

THE AUSTIN HOME GUIDE

2026 EDITION

Your honest, no-pressure guide to buying or renting
a home in the Austin area

Neighborhoods, market data, real costs, and mistakes to avoid.

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Market data reflects early 2026 figures. For the most current numbers, reach out directly.

A NOTE FROM ME

If you're reading this, you're probably somewhere in that in-between place. Thinking about making a move in Austin but not totally sure where to start, what you can actually afford, or whether now is even the right time.

That's exactly who this guide is for.

Whether you're trying to buy your first home, relocate your family from another state, figure out if renting makes more sense right now, or just understand what this market is actually doing — this is for you.

I put this together because the process can feel really overwhelming, especially when you're doing it in a city you don't fully know yet. My hope is that by the time you finish reading, you feel less anxious and more ready, even if you're still months away from making a move.

By the time you're done, you'll know more about the Austin market than most people who've lived here for years.

— Bobus

SECTION 1

Why Austin and the Surrounding Area?

Austin gets most of the headlines, but honestly? Some of the best places to live are just outside the city. The suburbs have quietly become go-to destinations for families who want more space, strong schools, and a real sense of community without the price tag of living inside Austin proper.

Quick filter: Which area is right for you?

- If commute matters most → North Austin or Cedar Park
- If budget matters most → Hutto or Manor
- If schools matter most → Leander or Round Rock
- If small-town feel matters → Georgetown or Liberty Hill
- If you want the best all-around value → Round Rock or Pflugerville

Leander **\$380K – \$450K** | ~35–45 min to downtown

One of the fastest-growing cities in the country. Newer homes, great schools, friendly neighborhoods, and still accessible to Austin. If you're relocating or upsizing, this deserves a serious look.

Cedar Park **\$400K – \$475K** | ~25–35 min to downtown

A sweet spot between Leander and Austin. Strong schools, established community, and suburban comfort without being too far removed.

North Austin **\$450K – \$550K** | ~15–25 min to downtown

Closest to the city energy, tech corridors, and major employers. Smart choice if your job or lifestyle pulls you toward Austin regularly.

Round Rock **\$370K – \$440K** | ~25–40 min to downtown

One of the most underrated options. Affordable, well-established, strong school district, and a genuine community feel.

Georgetown \$360K – \$430K | ~40–55 min to downtown

Charming downtown square, newer master-planned communities, and some of the best value in the metro right now.

Liberty Hill \$350K – \$420K | ~45–60 min to downtown

Small-town feel with newer developments coming in. Appealing for families who want space and community.

Hutto \$300K – \$370K | ~30–45 min to downtown

People overlook this one until they actually go. Affordable, growing, and well-positioned north/east of Austin.

Pflugerville \$310K – \$390K | ~20–35 min to downtown

Northeast side of Austin, solid value, easy highway access. A diverse and established community.

Manor \$280K – \$350K | ~25–40 min to downtown

One of the most affordable options close to Austin proper. If getting into the market sooner matters, Manor is worth a serious look.

Price ranges are based on early 2026 data and vary by size, condition, and specific neighborhood. Commute times are approximate and traffic-dependent.

SECTION 2

Why Right Now? The 2026 Market

This is the section most guides leave out, and it's probably the most important one. Here's what the Austin market actually looks like right now:

13,000+	91 days	~48%	\$411K
Active listings in the Austin area	Average days homes sit on market	Of listings have had a price cut	Current metro median sold price

What does all of that mean?

It means buyers have more leverage right now than they have had in years. The frenzy of 2021 and 2022 — where buyers were waiving inspections, offering tens of thousands over asking, and losing out on five homes in a row — that era is over.

Today, you can take your time, ask for repairs, negotiate on price, and make a smart decision instead of a desperate one. Sellers are currently accepting offers at roughly 97% of asking price.

What about mortgage rates?

Yes, rates are higher than the 3% era. But homes are also \$50K–\$80K cheaper than they were during that window. For most buyers, today's price plus today's rate is a better deal than 2022's price plus 2022's rate — and you can always refinance the rate later. You can't refinance the purchase price.

For renters: This market also creates an interesting decision point. With home prices softened and sellers motivated, the gap between renting and owning has narrowed meaningfully in several Austin suburbs. It may be worth running the numbers sooner than you think.

Pending sales have been trending upward since the start of 2026 and buyer activity is picking back up heading into spring. I'm not trying to rush you, but I'd rather you know the full picture so you can move on your timeline with your eyes open.

The bottom line: This is one of the most favorable times to make a move in Austin in several years. But only if you go in with the right information and the right plan.

SECTION 3

Renting vs. Buying in Austin

This is a question I get a lot, and the honest answer is: it depends on your situation. There is no universal right answer.

Renting makes more sense when:

- **You're new to Austin.** Locking into a 30-year mortgage in the wrong part of town is a much bigger mistake than signing a one-year lease while you get your bearings.
- **You're moving again within 2–3 years.** The break-even point on transaction costs is around 2 to 3 years. If you'll move sooner, renting is almost always smarter.
- **Your financial picture isn't ready.** Outstanding debt, a job transition, or a thin down payment are all good reasons to rent while you strengthen your position.

Buying makes more sense when:

- **You're ready to put down roots.** Stable income, clear location preference, and a 5-plus year horizon? Buying in the Austin area right now is a strong move.
- **You want to stop paying someone else's mortgage.** In many Austin suburbs, monthly payments on a \$380K home are comparable to rent on a similar property — and you're building equity.
- **You want stability for your family.** Landlords can raise rent, sell, or choose not to renew. Owning gives your family a predictable, stable home base.

Quick monthly comparison (3BR in Leander):

Renting a similar home	~\$2,200/mo
Buying at \$400K (5% down)	~\$3,400/mo

The gap is real, but rent increases every year while a fixed mortgage doesn't. And ~\$1,200 of that monthly payment is building equity you keep.

The break-even math: On a \$400,000 home with 5% down, total transaction costs are roughly \$20,000 to \$30,000. At 2–3% appreciation, you break even around the 2.5 to 3 year mark. Stay longer, and buying

starts building real wealth.

How the Rental Process Works

01 Define your must-haves

Location, budget, school district, pet policy, lease length. Get clear before you start searching.

02 Get your documents ready

Most landlords require proof of income, a credit check, and references. Having these ready speeds things up.

03 Tour and evaluate

Check for water damage, HVAC condition, natural light, storage, and noise levels. Ask about utility averages.

04 Apply and negotiate

Apply quickly — good rentals move fast. Negotiate on price, move-in date, and lease length. Landlords are more flexible than most people realize, especially right now.

05 Document everything at move-in

Photograph every room, wall, and appliance before you move a single box in. Date and save the photos. This protects your deposit.

I help people find rentals too. If renting is the right call for your season, let's talk about that — no pressure toward a purchase.

SECTION 4

The Buying Process, Step by Step

01 Get pre-approved

Talk to a lender and get pre-approved before you start looking. This tells you exactly what you can afford and signals to sellers that you're serious. It doesn't lock you into anything.

02 Get clear on what you want

Location, size, school district, commute, must-haves, dealbreakers. With 13,000+ active listings right now, having a focused filter matters more than ever.

03 Start searching

Once we're working together, I'll set you up with a live search matching your criteria. You'll get notified when something fits. We tour the ones worth seeing and skip the ones that aren't.

04 Make an offer

When you find the right home, we move. In early 2026, I'm seeing most of my buyers successfully negotiate 2–4% below asking price and get \$5,000–\$10,000 in seller-paid closing cost contributions. This wasn't possible two years ago. I'll help you structure every detail.

05 The contract period

Inspection, appraisal, and final loan approval all run simultaneously. I'll walk you through every step, including how to negotiate repairs from the inspection.

06 Closing day

You sign the paperwork, funds are wired, you get your keys. The whole process from accepted offer to closing typically takes 30 to 45 days. I'll make sure you know what to bring and what to expect.

SECTION 5

The True Cost of Buying

This is where a lot of first-time buyers get caught off guard. Here's the full picture based on a **\$400,000 home**:

COST ITEM	AMOUNT	NOTES
Down Payment (5%)	\$20,000	3% programs available for first-time buyers
Down Payment (10%)	\$40,000	Reduces monthly PMI significantly
Down Payment (20%)	\$80,000	Eliminates PMI entirely
Closing Costs (2–3%)	\$8K–\$12K	Often negotiable with seller concessions
PMI (if < 20% down)	\$100–\$150/mo	Goes away at 20% equity
Moving Costs (local)	\$500–\$1,500	Out of state: \$3,000–\$8,000
First Year Maintenance	~\$4,000	1% of purchase price is a solid rule

Monthly Payment Reality Check (\$400K home, 5% down):

Principal + Interest (6.5%)	~\$2,400/mo
Property Taxes	~\$700/mo
Homeowners Insurance	\$150–\$250/mo
PMI	~\$125/mo
Estimated Total	\$3,375–\$3,475/mo

The number most people forget: opportunity cost.

If you're putting \$20,000 down, that's \$20,000 not earning returns elsewhere. For most families buying a primary residence, the stability and long-term appreciation make it worth it. But it's worth thinking about, especially if you're choosing between 5% and 20% down. A smaller down payment keeps more cash in your pocket for emergencies, investments, or renovations.

SECTION 6

The Texas Property Tax Explainer

If you're moving from a state with income tax, read this section carefully. Property taxes in Texas catch people off guard more than almost anything else.

Texas has no state income tax. That's the good news. The state makes up for it through property taxes, which are among the highest in the country.

What to expect

Property tax rates in the Austin area typically run between 1.8% and 2.5% of your home's assessed value per year. On a \$400,000 home, that's \$7,200 to \$10,000 per year — or \$600 to \$833 added to your monthly housing cost.

Approximate rates by area (on a \$400K home):

AREA	APPROX. RATE	ANNUAL TAX	MONTHLY
Leander (Leander ISD)	~2.1%	~\$8,400	~\$700
Cedar Park (Leander ISD)	~2.1%	~\$8,400	~\$700
Round Rock (RRISD)	~2.0%	~\$8,000	~\$667
Georgetown (GISD)	~2.2%	~\$8,800	~\$733
Pflugerville (PflISD)	~2.1%	~\$8,400	~\$700
Hutto (Hutto ISD)	~2.3%	~\$9,200	~\$767
Manor (Manor ISD)	~2.4%	~\$9,600	~\$800

Rates are approximate and vary by specific address. I verify the exact rate for every home we look at.

The Homestead Exemption

Once you purchase your primary residence, you're eligible for the homestead exemption. This reduces your taxable assessed value and caps annual assessment increases at 10%. You must apply through your county appraisal district before the deadline — typically April 30.

Put this on your calendar the day you get your keys.

School district matters

Your tax rate is heavily influenced by which school district your address falls in. Two homes on the same street can occasionally sit in different tax jurisdictions. I always verify this during the search process.

Over 65 or disabled?

There are additional exemptions and a property tax freeze available. If this applies to you, make sure we discuss it — you're entitled to every benefit available.

SECTION 7

Questions to Ask Before You Offer

About the Home Itself

- ✓ **How old is the roof?** A full replacement in Texas runs \$15,000–\$25,000.
- ✓ **How old is the HVAC system?** A replacement runs \$8,000–\$15,000. Anything over 10–12 years is worth flagging.
- ✓ **Any foundation issues?** Texas soil is notoriously expansive. Undisclosed issues are a serious concern.
- ✓ **Any history of flooding or water intrusion?** Check the seller's disclosure and FEMA flood maps.
- ✓ **What are average monthly utility bills?** Texas summers are brutal. Poor insulation can mean \$400–\$600 electricity bills.

About the Neighborhood

- ✓ **Which school district does this address fall in?** Always verify directly. Don't assume.
- ✓ **Is there an HOA?** Fees can add \$50–\$500/month. Read the documents before you commit.
- ✓ **Any planned developments or road projects nearby?** A quiet street today can look different in two years.

About the Transaction

- ✓ **Why is the seller selling, and how long has it been listed?** 60–90 days on market usually means room to negotiate.
- ✓ **Have previous offers fallen through?** This tells you a lot about potential issues.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- *Am I buying this home for where I am now or where I'll be in 5 years?*
- *Could I afford this if one income went away for 6 months?*
- *Am I excited about the neighborhood or just the house?*
- *Am I making this decision from clarity or from pressure?*

SECTION 8

Mistakes to Avoid

For Buyers:

- **Skipping pre-approval.** You'll find a home you love and then find out you can't buy it.
- **Letting emotions run the offer.** It's easy to overbid on a home you love. Keeping you grounded is part of my job.
- **Underestimating closing costs.** Plan for 2–3% of the purchase price on top of your down payment.
- **Skipping the inspection.** Even brand new construction should be inspected.
- **Making big financial moves mid-process.** No new cars, credit cards, or job changes between pre-approval and closing.
- **Ignoring the property tax number.** Your mortgage payment is not your full housing cost.
- **Choosing an agent based on who tells you what you want to hear.** The best agent isn't the one who says yes to everything. It's the one who tells you the truth about a home's flaws, a neighborhood's trajectory, and whether the price makes sense.

For Renters:

- **Not reading the full lease.** Renewal terms, early termination clauses, and maintenance responsibilities vary widely.
- **Skipping the move-in walkthrough.** Photograph everything before you move a single box in.
- **Not asking about rent increase history.** Ask what rent was one and two years ago. It gives you leverage.
- **Assuming renting is always cheaper.** Once you factor in parking, pet deposits, and annual increases, the gap can be narrow.
- **Not negotiating.** Most renters don't realize they can negotiate rent, especially on longer lease terms or if the unit has been sitting vacant. Landlords are more flexible than most people think.

SECTION 9

A Little About Me

I'm Bobus, a realtor serving the Austin area, and someone who takes this work personally.

I'm a husband and a dad to two young kids, which means I understand what it actually feels like to make a big decision with your family's future on the line. It's not just about square footage or school ratings. It's about finding a place where your family can grow, rest, and belong.

My faith shapes how I show up for people. I believe in being honest even when it's not convenient, serving people well without an agenda, and genuinely caring about what happens after the deal closes.

I help people buy and I help people rent. Not every season calls for buying, and I would rather help you make the right move than the fast one.

- ✓ Straight answers, even when they're not what you want to hear
- ✓ Clear communication at every step of the process
- ✓ No pressure to move faster than you're ready
- ✓ Someone who actually picks up the phone

Ready to Have a Conversation?

Here's what happens when you reach out: We'll hop on a 20-minute call. I'll ask about your situation, your timeline, and what matters most to you. I'll give you an honest take on what makes sense. No paperwork, no commitment, no pressure. If we're a good fit, great. If not, you'll still walk away with better information than you had before.

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