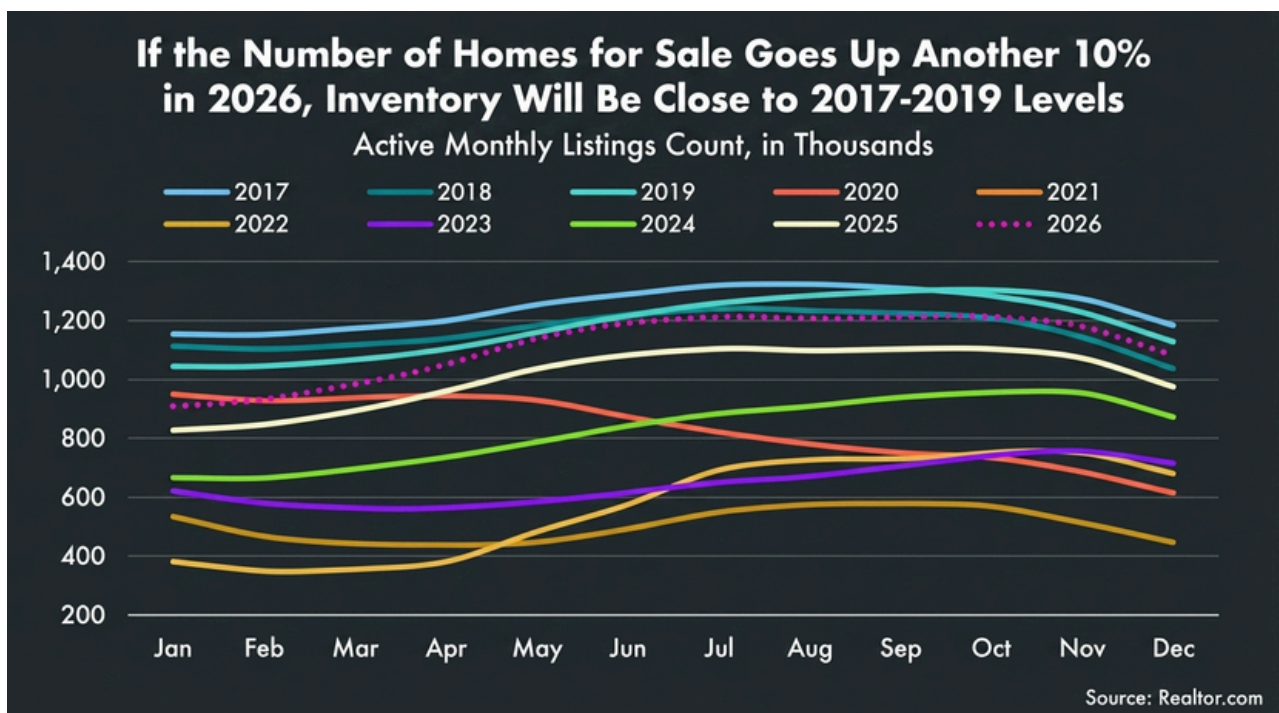
Inventory is improving across South Florida, but the pace varies by area. Some communities are seeing faster recovery than others, which means local market conditions can differ depending on location.

Even so, the overall trend is positive. Compared to a year ago, more areas in South Florida are moving closer to typical inventory levels—a strong sign of a gradually balancing market.

Inventory Is Expected to Keep Growing

Looking ahead, the number of homes for sale in South Florida is expected to continue rising. As more listings come to market, additional areas may return to inventory levels that were more common before the pandemic.

While conditions aren't fully back to normal everywhere, the direction is clear. If this trend continues, much of the South Florida market could feel more balanced by the end of the year.



As inventory continues to improve in South Florida, the home search process is becoming more manageable for buyers. Instead of the intense pressure seen in recent years, buyers now have more options and a bit more flexibility when negotiating.

The market is shifting toward a more balanced environment. It's no longer as strongly in favor of sellers, giving buyers greater choice and a less stressful experience as they search for the right home.



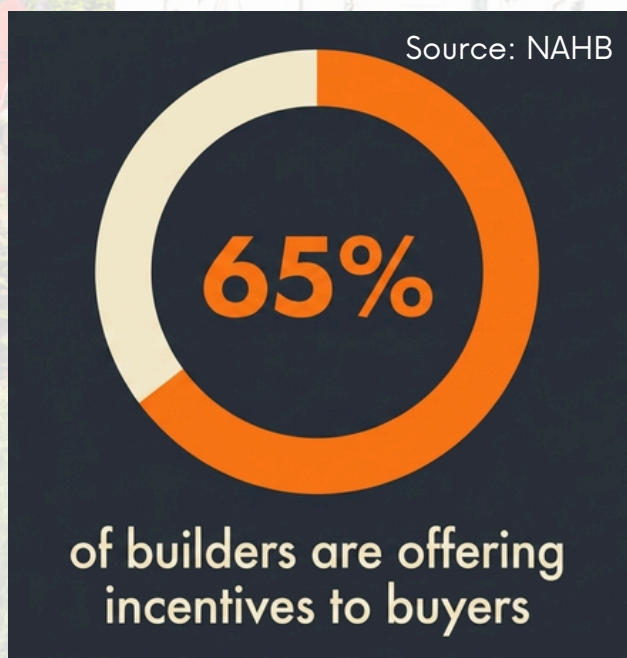
Why a Newly Built Home Could Be a Smart Choice Right Now

There are more new construction homes available in South Florida right now than buyers have seen in years—and that creates some clear advantages. For one, you have more options to choose from. At the same time, builders are often more motivated to sell existing or in-progress homes before starting new projects.

Because of this, many South Florida builders are offering incentives to attract buyers. These can include price reductions, assistance with closing costs, mortgage rate buydowns, or upgraded finishes and features at no additional cost.

These incentives can have a meaningful impact on your overall budget and monthly payment. That's why many buyers are taking a closer look at new construction—it can be a great opportunity to secure better value, favorable terms, and a move-in-ready home from day one.

Some of the most common builder incentives in South Florida right now include contributing toward your closing costs, offering upgraded finishes or appliance packages, and providing mortgage rate buydowns to help lower your monthly payment. With these benefits available, new construction homes can be a smart and cost-effective option to consider in today's market.



The good news is that these types of incentives are quite common in South Florida right now. Many builders are offering added benefits to attract buyers, creating opportunities in the new construction market that many people may overlook.

Another way builders are adding value is through price adjustments. In some cases, they're reducing prices to move inventory and stay competitive. This can give buyers more negotiating power and allow their budget to go further compared to resale homes.

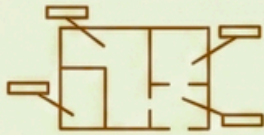
This is where working with a knowledgeable agent makes a difference. A local expert can help you compare builders, evaluate available incentives, and identify which opportunities offer the best overall value in the South Florida market.



Should You Buy an Existing Home Or a Newly Built One?

If you're torn on whether you want to focus your search on new construction homes or existing ones, here are some differences that could help you decide.

Benefits of an Existing Home



A wider variety of floor plans and styles

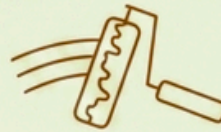


Details that add charm and character



More mature landscaping and neighborhoods

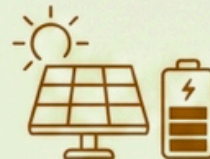
Benefits of a Brand-New Home



Ability to customize certain features during the build



Won't need repairs or renovation work up front



Energy efficient features may be standard

1. Delaying Pre-Approval

As part of the homebuying process in South Florida, a lender reviews your finances to determine how much you can borrow. This gives you a clear picture of your budget before you start touring homes. While searching for homes is exciting, it's important not to skip this step. Getting pre-approved first helps you move quickly and confidently when you find the right property—without risking missed opportunities.

2. Buying Beyond Your Budget

With current home prices and mortgage rates in South Florida, it's essential to stay within a comfortable budget. Beyond your mortgage, you'll also need to account for costs like property taxes, homeowners insurance (including wind and flood coverage), and maintenance. Instead of focusing on the maximum loan amount you qualify for, it's smarter to base your decision on a monthly payment that fits your lifestyle. Just because you can qualify for a higher loan doesn't always mean it's the right financial move.

Top Reasons To Own

Accomplishment



Feeling proud of your achievement

Stability



Locking in a large portion of your monthly housing payment with a fixed-rate mortgage

Appreciation



Home values usually rise, and that makes owning a home a good investment

Wealth Building



Growing your net worth as your home value climbs and you pay down your mortgage

Tax Benefits



Getting a tax break, if your situation applies. Talk to your accountant or financial advisor to learn more.

What's the top reason you'd love to own a home?

Top 5 Reasons You Need an Agent When Buying a Home

If you're thinking about buying a home, here's the truth: having a great agent by your side isn't just helpful, it's a game-changer. Here are five key reasons why working with a pro makes all the difference:

1. You Get a True Expert in Your Corner

Buying a home is a big move, and the process is always evolving. A great agent knows the latest rules, trends, and tools, and they'll walk you through every step. You don't need to figure it all out alone.

2. They Know Your Local Market Inside and Out

An agent doesn't just show you homes, they help you understand your market. They know what's selling, what's sitting, and where the opportunities are. They'll help you cut through the noise and focus on what really matters for your goals.

3. They'll Help You Make the Right Offer

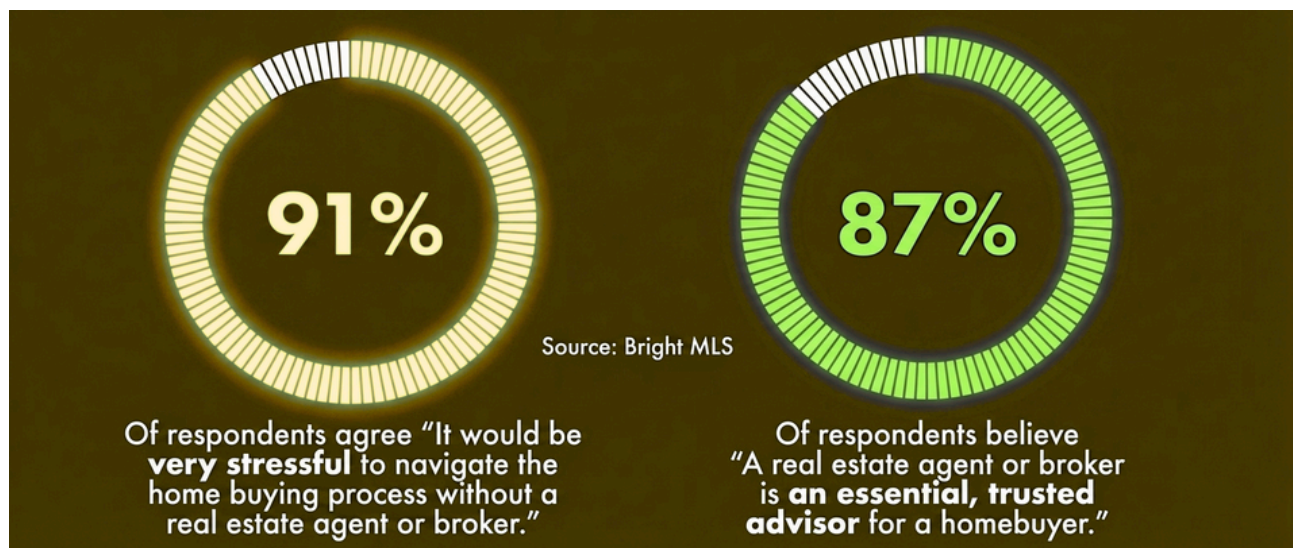
What's the home really worth? Is the price fair? Could there be hidden issues? An experienced agent will help you figure out how to structure a strong, smart offer, without overpaying or missing something important.

4. They Handle the Contracts and the Fine Print

Real estate comes with a lot of paperwork, and it's full of terms, deadlines, and disclosures you don't want to overlook. Your agent will make sure you know exactly what you're signing and why it matters.

5. They're Your Negotiator and Advocate

From the first offer to the final walkthrough, your agent is your voice. They'll negotiate on your behalf, manage communication with the seller's side, and protect your interests every step of the way.



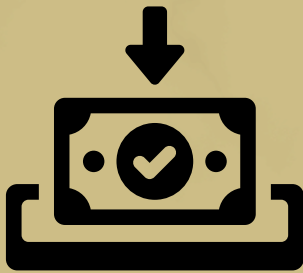
Things To Avoid After Applying for a Mortgage



Don't change bank accounts.



Don't apply for new credit or close any credit accounts.



Don't deposit cash into your accounts before speaking with your bank or lender.



Don't co-sign other loans for anyone.



Don't make any large purchases.

The best plan is to fully disclose and discuss your intentions with your lender before you do anything financial in nature.

LET ME HELP YOU FIND YOUR NEXT HOME!



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