A RELOCATION GUIDE TO

GREATER SEATTLE

What Your Money Actually Buys



DAWNA CAPPS

eXp REALTY



Understand how your budget, lifestyle and priorities can look different depending on where you choose to live.

Moving to Greater Seattle can feel like trying to understand a map before you know what any of the places on it really mean.

This guide will help you get oriented — from Seattle neighborhoods and the Eastside to communities north and south — with real-world examples of what homes cost, what draws people to different areas and the local details that can affect everyday life.

Because finding the right place to live isn't only about what your money can buy.

It's about where that home fits the life you're moving here to live.

YOU GET ONE WEEKEND TO DECIDE

Most people relocating here get a single trip. A Friday flight, two days of driving around, a decision that shapes the next ten years of school runs, commutes, and weekends.

I know how that goes, because I did it.

When my family and I moved cross-country to the Seattle area, we had one weekend to figure out where we should live. We found a beautiful home, but we didn't yet understand how all the pieces fit together — the schools, the commute, our son's activities, and the distances between the places that would become part of our everyday life.

We quickly discovered that a beautiful house isn't necessarily the right home. The school wasn't the right fit, a daily activity meant a long drive, and the commute was much harder than we'd anticipated. About a year later, we moved again.

What we were missing wasn't more information about the house. We needed a better understanding of the area and how our day-to-day life would actually work there.

That experience has stayed with me. It's one of the reasons I believe finding the right home isn't only about finding a house you love. It's about understanding how that house fits the life you're actually going to live there.

And that's why, when someone asks me the question I hear more than any other —

"What can we actually get for our budget?"

—I think there's another question underneath it:

"Where will that budget give us the kind of life we're moving here for?"

It's the right question. It's just usually answered with a list of homes instead of an explanation.

This guide isn't meant to tell you where you should live. It's meant to help you start understanding the choices.

We'll look at how different parts of Greater Seattle compare, what a similar type of home might cost as you move around the region, and some of the local details that can be easy to miss when you're new to the area.

By the end, I hope you'll have a better sense of the questions to ask, the areas you may want to explore, and what matters most as you begin narrowing the map.

There's no such thing as a perfect house. Let's start there.

FIVE THINGS THAT ARE DIFFERENT HERE

If you're new to the Seattle area, some of the things that are completely normal here may be very different from what you're used to.

Here are five details that are easy to overlook when you're getting to know the area.



1

Don't assume the home has air conditioning.

For a long time, air conditioning wasn't considered a necessity in the Seattle area, so you'll still find plenty of homes without it. These days, though, I find that more buyers prefer having the option of A/C, even if they don't need it every day.

If you're moving from a part of the country where central air is standard, this can be easy to overlook. Check each home rather than assuming it's included. And if a home you love doesn't have it, that doesn't necessarily have to be a dealbreaker. We can look at what it would take to add it, what it might cost, and whether the rest of the home makes that tradeoff worthwhile.

2

Not every home is connected to city water and sewer.

Depending on where you're looking, you may find homes with a septic system, a private well, or both. That's not necessarily a negative — plenty of buyers are perfectly comfortable with them — but they come with different questions about inspections, maintenance, and long-term costs.

If you've always lived in homes with city water and sewer, don't let this catch you by surprise. It's simply one more thing to understand about a property before deciding whether it's the right fit for you.

3

Public transportation may be more useful than you expect.

Greater Seattle's transportation options may be different from what you're used to. Light rail has expanded considerably in recent years, connecting Seattle with communities north through Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood, as well as Eastside communities including Mercer Island, Bellevue and Redmond.

But light rail is only part of the picture. Bus service is also an important part of getting around the region, and you may be surprised by how practical public transportation can be for everyday commuting.

If transit could be part of your routine, don't judge a home's location by mileage alone. Look at nearby bus routes and light rail stations, how you'll get to them, whether transfers are involved, and what the entire trip would actually look like.

4

The hills can change how a home lives.

One thing that's hard to appreciate from a map or an online listing is just how hilly parts of the Seattle area can be. A home may look close to shops, schools or a neighborhood center, but the terrain can make that distance feel very different once you're actually there.

It's also worth noticing the property itself. A steep driveway, exterior stairs or a sloped lot may not bother you at all — but they're things you'll want to experience in person rather than discover after you've moved in. And on the occasional snowy or icy day, that hill you barely noticed in July can suddenly matter quite a bit.

5

The school district doesn't necessarily tell you which school your child will attend.

School attendance boundaries don't always follow city or neighborhood lines. Two homes that seem very close to one another can sometimes feed into different schools.

If a particular school is important to your move, we'll want to verify the attendance boundary for the specific property rather than relying on the city, neighborhood, or even the school district name. It's one of those details that's much better to confirm before you fall in love with a house.

WHAT YOUR BUDGET CAN LOOK LIKE ACROSS GREATER SEATTLE

One of the hardest things to understand when you're moving here is just how much your options can change depending on where you look.

The same budget might put you in a smaller or older home close to the city, a more traditional neighborhood farther out, or a larger home and lot as you move north, south or away from the major employment centers.

Price is only part of the picture. Commute, housing style, lot size, neighborhood feel, access to activities and how you spend your everyday life can all change as you move around the region.

To make the comparison easier, let's use a similar wish list in each area: a 3–4 bedroom single-family home with a garage. These are rounded estimates meant to give you a starting point — actual prices can vary considerably by neighborhood, condition, size and the homes available when you're looking.



WHAT YOUR BUDGET CAN LOOK LIKE ACROSS GREATER SEATTLE

SEATTLE

TYPICAL PRICE

Roughly $1.1–$1.6 million, with some neighborhoods and homes considerably higher.

POPULAR AREAS TO EXPLORE

Queen Anne, Ballard, Green Lake, Capitol Hill, Fremont

WHY BUYERS LOOK HERE

Seattle itself offers an incredible variety of neighborhoods and housing styles. You might be drawn to an older home on a tree-lined street, a neighborhood where restaurants and coffee shops are close by, or simply being closer to the energy and amenities of the city. Your options can change considerably from one Seattle neighborhood to another.

WEST SEATTLE

TYPICAL PRICE

Roughly $900,000–$1.4 million, depending heavily on the neighborhood, condition and proximity to the water.

POPULAR AREAS TO EXPLORE

Alki, Admiral, West Seattle Junction, Genesee Hill, Roxhill, Westwood

WHY BUYERS LOOK HERE

West Seattle has its own distinct feel while still keeping you within the city. Depending on where you look, you'll find everything from neighborhoods near Puget Sound and Alki Beach to residential neighborhoods with a more traditional neighborhood feel.

MERCER ISLAND

TYPICAL PRICE

Around $1.8–$2.5 million and up for many 3–4 bedroom single-family options.

WHY BUYERS LOOK HERE

Mercer Island offers a residential island setting right between Seattle and the Eastside, with direct access to I-90. Buyers are often drawn to its central location, established neighborhoods and access to Lake Washington, while its convenience and limited geography come with one of the higher price points in the region.

EASTSIDE

TYPICAL PRICE

Roughly $1.2–$1.8 million, with significant variation by community and neighborhood.

POPULAR AREAS TO EXPLORE

Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, Sammamish, Issaquah

WHY BUYERS LOOK HERE

The Eastside puts you close to some of the region's largest employment centers, including major technology employers, along with shopping, dining, parks and waterfront areas. Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, Sammamish and Issaquah each have their own personality, and your housing options can look surprisingly different even within this relatively small area.

SOUTH / SOUTHEAST

TYPICAL PRICE

Roughly $700,000–$950,000 for many 3–4 bedroom single-family options, with higher prices depending on neighborhood, size and condition.

POPULAR AREAS TO EXPLORE

Renton, Maple Valley, Kent, Covington

WHY BUYERS LOOK HERE

Looking south or southeast can open up a different mix of housing, neighborhoods and space. Buyers may find that their housing dollar stretches farther here while still providing access to major employment centers and the rest of the Greater Seattle region.

NORTH CORRIDOR

TYPICAL PRICE

Roughly $700,000–$1.1 million, with Bothell and Mukilteo generally toward the higher end and communities farther north often offering more purchasing power.

POPULAR AREAS TO EXPLORE

Bothell, Everett, Mukilteo, Lake Stevens, Snohomish, Marysville

WHY BUYERS LOOK HERE

The North Corridor offers a wide range of choices, from communities close to major employment centers in Everett to areas where buyers may find newer homes, more square footage or larger lots for their budget. Boeing's Everett presence is an important employment draw, and each of these communities offers a different balance of location, housing and lifestyle.

These aren't recommendations for where you should live, and they're not meant to tell you exactly what a particular home will cost on a particular day. They're examples of why I encourage relocating buyers to look at the region as a whole before narrowing the map.

Ranges are rounded orientation examples for a 3–4 bedroom single-family home with a garage, informed by Redfin market data and recent home sales through August 2026.

Sometimes the best fit isn't where you thought you'd live when you started looking.

FIVE MISTAKES I WATCH RELOCATING BUYERS MAKE

1

Waiting until the house-hunting trip to figure out where you want to live.

If you only have a weekend to find a home, that weekend shouldn't be spent trying to understand the entire Greater Seattle area. Before you arrive, I want to understand what's important to you and your family — your commute, activities, priorities, wish list and the way you want to live — and help you learn about the areas that may fit. Then we can use your time here to explore those possibilities and make a more informed decision.

2

Choosing an area before understanding the address.

The name of the city or neighborhood only tells you so much. The exact address can change the school assignment, transportation options, utilities, surroundings and what your everyday routine will actually look like. Once we've narrowed the map, we still need to look closely at each individual property.

3

Judging a commute by the number of miles.

A home that looks close to work on a map may not feel close during your actual commute. Bridges, traffic patterns, transit options and even the route you take can make a relatively short distance feel very different. When commute matters, look at how you'll actually travel — not just the mileage.

4

Letting the listing photos tell the whole story.

Beautiful photos can show you the kitchen, finishes and floor plan. They don't necessarily tell you about the roof, electrical panel, furnace, water heater, plumbing, drainage or signs of moisture. Those are some of the things I pay attention to as we're touring — not because I'm an inspector, but because they can help us identify questions worth asking before you make a decision.

5

Waiting for the perfect house.

There probably isn't one — and that's okay. The real work is separating what genuinely matters to you from what can be changed later. A dated kitchen may be fixable. The location, lot and the way the home fits your everyday life may not be. That's the difference I want to help you see.

LOOK PAST THE PRETTY



Once you've narrowed down where you want to live, it's easy to get caught up in the house itself — especially when you're trying to make decisions during a short relocation trip.

I grew up in a painting and remodeling family, and I've renovated and staged homes of my own since 2007. That background taught me to look at a house a little differently. Beautiful staging and updated finishes can make a wonderful first impression, but they aren't necessarily the things that should drive the decision.

When you're touring, try to separate what can be changed from what can't — or what may be expensive to change.

Paint colors, light fixtures, flooring and dated finishes may be relatively easy to update. Location, lot, layout and natural light can be much harder to change. And then there are the less exciting things that deserve attention too: the age of the roof, furnace and water heater, signs of moisture, plumbing and electrical systems, and remodeling work that may need further investigation.

None of this means you need to become a home inspector. That's what the professionals are for. The goal is simply to look beyond how a home presents and start asking better questions about what you're actually buying.

A house doesn't have to be perfect on the day you buy it. Sometimes a home that doesn't make the best first impression has the things that matter most — while the beautiful one has compromises you can't change.

IF YOU CAN'T BE THERE IN PERSON

Sometimes relocation means making decisions from hundreds or even thousands of miles away. If you can't be there yourself, the goal is to gather enough information to understand not only the house, but what it would actually feel like to live there.

Before making a decision remotely, make sure you've looked beyond the listing:

- [ ] **See the entire home on video — not just the highlights.** Ask to see inside closets, the garage, utility areas and other spaces listing photos may skip.
- [ ] **Take a virtual walk outside.** See the driveway, yard, neighboring homes and the street in both directions. Pay attention to hills, sidewalks, parking and anything that might be difficult to appreciate on a map.
- [ ] **Understand the home's major systems.** Find out what's known about the roof, furnace, water heater, electrical system and other major components, and note anything that deserves further investigation.
- [ ] **Read the seller disclosure carefully.** Look for past repairs, water or moisture issues, remodeling and other information that may lead to additional questions.
- [ ] **Verify the property details that matter to you.** That might include the assigned schools, sewer or septic, water source, air conditioning, HOA information or other features important to your decision.
- [ ] **Experience the commute as realistically as possible.** Look at typical travel times when you'd actually be making the trip and consider the route, bridges, tolls and transit options — not just the number of miles.
- [ ] **Look beyond today's view.** Find out what you can about nearby development, major construction or other changes that could affect the area.
- [ ] **Ask what the photos aren't showing you.** Noise, traffic, odors, steep terrain, neighboring properties and the general feel of the surroundings can be difficult to understand from a listing.

A FEW THINGS WORTH RESEARCHING FOR YOURSELF

SCHOOLS

If schools are important to your move, research both the schools themselves and the attendance boundary for any home you're considering.

GreatSchools.org can be a useful starting point for comparing schools and learning about programs and academics. But don't assume the school shown on a real estate website is the school assigned to a particular address. Before making a decision, verify the address directly with the appropriate school district.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety is another topic that's worth researching when you're getting to know an unfamiliar area. Rather than relying on general impressions of a city or neighborhood, look at current information for the specific communities you're considering. Most cities and counties provide public safety information and local data online that can help you do your own research.

As with so many parts of a relocation decision, the goal isn't for someone else to tell you whether an area is right for you. It's to give you reliable information so you can decide for yourself.

Buying remotely doesn't mean buying blindly. It simply means being more intentional about gathering the information you would normally pick up by being there yourself.

HOW I CAN HELP

My approach to relocation starts with education, not houses.

Before we start looking, I want to understand what matters to you and your family — where you'll be working, how you spend your time, what you need from a home and what you're hoping this move will make possible. Then I can help you understand the Greater Seattle area through that lens and narrow the map in a way that makes sense for your life.

I also understand relocation from the other side of the experience. I've moved more than 30 times in my life, including moves across the country and back again. I know what it's like to arrive somewhere new and try to make sense of neighborhoods, commutes, schools, activities and everyday life — all while making one of the biggest financial decisions you'll make.

When we start touring homes, I bring another perspective with me. I grew up in a painting and remodeling family and have renovated and staged homes of my own since 2007. That experience helps me look beyond beautiful finishes and listing photos and think about what can be changed, what may be expensive to change and what can't be changed at all.

Most importantly, I don't believe my job is to tell you which house you should buy. My job is to help you understand the information, recognize the tradeoffs and make a decision you feel good about.

If you have a question — about an area you're considering, something you've read in this guide, or a house you can't stop thinking about — just ask. You don't have to be ready to buy. Sometimes a good conversation is simply the best place to start.

Leading You Home, One Step at a Time.



DAWNA CAPPS · REALTOR® · EXP REALTY

mail@dawnacapps.com · 843.819.3111 · @DawnaCappsHouses

Market information in this guide is general in nature and changes over time. Price ranges are rounded examples for orientation only — not an appraisal, a prediction, or an estimate of value for any specific property. Nothing in this guide is legal, tax, or lending advice.