Kristina Misailova COMPASS

The Manhattan & Brooklyn Buyer's Guide

Everything you need to buy with confidence, from a licensed Compass broker who works both boroughs.

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INSIDE THIS GUIDE

> This guide explains how the market works so you can make informed decisions. It is educational, not legal, tax, or lending advice. Confirm your specific numbers with your attorney, accountant, and lender.

How buying works, step by step

The NYC process has a few wrinkles you won't find elsewhere. Here is the whole path.

1 **Get pre-approved**

Before you tour, get a mortgage pre-approval so you know your real budget. Sellers and co-op boards expect it, and it makes your offer credible.

2 **Define your search**

Set your must-haves, neighborhoods, and whether a co-op or condo fits your plans. Your broker refines the list and surfaces options.

3 **Tour and evaluate**

You view homes and also weigh the building itself, its finances, rules, and reputation, which matter as much as the apartment.

4 **Make an offer**

Your broker helps you structure a competitive offer. In a co-op, the strength of your finances matters because the board will review them.

5 **Contract and attorney review**

Real estate attorneys on both sides handle the contract and due diligence. This is standard in NYC and not optional.

6 **Board package (co-ops)**

For co-ops, you assemble a detailed board package and usually sit for an interview. Condos skip this step.

7 **Closing**

Attorneys coordinate the closing and the transfer of funds. Then the home is yours.

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Co-op vs condo

This single choice shapes what you own, how you buy, and how easily you can sell or rent later.

What you own

With a condo you own real property. With a co-op you own shares in a corporation plus a lease for your unit. That distinction drives everything below.

Approval

Co-ops require board approval, including a detailed package and usually an interview, and the board can decline. Condos have a lighter process: typically a condo application and board review, with the building holding a right of first refusal, but interviews are uncommon and approval is far more routine. That makes condos faster and easier to buy and sell.

Financing and flexibility

Co-op boards often require larger down payments and scrutinize finances closely, and usually restrict renting out. Condos are more flexible on financing and subletting, which is why investors and pied-a-terre buyers prefer them.

Cost

Co-ops charge monthly maintenance that bundles taxes and building costs, and often a flip tax at sale. Condos charge common charges plus separate property taxes. Always compare true monthly cost, not sticker price.

> Rule of thumb: co-ops can offer more space for the money if you plan to live there long term; condos win on speed, financing, and flexibility to rent.

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Financing and down payments

Your budget is set by your lender and, for co-ops, by the building's rules.

Down payment

Condos often allow lower down payments. Co-op boards frequently require more, sometimes substantially, and each building sets its own minimum. Confirm your figure with a lender and the building.

Financing a co-op

Co-ops are financed through a share loan rather than a traditional mortgage, and buildings cap how much you can borrow. Some are all-cash or limit financing heavily.

Why boards review your finances

Because you are buying into a corporation, the board wants confidence you can carry maintenance long term. They review income, assets, and debt-to-income against their own thresholds.

> Get pre-approved early. It defines your budget, strengthens your offer, and tells you which buildings are realistic before you fall for one that isn't.

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What you'll pay at closing

NYC closing costs are higher and more layered than most buyers expect. Plan for them early.

Typical buyer costs

- Attorney fee, on every NYC deal.
- Mansion tax on purchases at or above one million dollars, rising in tiers for higher prices.
- Mortgage recording tax on condos and houses when you finance. Co-ops avoid this.
- Title insurance for condos and houses. Not applicable to co-ops.
- Building application, move-in, and administrative fees.

Co-op vs condo changes the math

Because a co-op is shares, buyers skip mortgage recording tax and title insurance, which lowers co-op closing costs meaningfully.

> Rates and thresholds change and depend on your price, property type, and financing. Confirm current figures with your attorney and accountant before relying on them.

Neighborhoods at a glance

A quick orientation to eight of the boroughs' most sought-after areas.

Manhattan

- **Upper East Side.** Prewar co-ops, Central Park, quiet and family-friendly.
- **Upper West Side.** Prewar co-ops and brownstones, two parks, cultural and leafy.
- **West Village.** Townhouses and charm, premium prices, scarce inventory.
- **Tribeca and SoHo.** Cast-iron lofts and luxury condos; Tribeca skews family, SoHo fashionable.

Brooklyn

- **Brooklyn Heights.** Historic brownstones and co-ops, skyline views, minutes to Manhattan.
- **Park Slope.** Brownstones by Prospect Park, strong family community.
- **Williamsburg.** Waterfront condos and converted warehouses, energy and nightlife.
- **DUMBO.** Loft condos and bridge views, creative and compact.

> Full guides for each neighborhood are on kristinamisailova.com.

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Smart moves and common mistakes

Smart moves

- Get pre-approved before you tour, not after you find something.
- Judge the building, not just the apartment. Finances and rules matter.
- Budget closing costs from the start so your true cash-to-close is clear.
- In a co-op, present clean, complete finances; the board is watching.

Common mistakes

- Comparing a co-op and condo on price alone, ignoring true monthly cost.
- Falling for a home outside your realistic, board-approvable budget.
- Underestimating co-op timelines, which run longer than condos.
- Skipping attorney review or rushing due diligence.

Frequently asked questions

Should I buy a co-op or a condo?

Co-ops often offer more space for the price but require approval, larger down payments, and limits on renting. Condos cost more but are faster, easier to finance, and flexible if you may rent later.

How is the approval process different?

Co-ops require a detailed board package and usually an interview, and the board can decline. Condos have a lighter application and board review, typically with no interview, and approval is far more routine.

How much down payment do I need?

It depends on the property and, for co-ops, the building's minimum, which is often higher than a condo would require. Confirm your figure with a lender and the building.

Can I finance a co-op?

Usually yes, through a share loan rather than a traditional mortgage. Buildings cap how much you can borrow, and some are all-cash or limit financing.

Why do co-op boards review my finances so closely?

Because you are buying into a corporation, and the board wants confidence you can carry maintenance long term. They review income, assets, and debt-to-income against their own thresholds.

How much income do I need to buy?

It depends on the price, your down payment, and the building's requirements. Co-op boards often want housing costs to stay within a set share of income. Your number comes from a lender and the building's rules.

Do I need a real estate attorney?

Yes. Essentially every NYC purchase is handled by attorneys on both sides. Your broker can recommend experienced ones.

What are typical closing costs?

Buyers may pay attorney fees, the mansion tax at or above one million dollars, and, for condos and houses, mortgage recording tax and title insurance. Co-ops skip the last two. Confirm current figures with your attorney.

What is the mansion tax?

An additional New York State tax on residential purchases at or above one million dollars, paid by the buyer, that rises in tiers for higher-priced homes.

What is a flip tax?

A fee many co-ops charge the seller at closing, set by the building. If you buy a co-op, it can matter when you eventually sell.

What is a board package and interview?

For a co-op, a detailed set of financial statements, references, and disclosures you submit to the board, usually followed by an interview. It is the main reason co-op deals take longer than condos.

Should I get pre-approved before I look?

Yes. It tells you your real budget and makes your offer credible. Sellers and co-op boards expect it.

What does a buyer's agent cost me?

Commission practices are changing across the industry and are increasingly negotiated and disclosed up front. Ask your agent to explain exactly how they are compensated before you start.

Is the commission negotiable?

Yes. Commissions are set by agreement, not by law, and have always been negotiable. Get the terms in writing.

How long does buying take?

Often around two months for a condo, and longer for a co-op because of the board process. The search itself varies widely.

Is now a good time to buy?

It depends more on your timeline and finances than on timing the market. The better question is whether a specific home is right and priced well.

Should I sell before I buy, or buy first?

Both work. It is a tradeoff between briefly carrying two homes and needing temporary housing. The right choice depends on your finances and risk tolerance.

What if a co-op board declines the buyer?

It happens, and the board need not give a reason. Presenting clean, complete finances and choosing a realistic building reduces the risk. An experienced broker helps you prepare.

How do I get started?

Reach out for a conversation about your search. We will define your budget and priorities and map the right next steps.

LET'S FIND YOUR HOME

Ready when you are.

Whether you are months away or ready now, a short conversation is the best next step. I will help you define your search, evaluate buildings, and structure a competitive offer, in Manhattan or Brooklyn.

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