



# Ready to Own?

Do you want no more landlords. No more rent. No more restrictions on what you can or can't do to your living space. It may be time to own your first home.

Before you lock yourself into a 30-year mortgage, it is up to you to do due diligence to ensure you'll be able to make your payments.

## The timing is right

Except for home flippers and real estate developers, it really doesn't make sense to purchase a home that you'll only own for a few years. The high transaction costs of buying and selling a property means you could lose money on the deal, unless you secure an opportunity that is too good to pass up.

Falling home prices make the case against buying even stronger. This is because prices are unlikely to skyrocket within the two- or three-year period you will own the home, meaning you're unlikely to make a great profit.

## The finances are right

On the financial side, one comparison to make is the cost of renting vs. owning. Remember to factor in the cost of the mortgage, property taxes and home insurance when building your

comparison.

A 2013 study by real estate organization Trulia found that it is 35 percent less expensive to buy a home than to rent one in America's largest cities. This may not be the case in your region, so do some research and make an informed decision.

## Get pre-approved

If you're looking to buy a house, your first plan of action is to determine a budget. This will help you define how much you're willing to spend on a new place.

With this information in mind, you're ready to make a visit to your bank to be pre-approved for a loan of that size or a little more. Obtaining a home mortgage is still relatively difficult today compared to the pre-recession years, so you may not be qualified to borrow as much money as you think.

It is a good idea both financially and emotionally to visit your mortgage specialist before you go on any home tours. The last thing you want to happen is to fall in love with a home before realizing it's not in your price range.

## CLEAN AIR IN YOUR HOME

As the American population has been made more aware of the dangers of greenhouse gases, one area that doesn't get as much attention is poor indoor air quality.

The quality of air can be two to five times more polluted than the worst outside air. This is because of the many indoor pollutants floating around our homes from sources such as gas, oil, kerosene, building materials and chemical products.

## Plants to the Rescue

In the 1980s, NASA and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America carried out an in-depth study on which house plants were the most effective in purifying the air in space. Several of the tested plants were proven to filter out common volatile organic compounds that can negatively impact our health and well-being.

Here are three of the most effective house plants for cleaning your air:

**Aloe:** The study found that aloe helps clear both formaldehyde and benzene, which are generally byproducts of chemical-based cleaners.

**Spider Plants:** Also safe for the pets in your home, spider plants are quick to battle benzene, formaldehyde and carbon monoxide. Their unique stringy foliage makes them perfect for hanging baskets.

**Azaleas:** These budding beauties are best grown in cooler temperatures, making them perfect for improving an indoor area such as a basement.

## Dirty Sock Syndrome

Even though it may not have a very scientific-sounding name, dirty sock syndrome can have a serious impact on the overall smell of your home. The problem most commonly occurs when bacteria that has built up from the moisture in your air ducts and system during cooling season are dried up and killed when you begin using heat.

This can result in a "dirty sock" smell being emitted from your ducts that is both annoying and overwhelming. Call your local heating and cooling professional, who for a fee can resolve the issue by spraying an antibacterial solution on your unit's coils. Hopefully you'll be back to odorless air in no time.