

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO

Buying in the Catskills

A Step-by-Step Guide for Buyers in
Delaware, Ulster, Greene & Otsego Counties

01 Prep	02 Search	03 Tour	04 Negotiate	05 Inspect	06 Close
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WHAT OUR BUYERS SAY

Voices From the Journey

“Working with the Catskill Country Living Team was a revelation. They knew every road, every town, and every quirk of the rural market up here. We never felt like just another transaction — they stuck with us through two offers, a tricky inspection, and ultimately a closing that felt like a celebration. We couldn’t be happier in our new home.”

— Victoria & Roman H., Delhi, NY

Our business is built on relationships — repeat clients and the referrals they trust us with. We take that responsibility seriously at every stage of your journey.

NICE TO MEET YOU

The Catskill Country Living Team

We are a full-service real estate team dedicated to the Great Western Catskills — Delaware, Ulster, Greene, and Otsego Counties. This is where we work. This is where we live. And this is the region we love sharing with people who are ready to plant roots here.

With varied backgrounds, deep local knowledge, and genuine enthusiasm for this corner of upstate New York, each member of our team brings something unique to your experience. We are consistently ranked among the top producers in the local MLS — not because we move fast, but because we move right.

Our professional reputation is built on doing the job well: navigating the complexities of rural real estate, communicating clearly at every turn, and treating every client's goals as our own. We look forward to earning your referrals too.

Our Commitment to You

Getting You in the Door — We help you narrow a vast market to the best-matched properties, saving you time and unnecessary miles across a wide region.

Dealing with Challenges — Negotiations, inspections, lender communications, attorney coordination: we handle the tough stuff on your behalf.

Staying Updated — Rural transactions involve specific documentation and timelines. We guide you through every requirement, clearly and on schedule.

On Your Side — As buyer's agents, your interests are always front and center. Full stop.

Local Market Authority — We watch macro trends and hyperlocal town-by-town dynamics every day. We know what's going on.

Fixer — When issues arise — and in real estate they sometimes do — we know how to find answers that keep things moving forward.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Your Step-by-Step Buying Process

Buying property in the Catskills is an adventure. It is also a process — one with distinct stages, each with its own decisions, paperwork, and professionals. Here is how we walk it together.

01 Prep

Assess your finances, understand your budget, and get your pre-approval in order.

02 Search

Define your wish list and explore the market — virtually and in conversation with us.

03 Tour

We plan strategic property tours that respect your time and maximize what you see.

04 Negotiate

Craft a compelling offer, navigate counteroffers, and reach a Meeting of the Minds.

05 Inspect

Home inspections, attorney review, and mortgage processing — we guide every step.

06 Close

Final walk-through, closing table, keys in hand. Then: celebrate.

STEP 1

Prep: Getting Ready to Buy

Buying a home is one of the most significant financial decisions you’ll make — and in the Catskills, where the market includes a rich mix of primary residences, vacation properties, working farms, and investment opportunities, having your finances and goals clearly defined before you search is essential.

Are You Ready? The Big Picture

Whether you’re searching for a weekend retreat, a full-time relocation, or a future short-term rental, your goals shape everything — what you look for, where you look, and how you structure your purchase. We’ll help you think through all of it.

Key Financial Factors Lenders Consider

- Income stability and employment history (typically 2 years)
- Debt-to-Income Ratio (DTI): total monthly debts ÷ gross monthly income
- Credit score — most lenders require 620 minimum; 720+ earns best rates
- Down payment funds and source (gifts must be documented for your lender)
- Reserves: funds remaining in your accounts after closing

Understanding Your DTI

Front-End DTI: Your expected monthly housing costs (principal, interest, taxes, insurance) divided by gross monthly income. Example: \$1,200 payment / \$6,000 income = 20%.

Back-End DTI: All monthly debt payments combined divided by gross monthly income. Example: \$2,000 total / \$6,000 income = 33%.

Most conventional lenders look for a Back-End DTI of 36% or less. Know your number before you apply — it shapes every loan conversation.

Loan Types at a Glance

Loan Type	Key Feature	Min. Down
Conventional (Fannie/Freddie)	Most common; strong credit benefits	3%*
FHA	Government-backed; flexible credit floor	3.5%*
VA	For eligible veterans & surviving spouses	0%*
USDA	Rural areas; income-eligible buyers	0%*
Seller Financing	Direct agreement with seller; case-by-case	Negotiated

*Conditions apply. Consult your lender.

Down Payments & Closing Costs

Down payment conventions vary by county in the Western Catskills. In Otsego County, 1-2% may be sufficient to go to contract. In Delaware County, 10% is the generally accepted standard at contract signing. Your buyer agent will guide you on what's expected in your target area.

Closing Cost Estimate

Budget 3%-6% of the purchase price for closing costs, in addition to your down payment. On a \$450,000 property, that's roughly \$13,500-\$27,000 covering appraisal, title insurance, attorney fees, transfer taxes, and potentially buyer agent compensation.

Your lender or attorney will provide a Closing Disclosure before closing day itemizing each charge. Review it carefully — and ask your attorney early if anything is unclear.

KNOW THE LANGUAGE

Key Mortgage & Closing Terms

Real estate has its own vocabulary. Here are the terms you'll encounter most — and what they actually mean.

Pre-Qualification

A preliminary estimate of what you might borrow, based on information you provide — without a hard credit pull. Useful for early planning, but not a lender commitment.

Pre-Approval

A written lender commitment up to a specified amount, following verification of income, assets, and a formal credit check. Sellers take pre-approved buyers more seriously.

Mortgage Points

Upfront fees paid to reduce your interest rate. One point = 1% of the loan amount and typically reduces your rate by 0.25%. Always ask about points when comparing loan offers.

Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI)

Required by lenders when your down payment is less than 20%. Protects the lender, not you. PMI is separate from homeowners' insurance and drops off once you reach 20% equity.

Tax & Insurance Escrow

Funds collected monthly by your lender and held to pay your annual property taxes and homeowners' insurance when they come due.

Origination Fee

A lender's charge for processing your mortgage application — typically paid at closing.

Title Insurance

A one-time premium protecting your ownership interest if title defects arise after closing (e.g., undiscovered liens or errors in prior deeds).

Transfer Tax

New York State charges \$2 per \$500 of purchase price. Properties over \$1,000,000 are also subject to the 'Mansion Tax' of 1% of the full purchase price.

Appraisal

An independent valuation of the property ordered by your lender. The appraised value must support your purchase price for financing to proceed.

Closing Disclosure

A detailed document from your lender listing every closing cost, adjustment, and payment required at the table. Review this carefully with your attorney well before closing day.

WHAT CHANGED & WHY IT MATTERS

Understanding the NAR Settlement

Recent changes to how buyer's agents are compensated affect every buyer in today's market. Here's what you need to know — in plain language.

A Buyer Agent Agreement Is Now Required

Before we show you a property, we are required to have a signed Buyer Agent Agreement in place. This document defines the services we provide and our compensation. It is also a formal commitment that we are working exclusively in your interest.

Sellers Are No Longer Required to Pay Your Agent

Historically, sellers commonly offered a buyer agent commission as part of the listing. That is no longer assumed. Some sellers still offer to cover buyer agent compensation; others do not.

You May Be Asked to Cover the Difference

If a seller offers no buyer agent compensation — or less than our agreed fee — you may be responsible for the difference. In some cases this fee can be negotiated into the offer.

Transparency Is the Upside

These changes create a clearer, more direct relationship between buyers and their agents. You'll know exactly what we're earning and exactly what you're getting. We think that's the right way to do business.

STEP 2

Search: Defining Your Dream

The Western Catskills offer an extraordinary range of properties — from lovingly restored farmhouses to modern retreats, working land to village Victorians. Before you dive deep into listings, getting specific about what you're looking for saves enormous time in a market that spans hundreds of square miles.

Your Wishlist: Start Here

CATEGORY	YOUR NOTES / PREFERENCES
Price Range	No less than \$_____ / No more than \$_____
Renovation Budget	\$_____
Bedrooms / Bathrooms	____ BD / ____ BA
Square Footage	< 1,000 1,000-1,500 1,500-2,000 2,000+
Acreage	< 1 ac 1-5 ac 5-20 ac 20+ ac
Style	Farmhouse / Colonial / Victorian / Contemporary / Ranch / Other
Condition	Move-In Ready Some Work Rehab Project
Short-Term Rental	Yes No Maybe (note: some areas restrict STRs)
Must-Haves	_____
Deal-Breakers	_____
Out-Buildings	Garage Barn Guest House Workshop None
Location Priorities	Privacy Village Views Dead-End Road Other

A Note on Virtual Research

Online tools make browsing listings easy — but they can also mislead. A listing may show a beautifully renovated kitchen with no photos of the adjacent county road. Before planning a drive, share listings with us. We likely know the property, and a two-minute conversation can save you two hours of travel.

STEP 3

Visit & Tour: Seeing It in Person

Unlike markets where homes are blocks apart, the Western Catskills is vast. Properties can be an hour’s drive from one another. A well-planned tour is not a luxury — it’s a necessity. We design tours that are strategic, efficient, and honest about what you’re actually seeing.

How We Plan Your Tour

- We review your wish list before scheduling anything — deal-breakers can eliminate a drive before it starts.
- Google Earth and Maps often reveal what listing photos don’t: neighboring structures, road types, proximity to commercial areas.
- We typically recommend no more than 5-6 properties per day. After the sixth showing, everything starts to blur.
- If you’re traveling from the metro area, we’ll build the tour around your arrival and departure window — routed logically so you’re not backtracking.

Property Tour Response Sheet

Make a copy for each property. Your impressions from early in the day will feel very different by the sixth showing.

Address:	
Date / Time:	
Beds / Baths / Acres:	/ /
FEATURE	LIKED / DISLIKED / NOTES
Kitchen	
Bedrooms	
Bathrooms	
Living Spaces	
Basement	
Roof / Siding	
Yard / Lot	
Driveway / Access	
Views / Privacy	
Out-Buildings	
Neighborhood / Setting	

OVERALL SCORE (circle one)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
NOTES:	

STEP 4

Negotiations & Contracts

You’ve found the one. Now comes the work we genuinely love — representing your interests at the negotiating table. In the Great Western Catskills, most offers are prepared by the buyer’s agent using a bar-approved contract template. Every line is a negotiation opportunity.

What Goes Into an Offer

- Purchase price and terms (cash or financing)
- Down payment amount (10% is standard in Delaware County at contract signing)
- Mortgage contingency — protecting you if financing falls through
- Inspection contingency — scope and timeline
- Buyer agent compensation arrangement
- Requested inclusions (appliances, outbuildings, equipment)
- Possession / move-in date
- Other contingencies (home sale, seller financing, etc.)
- All required disclosures reviewed and acknowledged

What You’ll Need Ready

- Proof of Funds letter (cash purchases) or Pre-Qualification / Pre-Approval letter
- Good-faith deposit funds (typically 10%) and your lender selected
- An attorney retained — ideally before you write your first offer
- Availability for inspections and attorney review within 10 days of acceptance

How the Offer Process Flows

STAGE	WHAT HAPPENS	POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
Initial Offer	You sign; we present to listing agent / seller	Accept / Decline / Counter
Counter Offer	Seller returns revised terms	Accept / Decline / Counter again
Multiple Offers	Seller may call for ‘Best and Final’ round	One winner selected
Accepted Offer	Both parties sign the contract	Move to inspections & attorney review

STEP 5

Inspections, Attorneys & Lenders

Once your offer is accepted, the pace picks up. Attorney review, home inspection, and your mortgage application all run concurrently — typically within the first ten days. We will be beside you for every step.

The Home Inspection

A licensed inspector will conduct a visual assessment of the home's structure, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, roof, windows, and more. For rural properties with private systems, water and septic tests are strongly recommended. Radon testing and pest inspections are also common.

Attend Your Inspection

Plan to be present for the full inspection. You'll gain an invaluable working knowledge of the property — what needs attention now, what may need attention in five years, and how systems operate. Think of the inspection report as the owner's manual for your new home.

What is Radon?

Radon is a naturally occurring, colorless, odorless gas that can seep into homes from soil and rock beneath the foundation. Prolonged exposure to elevated levels poses health risks. If detected, remediation is typically straightforward and effective.

Negotiating After Inspection

Sellers are not required to repair everything an inspection reveals. How you approach repair negotiations matters enormously, particularly in a competitive market. Our preferred strategy: request a credit at closing rather than direct repairs. This keeps the transaction moving, gives you control over the contractor, and often produces the best outcome for both parties.

Attorneys: New York Is an Attorney State

New York law requires attorneys to prepare closing documents and review purchase contracts. We recommend retaining an attorney before you write your first offer — so you're ready to move quickly when the time comes. We maintain a list of highly qualified local attorneys we're happy to share.

Your Lender

Contact your loan officer immediately upon contract acceptance. The contract will have specific dates for loan application completion and mortgage commitment — we track these deadlines alongside you. One milestone to flag immediately: your rate lock date. Let us know as soon as your lender sets it.

The Appraisal

If you're financing, your lender will order an appraisal. The appraised value must support your purchase price for the loan to proceed. If there is a gap between appraised value and contract price, we will work with you and your attorney to evaluate your options.

Homeowners Insurance

Most lenders require a paid homeowners' insurance policy as a condition of closing. Coverage should be sufficient to fully replace the home. Arrange it to begin on your closing date.

GETTING READY

Your Pre-Closing Timeline

The weeks before closing involve more logistics than most buyers expect. Here is a framework to keep things organized.

TIMEFRAME	TASKS
4 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule your moving company • Order packing materials and begin packing non-essentials • Get quotes for homeowners' insurance
2 Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize insurance; send policy to lender • Begin utility transfer process with your agent • Submit change of address with USPS • Confirm moving help for closing day
1 Week Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review closing day logistics with your attorney • Arrange for certified checks as instructed • Confirm final walk-through date and time • Confirm closing location and time
Closing Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final walk-through — we will guide you • Bring: certified check(s), photo ID, checkbook • Sign documents at the closing table • Receive your keys — then celebrate!

STEP 6

Closing Day

Closing Day is the finish line — and the starting line. This is where all the paperwork, negotiations, inspections, and planning arrive at a single table, and you walk away with keys in hand.

What Happens at the Closing Table

Final Walk-Through

Typically on closing day or the day prior. We'll walk the property together to confirm it is in the agreed-upon condition.

The Closing Table

All parties — buyers, sellers, attorneys, lender's representative — meet to sign documents, settle adjustments, and transfer title. Modern 'dry' closings may have sellers sign in advance; you may never meet them in person.

Adjustments & Calculations

Attorneys confirm all pro-rated amounts for taxes, heating fuel remaining in the tank, and any other agreed items.

Title Transfer

The title closer confirms all liens and mortgages are cleared and ensures you receive a clean title.

Recording

The deed and mortgage are submitted to the county clerk's office for recording.

Keys

You receive the keys to your property. Congratulations.

What to Bring to Closing

Certified check(s) as specified by your attorney based on the Closing Disclosure

Checkbook for any small adjustments

Photo identification (driver's license or passport) for all borrowers

Homeowners' insurance policy with paid receipt

Any additional documents your attorney has requested

Possible Fees Paid at Closing

Reimbursement to seller for prepaid property taxes (pro-rated)

Tax and insurance escrow deposit (if required by lender)

Your attorney's fee

Title insurance premium

Recording fees (county clerk)

Transfer taxes: \$2 per \$500 of purchase price; Mansion Tax of 1% on sales of \$1M+

Any remaining buyer agent compensation (per your agreement)

REAL ESTATE TO APPRECIATE

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Know someone planning a move to the Catskills? We'd love the referral.