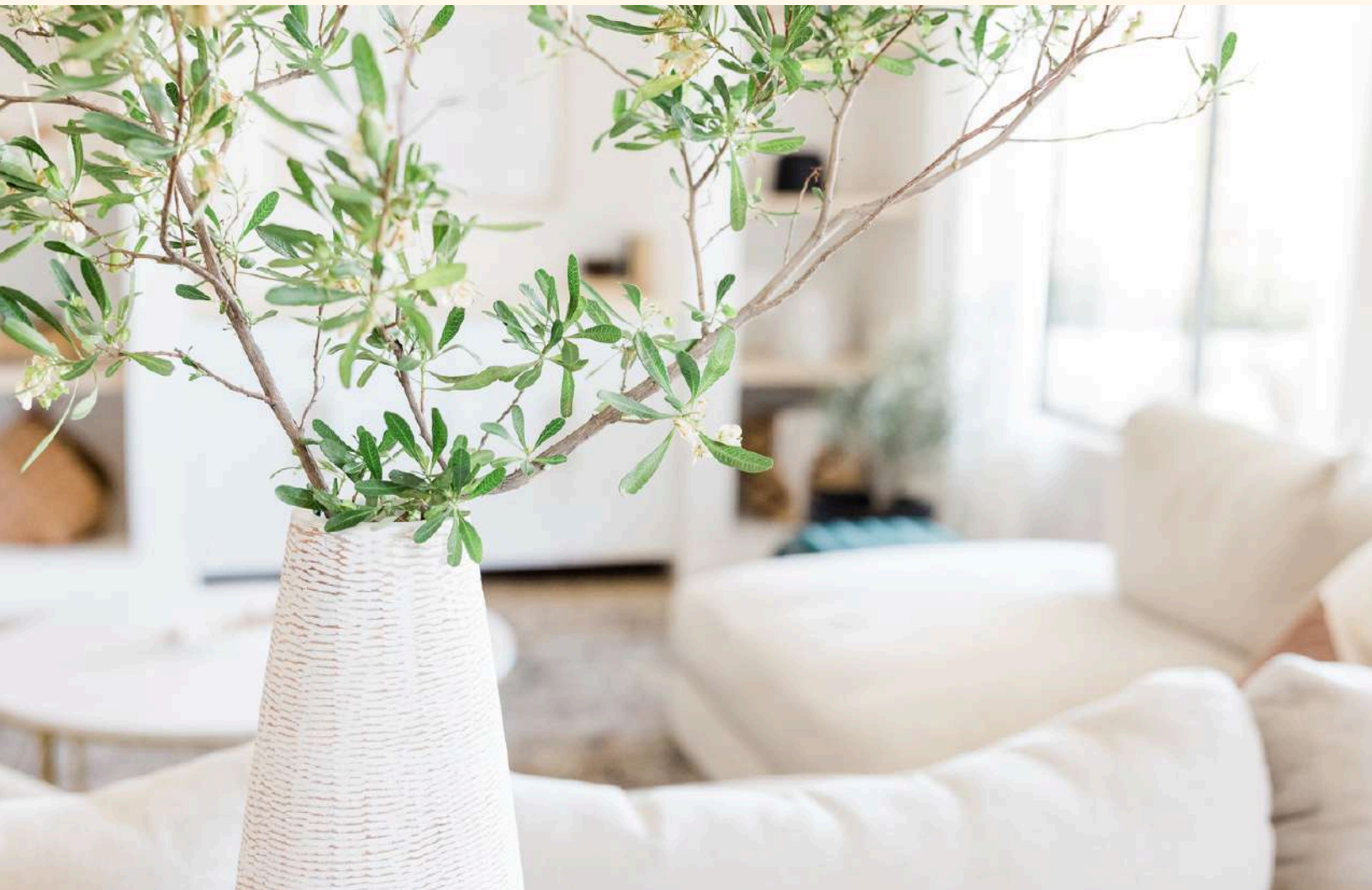


# A GUIDE TO HOME BUYING

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**FITCHER GROUP LLC**

YOUR FLORIDA REALTORS

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# ABOUT ME

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Principal Broker
- 18 years in the Business
- Leading Top Producer
- Giving Back to the Community

As a Florida native and a seasoned Broker, I recognize and value the trust my clients place in me, and I strive every day to exceed their expectations. I have been a leading top producer for over 18 years.

Prior to becoming a Real Estate Broker, I completed my B.A. in International Business and studied abroad in London, England. My internship was with Sir Ferguson, Member of Parliament in the House of Commons. These experiences instilled in me the discipline it takes to build the most powerful Real Estate team in Florida.

In my personal life, I take pride in giving back to the community and serve as a Board Member of St. Johns County Behavioral Health Consortium which shapes Florida Public Policy that helps high-risk, disadvantaged youth become successful adults.

SINCERELY

Michael Fitcher



# BUYER AGENCY

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## THE BUYER AGENCY CONTRACT

The buyer agency contract outlines my duties and responsibilities to you, and explains the relationship between buyer and broker. Much like a listing contract when you sell your home, this document is meant to protect you, give clarification around the service you can expect, and offer transparency around buyer agent compensation.

## MY RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOU

Once hired, I owe you duties of trust, loyalty, confidentiality, accounting, and disclosure. The duties of accounting and confidentiality extend beyond the agency relationship unless required by law, becomes public, or you give written consent to disclose. When representing you as a buyer, I have no duties or obligations to the seller, except to treat all prospective sellers honestly and not knowingly give false information.

## MY PROMISE

**We commit** to bringing out the best in ourselves, uncovering our hidden talents, and celebrating differences in our day-to-day interactions. These beliefs are essential as we serve our clients to fulfill the dream of home and property ownership in America.

# THE ROLE OF A BUYER'S AGENT

## THE VALUE WE BRING TO OUR CLIENTS

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### Education

We walk with you through the buying process, including Legal Requirements, Real Estate Terminology, and help you understand what to expect.

### Advice, Insight, On-Going Consultation

Market Trends, Property Comparisons, Negotiation Strategies, Legal Guidance, Local Insights.

### Accessibility & Availability

Immediate Response, Flexible Scheduling, Quick Showings, Research and Information.

### Research

We diligently research properties, neighborhoods, and local regulations. We track down information on HOA rules, property history, and any other relevant details.

### Strategy, Offer Prep, Negotiation

**Push:** Provide information, data, proactive help, understanding, and active listening.

**Persist:** Relentlessly pursue getting to a "yes."

**Pull:** Be willing to pull the deal away if necessary to create urgency.

### Managing The Transaction

Offer Acceptance and Escrow, Inspections and Negotiations, Title Search and Insurance, Appraisal and Financing, Closing Preparation, Closing Day!



# HOME BUYER ROADMAP

## 1. Buyer Consult

This is where we meet to discuss your options, get your questions answered, and put your list together of must-haves and deal-breakers for your home search.

**Time frame:** about an hour, give or take

## 2. Pre-approval

A pre-approval is a letter from a mortgage company that states they've reviewed your preliminary documents and have approved you for a loan of up to X amount (contingent on collecting more documents & a full review from underwriters.

**Time frame:** 1-2 days (depending on how fast you can provide docs.

## 3. Home Search

Once you have your pre-approval letter, we can start the fun part- looking at homes! We'll put together your criteria list: must-haves & deal breakers. Then we'll schedule showings to see homes that match your criteria.

**Time frame:** varies

## 4. Showings

As soon as a home hits the market that matches your criteria, we'll schedule a time to meet at the home and walk through it. If a home pops up that you want to see, we should schedule a showing for as soon as possible.

**Time frame:** 1 showing typically lasts around 20 min, but we have up to an hour to view a home.

## 5. Submit offer

If we are at a showing and you feel like it's "the one", we'll want to put together a purchase agreement and submit an offer as soon as possible!

**Time frame:** it will only take 10 min or so to go over the offer, I'll type it up, and have you sign it electronically. We'll want to submit the offer asap

## 6. Negotiations

We typically give the seller a deadline of 24 hours to respond to our offer. The seller may send a counter offer. Counter offers can be sent back and forth until both parties are satisfied.

**Time frame:** varies

# HOME BUYER ROADMAP



## 7. Accepted Offer

Once both parties are satisfied, and a signed accepted offer or counter offer is in hand, we can move forward with the loan application, inspections, & appraisal. Deadlines to get all of those things done will be outlined in the offer.

**Time frame:** varies

## 8. Financing

Now that you have an accepted offer, you'll need to officially apply for the loan. The underwriting will begin, and you may be asked to submit more documents, until the lender is satisfied and they give final approval.

**Time frame:** 30-45 days

## 9. Inspections

In the meantime, we'll order any inspections you'd like to have done at the house. We'll review the reports together, and decide if there are any items you'd like to request the seller have done prior to closing.

**Time frame:** order inspections asap. 10-12 days to respond

## 10. Appraisal

Your lender will order an appraisal on the home. They will require payment from you prior to ordering this. This needs to be done as soon as possible after you received an accepted offer.

**Time frame:** this can take up to 10 days or so to receive the appraisal report

## 11. Final Things

As we get closer to closing, we'll remind you to get utilities scheduled at your new house. We'll also have you wire your funds for closing to the title company, and we'll do one final walk-through at the house before signing closing docs!

**Time frame:** usually the day before or the day of closing

## 12. Closing

We will have a scheduled day and time to meet at the title company to sign closing docs with the sellers. You will be provided the keys to the house (unless a different possession date was negotiated). Yay! You bought a home!

**Time frame:** about an hour



# BUYER EXPENSES

## UPFRONT

**EARNEST MONEY:** typically around 1% of the purchase price. Will be turned in within 2 days of an accepted offer.

**INSPECTIONS:** a general inspection typically starts around \$400 (but depends on the size of the home). Add-ons will cost more: sewer line, termite, radon, well, septic, pool, etc). I would recommend budgeting for \$500-\$700.

**APPRAISAL:** usually around \$450. The lender will charge you for this before ordering the appraisal, which needs to be ordered as soon as you receive an accepted offer.

## AT CLOSING

**DOWNPAYMENT:** minimum down payment will be 3% of the purchase price, depending on the type of loan. You can put more down if you'd like, if you are willing and able!

**LENDER & TITLE CO FEES:** These are lumped in as part of your "closing costs," and they vary depending on the lender and title co you close with. Your lender can provide you with an estimate of what your closing costs will be.

**PREPAID INSURANCE:** a few months of your homeowner's insurance premium will be collected at closing. Contact your insurance carrier for a quote once you receive an accepted offer.



# GETTING PRE-APPROVED

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A pre-approval is needed to submit an offer. It gives the seller proof that a lender has reviewed your preliminary documents and has determined you are very likely going to be approved for a loan to buy their house.

## Shopping for a lender

It is a good idea to speak to a couple different lenders before deciding who you'd like to work with. When interviewing loan officers, ask them the following:

- What is the best type of loan for me?
- Do I qualify for any special loan programs or discounts?
- Are your rates, terms, fees and closing costs negotiable? (and what are they?)
- When can you lock in my rate, and how long is it locked for?
- Will I have to pay for private mortgage insurance (PMI)? If so, how much will that cost?
- Can I buy down points for a lower interest rate?
- How much should I expect to pay in closing costs?



## Initial docs needed for a pre-approval letter:

- Recent tax returns
- W-2 forms
- Paystubs
- Bank Statements
- List of monthly debt
- Credit report (you will give them permission to pull your credit. It will not drastically effect your score, but you want to limit the amount of pulls if you are shopping lenders).

# FINANCING- WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN BUYING A HOME

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You want to avoid doing any of the following during the process of buying a home, because they will affect your ability to get approved for the mortgage loan.



**Change jobs**

**Buy a vehicle**

**Spend excess money**

**Make large deposits**

**Co-sign another loan**

**Change bank accounts**

**Open new lines of credit**

**Omit debt from loan application**



# THE HOME SEARCH

## HOW SHOWINGS WORK

### The Who

When there is a home or homes you'd like to view, you'll contact me right away and we'll schedule a time to meet at the houses. The seller will not be there.

### The How

I will take care of requesting showings to view homes. Once the seller and/or listing agent approves our request, I will be provided with the access info. Only licensed Realtors are given this info to access the home for showings.

### The When

We are only allowed in the home during the scheduled time frame. Typically, we can schedule a 1 hour block of time at a house (although we don't HAVE to use up that whole hour if we don't need it). When a home you are interested in hits the market, we want to go view it as soon as possible.

### Visiting Open Houses

If you are out and about, feel free to stop by open houses! Just let the hosting real estate agent know that you do have a Realtor representing you already.



# SUBMITTING AN OFFER & NEGOTIATIONS

When you find the home you LOVE- it's time to make an offer! We will go over the purchase agreement together, fill in our price and terms, and I will submit it to the listing agent.

The offer will include a deadline for the seller to respond to us (typically around 24 hours, sometimes shorter).

## THEN, THE SELLER HAS 3 OPTIONS

### REJECT

If the seller is not satisfied with your offer in any way, or think you are too far apart in price, they may simply reject the offer.

### COUNTER

They can choose to send a counter offer, asking to change the price, or any other terms from the original offer.

### ACCEPT

If the seller is satisfied with the offer as it is written, they may accept the offer and we'd all move on with next steps!

## How counter offers work

If the seller sends us a counter offer, they will **ONLY** counter the items they want **CHANGED** from the original Purchase Agreement. If an item is not mentioned in the counter offer, that means they are ok with it, and it carries over legally in the agreement.

You can then either: sign and accept their counter offer, **OR** send a counter offer back to them. This can go back and forth until both parties are satisfied.

**TAKE NOTE:** Nothing is officially "accepted" or "countered" until the signed document has been delivered from agent to agent via email. An offer or counter offer may be rescinded at any time prior to the delivery of the signed, accepted document.



# THE PURCHASE AGREEMENT

## CONTRACT DETAILS

1

### PRICE

The big one- the price is the main part of the offer. The purchase agreement includes the price you are offering for the home.

2

### TERMS

The negotiable terms include but are not limited to: type of financing, timelines for inspections & appraisal, amount for earnest money, who picks title company, Closing date/possession, what's included/not included in the sale, etc.

3

### CONTINGENCIES

Unless you are paying cash, the offer will be contingent on your ability to get a mortgage loan approved. Sales are often contingent on a satisfactory inspection, and on receiving an appraised value at (or above) the contract purchase price. The offer could also be contingent on the current home selling (if you have to sell before you buy.)

4

### CLOSING/POSSESSION

The closing date will be agreed upon in the contract, as well as when the buyer will take possession of the home.

# WHAT IF THE SELLER HAS MULTIPLE OFFERS?

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If the seller receives multiple offers, they **COULD** choose to call for “highest and best.” This means they will notify all buyers that they have received multiple offers, and will put out a deadline to revise your offer if you wish, and re-submit.

If your current offer is already the best offer you are willing to submit, you can simply re-submit the same offer by the given deadline.

**The sellers do not HAVE to call for highest and best.** If one offer stands out and they'd like to accept one, they have that right. They don't have to give you a chance to revise or counter.

That is why it is important to always put your best foot forward from the beginning! If you want the home, don't play games.



## My best tips to win a multiple offer situation:

- Always submit a pre-approval letter
- Have your lender call the listing agent
- Offer above asking (based on my recommendation)
- Be flexible with the closing date
- Be flexible with possession date
- Appraisal gap coverage
- Escalation Clause
- Inspection repair limits
- Keep the offer as clean as possible with contingencies- if it's not a deal breaker, don't ask for it.





# YOUR OFFER WAS ACCEPTED!

## Now what?

As soon as you have an accepted offer, all the deadlines outlined in the contract will begin the day AFTER acceptance was received in writing.

## Next Steps

- Turn in earnest money: this will be given to the listing agent's company or sometimes the title company. It will be held in their account and will be applied to the purchase price at closing. Typical deadline: 2 business days.
- Apply for the mortgage loan: you have your pre-approval letter, but now that you have a contract, you'll need to sign the official loan application with your lender. Typical deadline: 7 days.
- Order inspections and respond to inspection report: you'll want to get an inspection ordered immediately so we have time to review it and put together a response. Typical deadline: 10-14 days.
- Pay for and have your lender order the appraisal: contract deadline says "immediately" after accepted offer.
- Get a commitment letter for homeowner's insurance: You'll call your insurance provider (or I can recommend one) to get a quote and commitment letter. The lender will require this before closing. Typical deadline: 10-20 days.

# LET'S CHAT INSPECTIONS

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The purchase agreement says exactly how many days you have to get all inspections done, and respond to those inspection via an "inspection response."

You may either: **WAIVE** or **RESERVE** the right to have independent inspections done within an agreed upon timeline.

Any and all inspections shall be at the **buyer's expense**.

## Inspection Response is Required:

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If a "defect" is revealed by an inspection, you must: provide the inspection report or relevant parts, and give the seller the opportunity to remedy the defects. The buyer's inspection response will outline/list out the defects you want addressed.

If the seller is unwilling or unable to remedy defect to your reasonable satisfaction, you can either: terminate the agreement (and get your earnest money back), or waive the defects and proceed towards closing.



## DEFECT, defined:

A "Defect" means a condition that would have a significant adverse effect on the value of the Property, that would significantly impair the health or safety of future occupants of the property, or that if not repaired, removed, or replaced would significantly shorten or adversely affect the expected normal life of the premises.

# TYPES OF INSPECTIONS

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You may get the following types of inspections done on your home during the agreed upon inspection response period. Including but not limited to:

General inspection  
Radon Testing  
Termite inspection  
Sewer line scope  
HVAC/mechanical inspections  
Roof inspections

Lead-based paint tests  
Mold tests  
Structural/Foundation  
Well water tests/inspections  
Septic System inspections  
Pool





# WHAT IS AN APPRAISAL?

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An appraisal is the estimation of a home's current market value. A licensed appraiser completes this estimation, which is calculated by comparing recent nearby sold homes to the property that is being appraised.

## WHAT IS IT FOR?

Appraisals are required by mortgage lenders to be sure that the money they are lending to a buyer is a fair amount for the home. The lenders want to be sure that the buyers are not overpaying for the property. This is to protect the lender. If the buyer stops making payments on the home, the lender wants to make sure they would be able to sell and re-coup the money that they loaned for the home.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

If you are financing the sale with a mortgage, the lender will require an appraisal to be done on the home. The lender hires a 3rd party appraisal company, who will send an appraiser to your home. They will evaluate your home, look at comparable sales, then send the lender a full appraisal report, which includes the "appraised value" of your home. The buyers typically pay for the appraisal.

## TIMING

Appraisals can take a few minutes to a few hours to complete, depending on the details of the home and the appraiser's methods. It usually takes a week to 10 days to complete and send the appraisal report to the lender (or whomever ordered it).

# WHAT HAPPENS IF THE APPRAISAL COMES IN LOW?

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If the appraised value comes in and it's **BELOW** the agreed upon purchase price, a few things could happen:

**OPTION 1:** Either party, buyer or seller, could choose to terminate the contract (unless a different agreement was made in writing upfront, as part of the offer).

**OPTION 2:** Both parties re-negotiate the purchase price. The seller could agree to sell for the lower appraised value, the buyer (if able and willing) could come up with the difference in cash and move forward at the original agreed price, or a different price, somewhere in-between, could be negotiated.

**OPTION 3:** After reviewing the appraisal report, if you believe the appraiser to be wrong (maybe you disagree with the comps they used), you could go through an appeal process. But this doesn't guarantee that the appraiser will change the value. In this case, see if the lender will allow a second appraisal. Both parties will have to agree to this, and decide who is paying for the second appraisal.

The reason these are your options, is because the lender will only loan money for (up to) the appraised value. They can't simply add the discrepancy into the mortgage. You, as the buyer, would have to have the extra cash.





# FINAL THINGS

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## A few things need to happen right before closing

**Final clear to close** - given by the lender, once their underwriters have cleared all conditions and give us the go-ahead to schedule closing with the title company.

**Final paperwork** - When we get the clear-to-close, the lender gives the final numbers and “closing package” to the title company.

The title company then prepares their closing documents based on what was provided by the lender. Those documents then go BACK to the lender for final approval, before final numbers are given to the agents and their clients.

**Final walk through** - The home needs to be delivered in the same or better condition as when they made the offer. The buyers will likely schedule a final showing at the home so they can walk through and verify this.

**Utility Transfer** - You'll want to make sure you call your utility companies to transfer the utilities out of your name. You'll simply tell them you are moving, and give them your closing date. Have them turned off in your name the day after closing.





# CLOSING

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Both parties will find a time they can meet at the title company (on the closing date agreed to in the contract) to sign all the closing documents together at the same time.

A Realtor representing each client is required to be there. The title company "closer" will go over all the documents with each party, will get all signatures needed & notarize, then they will get the deed recorded and transferred with the county.

## WHAT TO BRING:

All you will need to bring to closing is a valid photo ID that is not expired.

## SENDING THE WIRE

As soon as we get the clear to close from the lender, the title company will work up the "settlement statement", breaking down all the numbers, including the final amount you need for closing. If this amount is over 10K, it MUST be wired from your bank to the title company. Otherwise a cashiers check will suffice. If you are sending a wire, we will get the title company's wiring instructions, which your bank will need to send the money. Ideally this is done the day prior to closing, to make sure the money get's transferred in time for closing.

## KEYS AND POSSESSION

The buyer will get possession as outlined in the purchase agreement, at which point you'll give them the keys & garage openers. This may be at the closing table, or at a later date if you have agreed to give the seller post possession.

# MEET YOUR TEAM

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## Principal Broker-Michael Fitcher

Michael Fitcher, CEO of the Fitcher Group LLC. As a Florida native and a seasoned Broker, I recognize and value the trust my clients place in me, and I strive every day to exceed their expectations.  
Mobile: 904-536-2223

## Realtor-Robert Moreno

Robert takes care of all the behind the scenes paperwork, and keeps us all on track with our contract deadlines. So we can focus on what's most important, YOU!

Mobile: 904-907-7195



## Justin Smith NMLS# 1644985

Broker/Owner

CBGC LLC NMLS# 1782517

Email: [justin.smith@cbgcmortgage.com](mailto:justin.smith@cbgcmortgage.com)

Mobile: 412-965-4947

# TESTIMONIALS

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## FROM MY BUYER CLIENTS

We had a wonderful experience with Michael as our agent.  
Always kind, helpful, knowledgeable and fun.

Margaret & Jay Martens

Michael went out of his way to make sure our house was  
market-ready and looked amazing to sell.  
He's not one to just sit back and post listings, I highly  
recommend Michael to anyone looking to sell.

Doug Hart

Michael went above and beyond just being my realtor. He truly  
cared for me and my family and pulled out all stops to get me what I  
wanted. He's truly a special human, not just realtor.

Laura James

Michael & Robert did not disappoint. Always quick to  
respond, helpful 100% of the time.  
Go with Michael, you won't regret it.

Patricia Lajara Aquino





# NEXT STEPS



If all your questions have been answered, and we decide to work together, we'll go over the buyer agency contract, get you pre-approved (if you aren't already!), and then we can start looking at homes!  
(The fun part!)

SINCERELY,

**Michael Fitcher**

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# NEW HOME WISH LIST

## Must Haves & Deal Breakers

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## Nice to have but can live without

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NOTE :