# THE CINDY BANKS TEAM

## HOME BUYER'S GUIDE


**SERVING THE CHICAGOLAND AREA WITH 35+ YEARS EXPERIENCE & 5,000+ HOMES SOLD**

WHY CHOOSE THE CINDY BANKS TEAM

# Experience that moves you forward

Buying a home is an exciting milestone—and having the right team by your side can make all the difference. The Cindy Banks Team brings together decades of real estate experience, dedicated support staff, and skilled buyer specialists to provide an exceptional home-buying experience.

With **35+ years of experience, 5,000+ homes sold**, and a reputation as one of the nation's top REALTORS®, Cindy Banks and her team deliver the expertise, resources, and personalized guidance you need to navigate the market with confidence and find the home that's right for you.

**Click here to watch our video:**

**Cindy Banks**
**Broker/Owner**

RE/MAX LUMINARY OF DISTINCTION
RE/MAX CIRCLE OF LEGENDS
RE/MAX LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
DIAMOND AWARD TEAM

# Sign an Agreement

As of August 2024 throughout the United States, there have been significant changes in the real estate industry, particularly influenced by a major settlement involving the National Association of Realtors (NAR). Key updates include:

**Compensation Structure Changes:** A landmark settlement has altered how compensation is handled. Sellers are no longer required to offer compensation to buyer's agents as a condition for listing properties on Multiple Listing Services (MLS). This change is expected to increase transparency and foster more competitive compensation negotiations.

**Advertising Restrictions:** Listing agents can no longer advertise the compensation rates they are willing to pay buyer's agents through MLS.

**Mandatory Buyer Agreements:** New regulations require explicit written agreements (Non-Exclusive or Exclusive) between buyers and their agents, outlining service fees upfront. These agreements must be signed prior to viewing listed properties. This aims to ensure buyers are fully informed and can make empowered decisions.

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BUYERS

These changes are intended to create greater transparency throughout the home-buying process. Buyers should expect to discuss agency representation and compensation with their REALTOR® early in the process, ensuring they understand their options and can make informed decisions before beginning their home search.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION
### DO I HAVE TO PAY MY AGENT OUT OF POCKET?

Not necessarily. Buyer agent compensation is negotiable and may be paid by the seller, the buyer, or through another arrangement agreed upon during the transaction. Your agent will explain your options before you begin touring homes.

PREPARE YOUR BUYING POWER

# Get pre-approved with confidence

A pre-approval is a written statement from a lender confirming that a borrower qualifies for a specified loan amount under that lender's guidelines. While this does not guarantee a loan, it tells you how much you can afford. It also lets the seller know that you are a good candidate for financing under their terms -- which puts you in a stronger negotiating position.

Each Cindy Banks Team Realtor® is connected to a network of top mortgage financing professionals, who have access to a wide variety of unique lending options and the most advanced mortgage technology available. As a result, our clients enjoy a hassle-free experience through impeccable execution and timely communication throughout the process.

### Mortgage document checklist

Your lender may request these common items:

- [ ] Government-issued photo ID
- [ ] Recent pay stubs
- [ ] Two years of W-2s or tax returns
- [ ] Two months of bank statements
- [ ] Asset and investment statements
- [ ] Employment and housing history
- [ ] Debt and obligation details
- [ ] Gift-fund documentation, if applicable

### Mortgage DOs

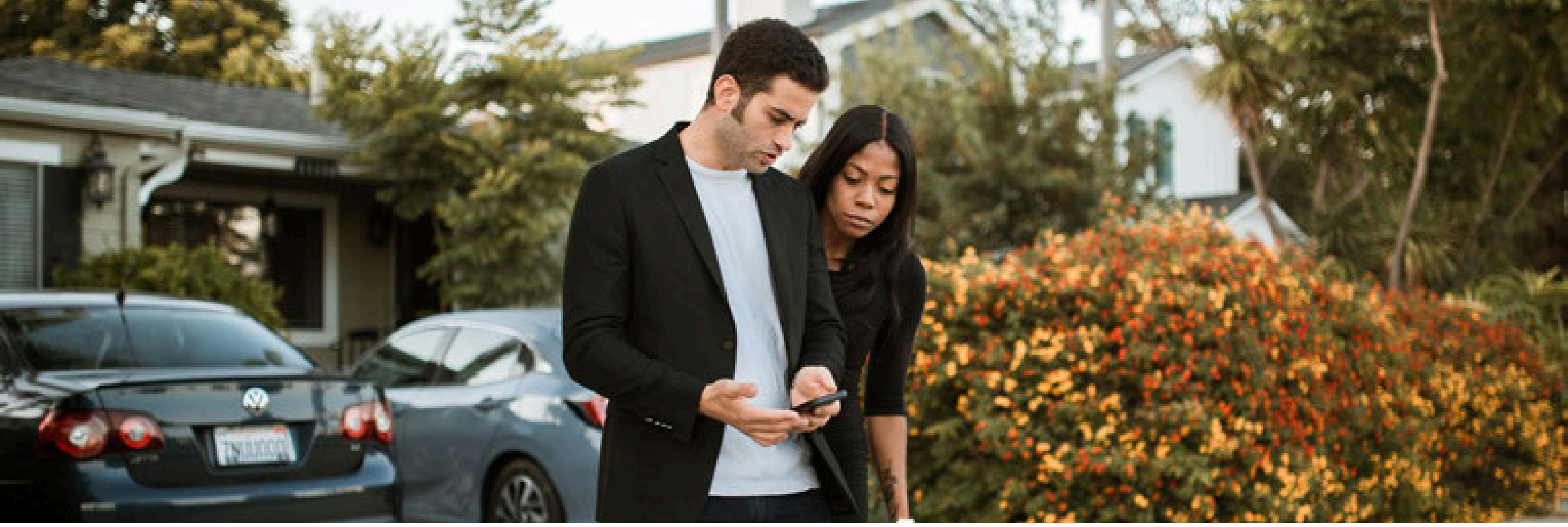
- Pay every bill on time
- Keep funds traceable
- Save all statements
- Ask before moving money
- Tell your lender about changes

### Mortgage DON'Ts

- Open new credit
- Finance a car or furniture
- Change jobs without discussion
- Make large cash deposits
- Co-sign another loan

### Protect your approval

Before making a financial change, call your lender. Even routine decisions can affect underwriting.



SEARCH WITH PURPOSE

# Find the right home

What are you looking for in your next home? How much space will you need? Are there specific amenities you can't live without? These are all important questions to ask yourself as you begin the home search process.

### Know Your Numbers

Set a comfortable monthly target that includes taxes, insurance, utilities, and maintenance.

### Life Outside

Consider outdoor living - yard, balcony/deck

### Needs vs. Wants

Separate daily essentials from upgrades that can wait or be added later.

### Location

Compare communities, commute patterns, services, taxes, and future plans.

## CUSTOM SEARCH

Once your Cindy Banks Team Realtor® sets you up on your custom search you will then have access to the entire Multiple Listing Service (MLS). As soon as a home is listed in the MLS it appears on cindybanksteam.com, including all property specifications and professional photographs. The powerful search functionality makes it easy for you to find properties that meet your requirements, while a wealth of custom links provide immediate access to your broker so you can receive more detailed information.

**Ready to explore available homes?**
Browse current properties for sale and save your favorites.

EXPLORE HOMES YOU'LL LOVE

# View your favorite homes

Together with your Cindy Banks Team Realtor®, you can select the homes that you would like to see at your leisure. Your broker will then work with the seller's agent to coordinate a day and time that works with your schedule to see the home. By setting up a date to view, you can see multiple homes in a short period of time and have a clear idea of what is right for you.

During the showings, we suggest you jot down notes as you go from one home to the next, and discuss all of your likes and dislikes of each home with your Cindy Banks Team Realtor®. Please always ask questions as you're touring through the homes, and bring up any objections you may have about a particular home. Feel free to ask us about the shopping and transportation around the area, as well as specific questions about the construction of the home: electrical, plumbing, heating, cooling systems, and so forth. Your Cindy Banks Team Realtor® will check in with the listing agent to answer all your specific questions.

### Inside the home

- [ ] Layout supports daily routines
- [ ] Bedrooms & baths fit future needs
- [ ] Natural light and storage feel sufficient
- [ ] Major systems appear maintained
- [ ] Kitchen & gathering space work well
- [ ] Renovation needs match budget & timing

### Property & Lifestyle

- [ ] Street & surroundings feel comfortable
- [ ] Commute & transportation are practical
- [ ] Outdoor space fits your plans
- [ ] Parking meets household needs
- [ ] Nearby services support your routine
- [ ] Taxes & association cost feel manageable

COMPARE WITH CLARITY

# Buyer property scorecards

Rate each category from 1 to 5. The score is a guide – not a substitute for inspection, due diligence, or your instincts.

**Address:** ____________________

| Category | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Location | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Condition | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Layout | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Value | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Lifestyle Fit | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Notes:**

**Total Score:** ____________________

**Address:** ____________________

| Category | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Location | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Condition | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
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| Value | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Lifestyle Fit | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Notes:**

**Total Score:** ____________________

*Revisit your scores after sleeping on the decision. Priorities often become clearer with a little distance.*

**Need more cards? Download them here.**

Helpful resources, ready whenever you need them.

FROM ACCEPTED OFFER TO KEYS

# Your path from offer to closing

Once an offer is accepted, deadlines move quickly. Your team keeps each specialist and milestone aligned.

### Offer & Earnest Money

We craft a strategic, compelling contract backed by deep market analysis.

### Negotiate Best Terms

We advocate tirelessly to secure the absolute best price, conditions, and timeline.

### Under Contract

With the contract signed by both parties, we formally open escrow and secure the earnest deposit.

### Inspection & Appraisal

We navigate detailed property reviews, request needed repairs, and verify the home's market value.

### Financing & Title

Lenders complete underwriting while attorney/title reviews protect clean ownership records.

### Walkthrough & Closing

Verify condition during the final walk, sign your papers, fund your loan, and take your keys!

### Stay reachable

Fast responses help protect deadlines. Keep your Cindy Banks Team REALTOR®, lender, attorney, and insurer informed of travel or availability changes.

MAKE A COMPETITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION

# Present an Offer

Before submitting an offer, your Cindy Banks Team REALTOR® will analyze current market conditions and comparable sales to develop a competitive pricing strategy tailored to your goals. Once your offer is prepared, we'll present it to the seller's agent with the supporting documentation needed to strengthen your position.

Throughout the transaction, we use secure digital technology through DocuSign to simplify paperwork, streamline communication, and keep you, your lender, and your attorney connected every step of the way.

## THE OFFER STRATEGY FUNNEL

### MARKET DATA

Recent Sales | Current Listings | Market Trends

↓

### STRATEGY

Price Positioning | Offer Terms | Negotiation Plan

↓

### COMPETITIVE OFFER

Strong Submission | Best Possible Terms

**Strong does not always mean highest**

Price matters, but financing strength, timing, contingencies, earnest money, and clarity can all improve an offer's position.

NAVIGATE THE DETAILS WITH CONFIDENCE

# Under Contract

When the seller accepts your offer, you are "under contract". This means you have a specific period of time to drop off earnest money, inspect the property, get your paperwork in order, and secure financing. Since the real estate purchase is one of the largest you'll ever make, it's crucial to have a team of real estate professionals to ensure that you are supported throughout your entire home buying experience. Your Cindy Banks Team Realtor® will help you assemble this team and will manage this complex transaction daily.

## FROM COMMITMENT TO KEYS

Each milestone moves the transaction closer to a successful closing day.

**Earnest Money**

Homebuyer commitment

**Inspection**

Understand the home's condition

**Financing**

Finalize Loan

**Final Approval**

Prepare for closing

**Closing Day**

**Get the keys!**

Stay responsive to your REALTOR®, lender, attorney, inspector, and insurer—many contract deadlines are time-sensitive.

Your Cindy Banks Team REALTOR® manages deadlines, coordinates professionals, and keeps your transaction moving forward.

CONFIRM YOUR HOME IS READY

# Final Walkthrough

In order to ensure that your future new home is in the shape that you last saw it in during inspection, we will schedule a final walk through 1-2 days before closing. We will walk through to check the home with you and relay any questions you may have. In addition to conducting a final walk through, getting home insurance and setting up utilities in advance of your move-in, you'll want to meet with your loan officer and attorney to go over final closing costs and other financial considerations. As your closing date approaches, we will work with you to finalize the details of the transaction.

## Before you get the keys, we'll help you confirm

✓ Agreed-upon repairs have been completed

✓ The home is in the expected condition

✓ Included appliances and fixtures remain in place

✓ Personal items and debris have been removed

✓ Any final questions are addressed before closing

### Before Closing

- ☐ Review final documents
- ☐ Confirm loan details
- ☐ Complete final walkthrough

### Closing Day

- ☐ Sign paperwork
- ☐ Receive your keys

THE MOMENT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR IS ALMOST HERE!

Your Cindy Banks Team REALTOR® will help ensure every detail is complete so you can step into your new home with confidence.

THE FINAL STEP TO HOMEOWNERSHIP

# Closing

Closing is the legal process of transferring ownership of a property from one party to another. You, your attorney, the seller's attorney, the closing agent, and the seller will gather to sign the required legal documents. The purpose of these documents is to confirm the terms of agreement between you and the mortgage lender; confirm the terms of sale between you and the seller; and legally transfer ownership of the home. At the end of the closing, you'll walk away with a complete set of closing documents and the keys to your new home!

**Review**

**Sign**

**Keys**

THE CINDY BANKS TEAM
RE/MAX CORNERSTONE

Your Cindy Banks Team is with you through the final signature and beyond.

SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF HOMEBUYING

# Home buying terms made simple

Keep these common terms close as you move through financing, contracts, and closing.

### Appraisal
An evaluation of a home's value completed by a licensed appraiser.

### Closing
The final step where ownership transfers from the seller to the buyer.

### Closing Costs
Fees and expenses associated with completing a home purchase.

### Home Inspection
A professional evaluation of a home's condition and major systems.

### MLS (Multiple Listing Service)
A database of available properties shared among real estate professionals.

### Pre-Approval
A lender's estimate of how much you may qualify to borrow.

### REALTOR®
A real estate professional who is a member of the National Association of REALTORS® and follows a strict Code of Ethics.

### Underwriting
The lender's process of reviewing your loan application and financial information.

### Walk-Through
A final review of the property before closing to confirm its condition.

### Title Insurance
Protection against potential ownership or title issues with the property.

**Need a complete glossary?**

Download the full glossary here.

MAKE THE MOVE MANAGEABLE

# Moving Checklist

A little planning now creates a calmer first night at home

## 4-6 Weeks Before

- [ ] Book movers or reserve a truck
- [ ] Sort, donate, and declutter
- [ ] Create a room-by-room plan
- [ ] Gather records and valuables

## 2 Weeks Before

- [ ] Transfer utilities and internet
- [ ] Update address and subscriptions
- [ ] Confirm insurance start date
- [ ] Arrange pet or child care

## Moving Week

- [ ] Pack a first-night essentials box
- [ ] Label boxes by room and priority
- [ ] Photograph electronics before unplugging
- [ ] Confirm keys, timing and access

## First Days Home

- [ ] Test smoke and CO detectors
- [ ] Locate shutoffs and breaker panel
- [ ] Change locks or access codes
- [ ] Meet neighbors and celebrate

FIRST-YEAR HOME MAINTENANCE

### Spring
Replace HVAC filter and inspect your air conditioner.

### Summer
Clean gutters and check exterior caulking around windows and doors.

### Fall
Winterize outdoor faucets and schedule a furnace tune-up.

### Winter
Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and check for drafts.


STORIES FROM THE CLOSING TABLE

# Guidance buyers remember

Every move is personal. Our goal is to make buyers feel informed, protected, and genuinely supported.

"

*Cindy and her team were communicative, honest, and very helpful for us as first-time homebuyers! We were moving from out of state so she was flexible with virtual tours and made sure we had all the information we needed. I would highly recommend working with Cindy and her team!*

**– Nick F.**

"

*Cindy Banks and her team recently helped my boyfriend and I buy our first home! They were incredible to work with, knowledgeable and helpful through the entire process. Cindy went with us to see multiple properties and was always available when we had questions. We would recommend Cindy and her team to anyone! They really made buying our first home an enjoyable experience.*

**– Alex P.**

**Ready to write your home story?**

Start with a thoughtful, no-pressure conversation.

YOUR ADVOCATE AT EVERY TURN

# The value of a REALTOR®

A skilled REALTOR® brings context, strategy, and coordination to one of life's biggest financial decisions.

- Access to Exclusive Listings
- Local Market Knowledge
- Legal Expertise
- Objective Advice
- Skilled Negotiation
- Time Efficiency
- Expert Guidance
- Post-Purchase Support

## The Right Team Makes All the Difference

Meet the Cindy Banks Team on the back page and connect with a REALTOR® who will be your advocate from search to sold.

# WE'RE A TEAM

One of the things that sets us apart from your average REALTOR® is that we work as a team.

**KATY BANKS**
Team Partner
REALTOR®

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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

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REALTOR®