

# COMPARISON SHOPPING GUIDE

House hunting? From energy-efficient features and personalization options to home maintenance costs and mortgage convenience, we tackle the topics that will help you make an informed decision about your next home purchase.

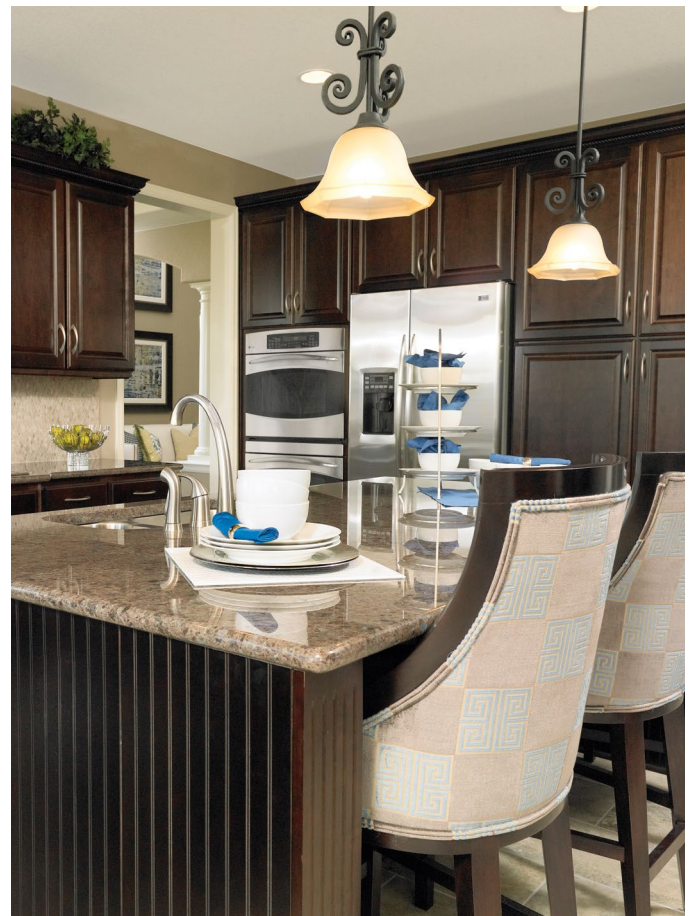
*This guide includes:*

- A builder vs. builder worksheet
- New home vs. resale home overview
- How buying stacks up to renting
- Community checklist
- House hunting wish list



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## MAKE THE SMART MOVE.



Low interest rates, an improving economy and rising home prices—not to mention rising rents—have many people interested in making a move. But, how do you know what's right for you?

In this guide, we provide worksheets and other resources to help you make a head-to-head comparison between:

- Richmond American & other builders
- New homes & resale homes
- Homebuying & renting

# BUYING NEW? COMPARE BUILDER VS. BUILDER.

*Touring beautiful model homes can be exciting, but your next thought might be...what's actually included? Don't assume every builder offers the same range of design options, the same standard features or the same degree of home energy efficiency. Asking questions now will help you make a decision you can feel good about from contract to close—and beyond.*

| BUILDER QUESTIONNAIRE                                                                                                          | RICHMOND AMERICAN | BUILDER 2 | BUILDER 3 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|
| How long has the builder been in business?                                                                                     | Over 35 years     |           |           |
| Does the builder have a strong financial position?                                                                             | Yes               |           |           |
| Does the builder have a variety of floor plans available?                                                                      | Yes               |           |           |
| Does the builder offer attractive standard features, so you won't have to upgrade to get what you want?                        | Yes               |           |           |
| Will you have chances to personalize your home with finishes, home technology & more?                                          | Yes               |           |           |
| Does the builder offer complimentary professional design assistance?                                                           | Yes               |           |           |
| Does the builder offer affiliate mortgage and insurance companies for a smoother homebuying experience?                        | Yes <sup>1</sup>  |           |           |
| Does the builder offer energy-efficient features such as low-e windows and HVAC systems designed to reduce energy consumption? | Yes <sup>2</sup>  |           |           |
| Does the homebuilder have a pre-scheduled plan to check in with you several times after you close?                             | Yes               |           |           |
|                                                                                                                                |                   |           |           |
|                                                                                                                                |                   |           |           |
|                                                                                                                                |                   |           |           |
|                                                                                                                                |                   |           |           |

Choosing a homebuilder will be an important decision. No matter what the economic conditions are, you will want to make sure the company is financially stable and will be able to finish construction and service any warranty requests after you settle in.

# THINKING RESALE? COMPARE TO NEW.

*As you're trying to decide between buying a new home and looking into resale homes, you'll discover brand new communities where you can choose your floor plan, your homesite and all your design options. Then you'll turn around and see the other end of the spectrum: established, comfortable neighborhoods with homes that were built a few years or even decades ago. Here are a few factors to highlight why buying a new home might be the best choice for you.*

## 1. ENERGY EFFICIENCY

New homes frequently offer improved energy efficiency due to better wall insulation and high-quality heating and cooling systems. These features can provide comfort as well as cost savings, compared to their older counterparts. What's more, new homes often allow you to opt for features such as low-e windows or water-saving showerheads. If you buy a resale home, keep in mind that you could end up with poor insulation, drafty windows or an old furnace, all of which may need to be replaced.

## 2. DESIGN CHOICES

Building a new home can give you the freedom to choose your own colors and finishes, while buying a resale home means you'll have to settle for someone else's style choices. Though you can always redecorate later, changing items like orange carpeting and dated cabinetry can be expensive—and they're often put off for a rainy day that never seems to come.

## 3. STORAGE

Today's new homes can offer floor plans designed to fit the way you live, with convenient features like walk-in closets, generous kitchen pantries, cabinets with pull-out shelves, garage space options and large basements that provide plenty of room for growth. With resale homes, especially older models, you may find that the storage space is limited or has been customized to someone else's preferences.

## 4. WARRANTIES

Brand new homes can include a builder's warranty, providing an added sense of security for the years ahead. Heating and cooling systems are also new and often covered under manufacturer's warranties, so you don't need to worry about replacing them right after you move in. On the other hand, many resale homes don't come with a warranty included in the price. If a warranty is important to you, you may have to pay extra or negotiate with the seller to pay the cost.



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*Ask your Richmond American sales associate about the Energy Wise Difference™!*

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## 5. APPLIANCES

Some builders offer homebuyers optimal convenience by including brand new appliances, such as a refrigerator and dishwasher. And if they're not already included in the price of your home, you may be able to roll their cost into your mortgage. When looking at the price of a resale home, you may need to factor in out-of-pocket expenses like replacing outdated appliances or buying a new washer and dryer.

## 6. INSURANCE PREMIUMS

Because new homes have modern plumbing, wiring and HVAC equipment, insurance companies tend to view them as a lower risk than older homes—a difference you could see in your premiums. For more info, contact an insurance specialist from our affiliate, American Home Insurance Agency, at **888-325-8108**.<sup>1</sup>

## 7. MAINTENANCE

The cost of maintenance is something many homebuyers overlook, but it should be a prime consideration when establishing your buying budget. Roof replacement, plumbing renovations and other emergency repairs add up quickly!

## 8. NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES

Your home isn't just your house; it's the parks where you'll play, the trails you'll walk—the whole neighborhood around you. Remember that as you tour your home options, old and new. Take a copy of the Community Checklist (*next page*) with you, so you can compare your options later. Many new communities, especially masterplans, are built with a clubhouse, fitness center, playgrounds, pools and other neighborhood amenities. If those features are important to you, make sure to include them in your decision.

As you can see, buying a new home offers distinct advantages that you'll want to keep in mind while you're shopping around. Be sure to compare the cost of new vs. resale homeownership, taking all of these factors into consideration. Making a smart move means looking at the big picture, so think about the benefits you'll care about tomorrow as well as today.



### LOOKING FOR MORE INFO ON THE NEW VS. RESALE DEBATE?

Visit **RichmondAmerican.com** and click “**Our Blog**.” We have a number of articles on the subject, ranging from the facts on foreclosure homes to the issues involved in insuring an older home.

## COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

Copy this checklist and take it with you on your next community tour. Compare your favorites!

### Community Checklist

Community name: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Homebuilder: \_\_\_\_\_

Sales Associate: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Floor plans:

- |                                        |                                        |                                         |                                                 |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ranch         | <input type="checkbox"/> Two-story     | <input type="checkbox"/> Three-story +  | <input type="checkbox"/> Basement available     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 bedroom | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 4 bedroom | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 bedroom +    | <input type="checkbox"/> Main-floor master      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 bath    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3+ bath       |                                         |                                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-car garage  | <input type="checkbox"/> 2-car garage  | <input type="checkbox"/> 3-car garage + | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop/storage available |

Square footage range: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Features:

- |                                                    |                                          |                                                |                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood parks        | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports fields   | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking/biking trails | <input type="checkbox"/> Clubhouse      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation/fitness center | <input type="checkbox"/> Nearby shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> Freeway access        | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical center |

School district: \_\_\_\_\_

Elementary school: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle school: \_\_\_\_\_

High school: \_\_\_\_\_ Private/charter schools available? Yes / No

Estimated commute time: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Associated costs:

Home price: \_\_\_\_\_ HOA fees: \_\_\_\_\_

**TIP!** Call a Richmond American New Home Specialist at **888-500-7060** to learn more about our communities in the area. He or she will have valuable first-hand knowledge you just can't get from a website. We'll provide a tailored list of our neighborhood recommendations based on factors like your commute time, whether or not you have children, your budget and more.

# RENTING?

## CONSIDER THE BENEFITS OF HOMEOWNERSHIP.

*Buying your own home is a central part of the American Dream. The benefits of homeownership are both practical and emotional. We've summarized some of the main advantages below, but not every benefit can be put into words. Nothing compares to the pride you feel when you're handed the keys to the place where you'll build memories with family and friends.*

### ENJOY STABLE HOUSING COSTS

For those who choose a fixed-rate mortgage, the principal and interest payments are fixed for the life of the loan, a clear advantage over rental market fluctuations. You don't want to be caught off guard by a rent hike, or have to move to get the payment you want.

### YOU'LL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD EQUITY

While renters' monthly payments go to a landlord, mortgage payments made by homeowners can build equity. Home prices are on the rise in many regions, but it's not too late to get a brand new home at a great price. The sooner you act, the more opportunity you'll have to leverage any future price increases to build equity.

### YOU CAN MAKE YOUR HOME YOUR OWN

If you're like many renters, you've been inspired by home design shows on television, but up until this point you have been limited in your ability to make many changes to your current living space. Even if your landlord lets you paint and make other alterations, it's hard to justify spending the cash to update a house or apartment that isn't yours. Homeownership will change all that. You will have more opportunities to decorate your home to reflect your personality with paint, window coverings, landscaping and more.

### FURNITURE SHOPPING IS SIMPLIFIED

Have you ever bought a sofa, only to find that a year later you can't fit it through the hallway of your new apartment? Buying lasting pieces of furniture is a big decision and one that's hard to make when you're a renter. You don't want to worry about spending money on something that may not work with the floor plan in your next place. Instead, if you plan to buy a new home and stay in it for a while, you can buy furniture knowing that the pieces you select will work with your home's layout for years to come.

### MOVE ON YOUR OWN TIMELINE

If you rent a house or a condo, you always run the risk that your landlord will want to sell the property and you may be forced to move at the end of your lease. As a homeowner, the power is in your hands. You don't have to move until you're ready to sell.

# COMPARE YOUR HOME OPTIONS.

*Whether you've decided to buy new, consider resale or keep renting, it's important to choose a home that fits your family's needs. You may think you know exactly what you're looking for, but it helps to type a list or get it down on paper, especially if you won't be the only decision maker in the home selection process. Everyone needs to be on the same page and the following checklist is a good starting point. You can carry it with you as you tour each home. It's an easy way to make sure you get what you're looking for.*

## House Hunting Wish List

Ideal number of bedrooms ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5+ ☐ \_\_\_\_ Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Ideal number of bathrooms ☐ 1 1/2 ☐ 2 ☐ 3+ ☐ \_\_\_\_ Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Garage capacity ☐ 1-car ☐ 2-car ☐ 3-car+ Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of house ☐ Ranch home (detached) ☐ Two-story (detached) ☐ Townhome

## What do you want in a floor plan?

Examples:

Kitchen open to family room  
Laundry close to bedrooms  
Spacious garage  
Deck or patio  
Study/den

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## What special features are you seeking?

Examples:

Hardwood floors  
Air conditioning  
Pantry  
Low-maintenance landscaping  
Technology package  
Energy-efficient construction

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## Neighborhood details:

Ideal commute time  
Cities/communities you're considering

Under \_\_\_\_\_ mins./hrs.  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_

## Location needs to be close to:

☐ Shopping ☐ Work ☐ Freeway access ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Other things you're looking for:

Examples:

Quality schools  
Community pool  
Parks/playground nearby

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**PRINT** a blank copy of this worksheet for each decision-maker in the household.

**GIVE** a copy of your completed worksheet to a Richmond American sales associate or New Home Specialist, and another to your real estate agent.

**KEEP** a copy of your completed worksheet with you as you tour model homes.

# CHOOSING NEW CONSTRUCTION? START TODAY!

*Our affiliates can help you with every stage of the buying process.*

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Richmond American has been building new homes for families since 1977. Our calling cards? Quality craftsmanship, timeless value and a personalized homebuying experience from start to finish. We understand your home is one of the most important purchases of your life and we want to get it right. Whether you're deciding on your neighborhood, your plan or your bathroom tile, it's the personal touches that make the difference. And that's what Richmond American is all about. With us, it's personal.™

Our New Home Specialists are standing by to help you kick off your home search. They have the information you need to compare Richmond American communities and plans across your area. Want to know what your commute will really be like? Curious if there's shopping nearby? Your dedicated New Home Specialist has the answers a local would know. Call **888-500-7060** to get started today.

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Put an American Home insurance specialist to work for you. Call **888-325-8108** to discuss your insurance options.

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At American Home Title, we understand what your home means to you and we want to help you protect it. Our staff of dedicated professionals will take the time to guide you through the process to protect against adverse title claims and risks that may not surface until long after your closing.

Call us at **855-248-4853** for more information. Services are available in Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Nevada and Virginia.

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Options and features may not be available on all homes and are subject to change without notice. Actual homes may vary from photos and/or drawings which show upgraded landscaping and may not represent the lowest priced homes in the community. Features may include optional upgrades and may not be available on all homes. Specifications and availability are subject to change without notice.

1:

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