



Buying a Colorado home

A practical guide to the address, the contract, and the cost of owning. From Front Range neighborhoods to mountain communities.

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Start with a Tuesday, not a listing

A home search works better when it begins with an ordinary day. Picture leaving for work, bringing groceries inside, walking the dog after dark, and making room for visiting family. A spectacular view cannot fix a daily routine that does not work. Choose the routines the home needs to support before comparing finishes.

Tour the neighborhood at different times. Drive the route you would actually use, check the walk from parking to the front door, and notice stairs, shade, street activity, and outdoor maintenance. For a mountain home, repeat the exercise for winter: where will snow go, who clears access, and how will you arrive after a storm? Treat those as questions to verify, not assumptions about a whole town.

In Longmont and Niwot, compare the actual address and its surroundings rather than treating the two places as interchangeable. In Denver, weigh building operations and parking as carefully as the floor plan. Around Steamboat, distinguish the way you will use a downtown home from a property oriented around ski access. The right choice is the one that fits your use, not a universal ranking of neighborhoods.

Five Four's podcast conversations offer a useful starting point: Laura and Tim discuss Longmont and Niwot through everyday experience, while the Steamboat episode explores how a second home can become part of year-round life. Use that perspective to sharpen your own search.

**Before touring: agree on three daily-life priorities and three acceptable tradeoffs.
Use the same test at every home.**

Five Four editorial guidance. Examples are illustrative.

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Separate the payment from the cash you need

Build two budgets. The first is the recurring cost of ownership: principal and interest, property taxes, insurance, any mortgage insurance, HOA charges, utilities, and a reserve for repairs. The second is cash needed for the purchase: down payment, closing costs, prepaid items, inspections, moving, and immediate work. Money retained after closing is a separate decision, not whatever happens to be left.

Illustrative comparison: two homes can each have a \$3,000 principal-and-interest payment. If one adds \$350 taxes, \$220 insurance, and \$100 HOA dues, those items total \$3,670 monthly. If the other adds \$550 taxes, \$300 insurance, and \$350 dues, the total is \$4,200. That \$530 difference comes before utilities and maintenance. These are examples, not Colorado price or insurance estimates.

Ask the county and any metropolitan district for the actual parcel's tax information. A district can create an additional tax burden; do not infer the bill from a nearby home or an online payment calculator. For new construction, ask whether the displayed historical bill reflects completed improvements. Obtain the lender's current estimate and understand what may change.

CHFA offers Colorado homeownership resources and financing programs through participating lenders. Ask about eligibility and homebuyer education early. Compare the total loan terms and repayment conditions of any assistance, not just the amount offered at closing.

Get a property-specific lender estimate. Keep a repair reserve outside your down payment and closing-cost calculation.

Sources: metro, chfa

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Put the address through a Colorado risk check

Request an insurance quote while you still have time to act under the contract. Give the insurer accurate information about the roof, property condition, intended occupancy, and any rental use. Ask what must happen before coverage can begin. A seller's premium is not a quote for you.

Colorado's insurance regulator highlights hail and wildfire pressures. Ask whether roof losses are paid on replacement-cost or depreciated actual-cash-value terms, and convert any percentage deductible into dollars. For example, 2% of a \$600,000 insured dwelling limit is \$12,000. This is a deductible illustration, not a typical policy recommendation.

Inspection planning should follow the house. Ask the inspector which areas and systems are outside the general inspection, then consider the appropriate specialists for a sewer line, roof, structural concern, or well. Request a radon test and review any existing system and test reports. Colorado law requires disclosure of known radon information; disclosure alone does not establish today's conditions.

Read drainage and access questions together. Look at grading near the foundation, evidence of past water intrusion, and the route water would take through the lot. Ask about flood designation and any separate coverage needed. On foothill properties, discuss vegetation, access, and insurer requirements with qualified local professionals before treating an appealing setting as a fully understood risk.

Resolve the expensive unknowns early: insurability, major systems, water intrusion, radon, and access.

Sources: insurance, radon

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Read the contract as a decision calendar

Your signed agreement controls your obligations. Have your broker explain the current Colorado form, all additional provisions, and the dates filled into it before you sign. Do not rely on a friend's inspection timeline or assume every transaction has the same cancellation window.

Make a one-page calendar of the decisions that apply to your contract: earnest money, title, association documents, inspections, financing, appraisal, insurance, closing, and possession. For each, identify who supplies the information, who reviews it, and when a notice must be delivered. A calendar reminder is useful only if it leaves enough time to investigate.

An inspection, an appraisal, and loan approval answer different questions. Inspection evaluates condition within its scope. Appraisal informs the lender's valuation analysis. Underwriting evaluates the loan. A satisfactory result in one does not settle the others. Ask your broker and lender to explain what happens if the appraisal is low or a specialist cannot inspect before the relevant deadline.

Treat a competitive offer as a set of obligations you can afford to perform. Before offering an appraisal-gap commitment or changing an inspection provision, model the cash consequence and obtain advice about the exact wording. Ask how earnest money is handled if the transaction ends. It is not automatically recoverable simply because your plans change.

Have your broker explain your actual deadlines and notice requirements in plain language before you sign.

Sources: contract

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An HOA is part of what you are buying

The home has a condition; the association has a financial condition. Review governing documents, budgets, financial statements, meeting minutes, insurance information, and assessments. The Colorado purchase contract addresses association documents. Ask for the package promptly rather than waiting until the end of your review period.

Look for recurring maintenance problems, discussion of major projects, rising insurance costs, and disagreement about funding. Ask how reserves relate to the anticipated roof, siding, paving, elevator, or other work the association maintains. A low monthly charge is not proof of a low long-term cost. A missing document is a reason to follow up, not a reassuring answer.

Clarify the boundary between your responsibility and the association's. Who maintains windows, patios, pipes, roofs, and exterior finishes? Ask your insurer how your unit policy should coordinate with the master policy, including deductible exposure and loss-assessment coverage. Then read use restrictions that matter to you: pets, parking, leasing, guests, exterior changes, and work from home.

Illustrative comparison: a \$250 monthly HOA with an unfunded roof project may present a different risk from a \$400 HOA with documented reserves and broader services. Compare obligations and condition, not just the dues line. Request written answers from management where possible and take material uncertainty to your broker or attorney.

Read the meeting minutes for the next expense, not only the budget for the current one.

Sources: hoa

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Acreage, additions, and an ADU need proof

A listing's word "potential" is the beginning of due diligence. Before paying for a planned addition, garage conversion, or accessory dwelling unit, confirm the governing jurisdiction and ask its planning and building departments about the specific parcel and proposal. A mailing address does not establish which authority regulates the property.

Longmont publishes an ADU process and updated local rules. Use those resources for a Longmont parcel; do not apply them automatically to nearby unincorporated land. Ask about site layout, utility capacity, building requirements, permit history, and any recorded restrictions. Separate a legally established dwelling from a room that happens to have a sink and a separate entrance.

If the property uses a well, obtain the actual well permit and ask the Division of Water Resources about authorized uses. Water quality, physical yield, and legal permission to use water are different questions. Do not assume a lawn, garden, animals, or future rental unit can be served because a well exists.

For a Boulder County property with septic, investigate the county's property-transfer requirements before closing. Confirm permitted bedroom capacity and whether planned changes affect the system. Review the transfer certificate or any approved repair arrangement with the relevant professionals. Also ask about recorded access, shared driveways, and maintenance agreements where they apply.

Buy the property that is documented today. Price an expansion plan only after its legal and physical feasibility is established.

Sources: adu, well, septic

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From inspection findings to the keys

Prioritize findings by consequence: immediate safety, active damage, expensive systems, and smaller maintenance items. A long report is not automatically a bad house, and a short report is not a warranty. Ask which findings warrant a specialist, a written estimate, or investigation behind a visible symptom.

When negotiating, compare a completed repair, a credit, and a price change. A credit may preserve your control over the work, but lender rules can limit how credits are used. A price reduction does not give you the same repair cash at closing. If the seller will complete work, document scope, timing, permits where needed, and how completion will be verified.

Review your Closing Disclosure with the lender and compare the loan terms, cash to close, taxes, insurance, and agreed credits with earlier estimates. CFPB guidance explains this review and the advance-delivery requirement for most covered mortgages. Independently verify any wiring instructions through a trusted, previously confirmed contact.

At the final walk-through, check agreed work, included items, and the property's condition. Confirm the possession arrangement rather than assuming keys follow the signing appointment. After closing, keep permits, reports, warranties, and contractor invoices together. They form the ownership record you will wish you had when planning work or selling.

Do not let the logistics of moving crowd out the final document review and walk-through.

Sources: closing

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The short list before you commit

You should be able to explain why the location works, what ownership is likely to cost, which major risks were investigated, and which questions remain open. You do not need a perfect home. You need a decision whose tradeoffs you understand.

Confirm that insurance can be placed, financing and cash requirements are clear, and any HOA or use restrictions fit your plans. Obtain the appropriate specialist input on unresolved condition concerns. Keep a list of outstanding documents with a responsible person and a deadline, rather than treating a verbal promise as completion.

If the property only works after an unapproved addition, an assumed rental income stream, or a future refinance, stop and test that dependency. A plan can change; a purchase obligation is less flexible. Ask what the home looks like financially and practically if that hoped-for event never occurs.

Bring the questions to Five Four. Local perspective helps connect the property details to the life you want to build, while your lender, insurer, inspector, and other specialists answer the questions within their expertise. The goal is a home you can choose with understanding, not a worksheet with every blank filled.

Final check: fit, cost, condition, documents, deadlines, and a realistic cash cushion.

Five Four editorial guidance. Examples are illustrative.

Keep the source close.

Research notes and next steps

Prepared by Five Four Real Estate. Sources checked October 4, 2026. This guide provides general education; property-specific contract, legal, tax, insurance, and lending questions require the relevant professional. Confirm current rules with the authority for the actual address.

METRO / Town of Erie: understanding metropolitan districts

CHFA / CHFA: Colorado homeownership resources

INSURANCE / Colorado Division of Insurance: homeowners and HOA insurance toolkit

RADON / Colorado General Assembly: residential radon disclosure law

CONTRACT / Colorado Division of Real Estate: residential purchase contract

HOA / Colorado Division of Real Estate: buying in an HOA

ADU / City of Longmont: accessory dwelling units

WELL / Colorado Division of Water Resources: well permitting

SEPTIC / Boulder County: septic property-transfer requirements

CLOSING / CFPB: reviewing documents before closing

Read the latest edition online

Open this guide on the Five Four website