



To paraphrase a lyric from Donna Summer, "We work hard for the money"—so let's not squander it! From investing to estate planning to buying a home, *Just Out* offers a few tips to take to the bank

DOLLARS & SENSE

Setting roots

Whether you yearn for a bungalow in 97214 or a cabin over yonder, here are some tips to ponder

BY ORIANA GREEN

One of the biggest decisions any queer couple makes is to buy a home together. Luckily, there are many resources available to smooth the process and aid in securing that little slice of heaven.

The Portland metro area abounds in gay-friendly real estate agents, mortgage brokers and attorneys who can add that extra bit of expertise to ensure you get the result you want. It could be especially helpful to work with a queer agent if you're unfamiliar with the area and want to live in a welcoming neighborhood.

ner owns a joint tenancy with right of survivorship—which means when one partner dies the other retains full ownership.

Another method is to create a trust that owns the house and other properties. The partners can be the trustees and also the beneficiaries. When one partner dies, the terms of the trust dictate that the property shall be maintained for the benefit of the surviving partner. This option is especially good for estates worth more than \$600,000. Since the trust owns the property, the dying partner's estate is not subject to federal taxes.



PHOTOS BY MARTY DAVIS

Floyd Sklaver (right) and partner Mark Acito living "la vida domestica"

When Mark Acito and his partner, Floyd Sklaver, relocated here from New York, they were happy to have some help finding a more secluded location after they looked at suburban homes that to them "just felt too exposed, too June Cleaver-might-live-here."

Of course, others might prefer a location close to one of the city neighborhoods known for a high home density or an area rife with queer-owned businesses.

One tip they offer is to examine voting demographics of a prospective neighborhood as a rough gauge of prevalent attitudes. Acito says he and his partner bought in the most Democratic area, and "as it turns out, we have very liberal neighbors, who are now among our closest friends," he adds with relief.

"In terms of consciousness-raising we're always right there changing people's opinions," he adds.

In fact, Acito's experiences as a gay man living in deepest suburbia led directly to the creation of his comic strip, "The Boys Next Door."

But wherever you buy, do consider your options for protecting each partner's investment.

Lake Perrigey, a Portland-based gay attorney, offers some fairly simple tips. When purchasing property together, be sure to have the property deeded and the title recorded so that each part-

Perrigey also counsels queer couples to consider getting POD (pay on death) forms from their banks and to fill out beneficiary directive forms on all retirement accounts. This ensures that funds will automatically transfer at death to the person named on the form. This is one of the easiest steps to take and does not require a lawyer or even a notary to carry out.

Another suggestion is for both partners to draft living wills giving power of attorney to each other so that, in case of debilitating illness, medical and legal decisions can be carried out.

These are just general suggestions—you should consult your own attorney—but they are offered in hopes of spurring some of you to take action to protect your investments before it's too late.

Another facet of home buying to keep in mind is that it's rarely a linear process. Being open to serendipity and downright miracles can have a big impact on the whole experience.

Take the case of Daniel Dale and his partner, Michael Byerley, who first rented a house from a gay man and over a decade invested \$20,000 in the property—repairing and improving it, and creating a fabu-

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