REALTY **ONE** GROUP RESULTS

TRIAD NC · BUYER COST GUIDE · FALL 2026

The All-In *Number*

What a $350,000 Triad home actually costs once the taxes, the insurance, and the roof are all sitting in the same column.

TERESA OVERCASH

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START HERE

The payment is not the *budget.*

The most common home-buying mistake is comparing rent against principal and interest alone. That number is easy to calculate, easy to advertise, and incomplete.

A homeowner also carries property taxes, insurance, repairs, utilities, possible HOA dues, and the one-time cost of acquiring the home. In the Triad, **geography changes the answer** — a $350,000 home in Forsyth County and a $350,000 home in Guilford County do not carry the same county tax baseline, and a High Point address can layer county, city, school, and fire charges differently than a Winston-Salem one.

The point of this guide is not to talk you out of buying. It is to help you write an offer with your eyes open. Use these tables as planning math, then **replace every assumption** with a lender quote, an insurance quote, the current tax record, and the inspection findings for the actual address.

> *The right question is not whether you can make the payment. It is whether you can carry the home after the payment, the first repair, the tax bill, and the life event you did not plan for.*
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THE HONEST SHAPE OF IT

$1,818	~$2,450	$84/mo	1%
PRINCIPAL & INTEREST 20% DOWN AT 6.76%	ALL-IN PLANNING FORSYTH COUNTY	COUNTY TAX SPREAD RANDOLPH VS GUILFORD	REPAIR RESERVE PLANNING BASELINE

THE PAYMENT

What $350,000 looks like at *6.76%.*

Freddie Mac's national 30-year benchmark averaged 6.76% in mid-September 2026. That is a national application average for a defined borrower profile — not a promise for a Triad buyer. Your credit, loan type, points, and lender all move the quote.

DOWN PAYMENT	LOAN AMOUNT	PRINCIPAL + INTEREST	WHAT IT LEAVES OUT
$70,000 — 20%	$280,000	$1,818/mo	Taxes, insurance, repairs, HOA, utilities
$52,500 — 15%	$297,500	$1,932/mo	May include mortgage insurance
$35,000 — 10%	$315,000	$2,045/mo	Mortgage insurance usually applies
$17,500 — 5%	$332,500	$2,159/mo	Mortgage insurance and higher cash needs

Principal and interest only, 30-year fixed at 6.76%, rounded to the nearest dollar.

Moving from 20% down to 5% down adds roughly **$341 per month** in principal and interest, before mortgage insurance. That is not an argument against a lower down payment — it is a reminder to compare the whole financing structure rather than treating the down payment as the only cash decision.

Build the budget at two rates, not one

RATE	MONTHLY P + I ON $280,000	VERSUS 6.76%
5.76%	$1,636	–$182/mo
6.26%	$1,726	–$92/mo
6.76%	$1,818	Baseline
7.26%	$1,912	+$94/mo
7.76%	$2,008	+$190/mo

Don't build the plan around a forecast

A refinance may be possible later. It is not guaranteed, and refinance costs are real. **If the payment only works at the best-case quote, the home is too expensive for your current comfort level.**

THE LINE THAT MOVES MOST

County taxes are *local.*

North Carolina property tax is set locally, and taxable property is assessed at 100% of appraised value. County-only math is a starting point, not the final bill — city, fire, school, and district charges layer on top of the address.

COUNTY	RATE PER $100	ANNUAL, COUNTY ONLY	MONTHLY
Randolph	0.5000	$1,750	$146
Davidson	0.5400	$1,890	$158
Forsyth	0.5540	$1,939	$162
Guilford	0.7895	$2,763	$230

2026–2027 county rates applied to a $350,000 assessed value. County only — before any municipal or district layer.

The spread between Randolph and Guilford is about **$1,013 a year, or $84 a month**, before a single city or district charge. That is real money. It is also not a reason to pick a county from a table — the right property in the right location can beat a cheaper tax line when commute, condition, insurance, and resale fit your life better.

ASK FOR THE PARCEL RECORD

Before you write, confirm the county, the municipality, the fire district, any service district, and **whether the listing's tax figure reflects the current assessed value or an older bill.** A tax estimate that omits one layer makes an affordable payment look safer than it is.

> *I want buyers to see the tax record before they fall in love with the house. The tax bill is not a footnote. It is part of the payment, and the address determines the layers.*
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Insurance and repairs break more *budgets.*

North Carolina's homeowners settlement included a second 7.5% average statewide base-rate increase effective June 1, 2026 — with variation by territory. That is context, not a quote for your address.

Get the insurance quote early, not after the inspection. Roof age, prior claims, replacement cost, detached structures, pools, finished basements, older wiring, and proximity to risk factors all move the number. If a carrier won't bind on the terms you need, that is a transaction problem to find during due diligence — not the week before closing.

A planning example, Forsyth County

LINE ITEM	MONTHLY	HOW TO REPLACE THE ASSUMPTION
Principal + interest	$1,818	The lender's Loan Estimate
Forsyth county-only tax	$162	The current parcel tax record
Homeowners insurance	$179	A property-specific quote
Repair reserve at 1%/year	$292	Adjust for age, condition, systems
Illustrative subtotal	$2,451	Add city and district tax, HOA, utilities, and mortgage insurance where they apply

The $179 insurance line is a planning assumption equal to $2,150 a year — not an official average. The 1% reserve equals $3,500 a year and is a target, not a prediction.

Stress-test the reserve

RESERVE APPROACH	ANNUAL	MONTHLY	BEST FIT
0.5% of value	$1,750	$146	Newer home, documented systems
1.0% of value	$3,500	$292	General planning baseline
1.5% of value	$5,250	$438	Older home, roof or HVAC uncertainty
2.0% of value	$7,000	$583	Deferred maintenance, complex property

Some years are quiet. One roof, HVAC, drainage, or foundation event can consume several years of reserve at once. **A reserve is not wasted money — it buys time.** It keeps a manageable repair from becoming high-interest debt, a rushed insurance claim, or a hard phone call to family.

SIDE BY SIDE

Same house, four *counties.*

Holding everything else constant, here is what the county tax line alone does to the monthly planning number on the same $350,000 purchase.

SCENARIO	COUNTY TAX	P + I	INSURANCE + RESERVE	SUBTOTAL
$350K in Randolph	$146	$1,818	$471	$2,435
$350K in Davidson	$158	$1,818	$471	$2,447
$350K in Forsyth	$162	$1,818	$471	$2,451
$350K in Guilford	$230	$1,818	$471	$2,519

This table holds insurance and reserve constant on purpose, which makes it deliberately imperfect. Insurance does not stay flat across counties or addresses, and the right reserve changes with age and condition. **The table shows what a county tax baseline does to a budget — not that every home costs the same to own.**

And none of these include the city

Add municipal tax and you are into a different number entirely. For Greensboro, High Point, Kernersville, Clemmons, Lewisville, and Winston-Salem, the address determines commute, utilities, tax layers, fire district, HOA obligations, insurance access, and your future buyer pool.

A countywide average is a starting question. What you need is the parcel-level answer.

One more caution when you compare listings: a listing's advertised tax figure may reflect a prior owner's bill, an older assessment, an exemption you won't qualify for, or a partial-year amount. Always pull the current record.

The cash plan is bigger than the down *payment.*

The down payment is the large, visible number. It is not the whole requirement — and the pieces around it are where buyers get caught short.

CASH CATEGORY	WHAT TO CONFIRM	WHY IT MATTERS
Down payment	Loan program, minimum cash, reserve requirement	Changes loan size and payment
Due diligence fee	Amount, delivery deadline, refund exceptions	Money at real risk under the contract
Earnest money	Amount, who holds it, refund conditions	Separate from the due diligence fee
Inspections and appraisal	Scope, timing, how they're paid	Protects the decision before the deadline
Prepaids and escrow	Taxes, insurance, interest — from the lender estimate	Can be several months of housing costs
Repair and move-in reserve	What's left after settlement	Keeps one surprise from breaking the plan

Keep the contract money straight

In North Carolina the due diligence fee is a negotiated, generally non-refundable payment made directly to the seller for the right to terminate during the due diligence period. It becomes the seller's property on the Effective Date, subject to limited exceptions.

It is not the same thing as a refundable earnest money deposit, and it should never be written casually. Read the executed contract with your agent and your closing attorney rather than relying on social-media shorthand.

> *A concession is a tool, not a rescue plan. We use it to improve the structure of a sound purchase — not to make a purchase sound after the numbers have already said no.*
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Seller-paid costs can help with eligible closing costs or a rate buydown, but they cannot erase an unaffordable payment, a thin reserve, or a carrier's refusal to write the policy. Have your lender explain exactly which costs a credit can cover, and what happens if loan rules or the appraisal limit it.

Eight moves before you *write.*

1 Set the payment from the future backward

Start with what you can carry after taxes, insurance, repairs, and reserves. Then ask the lender what price and down payment fit — rather than starting at the maximum approval.

2 Run two rate scenarios

Your quoted rate and one meaningfully higher. If it only works at best case, it's too expensive right now.

3 Pull the full tax record

County, municipal, fire, school, and district layers. Confirm whether the listing used a prior owner's bill or an old assessment.

4 Get insurance before you spend the fee

A property can be attractive and still be difficult or expensive to insure. The quote is part of the investigation, not last-week paperwork.

5 Separate urgent repairs from future projects

Ask the inspector for a near-term list, a capital list, and a maintenance list. Use it in the price conversation — then keep the reserve after closing.

6 Keep the contract money straight

Due diligence fee, earnest money, inspections, appraisal, and closing costs each do a different job and carry different risk.

7 Compare total cost, not county pride

A lower tax line can be undone by a long commute, older systems, higher insurance, or a property that's hard to resell.

8 Keep cash after the keys

If every dollar goes into the purchase, the first broken water heater becomes a crisis. A home should be a place to live, not a monthly test of whether your account survives.

> *The happiest buyers are not the ones who stretched to the top of the approval letter. They are the ones who kept a little breathing room and still had choices after closing.*
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Want the real number for *one address?*

Text the address and your target down payment. We'll line up the loan estimate, the parcel tax record with every district, an insurance quote, HOA documents, and the inspection questions — before you spend your due diligence fee, not after.

CALL OR TEXT

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Current as of September 2026. All payment figures are illustrative amortization calculations of principal and interest only at the stated rate, term, and loan amount — they are not a quote, a Loan Estimate, or an offer of credit, and they exclude mortgage insurance, taxes, insurance, HOA dues, and utilities. Mortgage rates change weekly and a national benchmark average does not reflect any individual borrower's credit, points, fees, or final terms. Property tax figures apply published 2026–2027 county rates to a $350,000 assessed value and are county-only; municipal, fire, school, and district levies are additional, and assessed value is set by the county, not by sale price. Insurance and repair-reserve amounts are planning assumptions, not averages, quotes, or predictions of actual expense. Not legal, tax, lending, or financial advice. Information deemed reliable but not guaranteed.