

# **Moving to Charleston, SC**

## **The Complete Relocation Guide**

Where Smart Home Buying Begins.

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A practical guide to understanding Charleston geography, comparing areas, planning a home search, and approaching relocation with confidence.

# About Sonja Schuman

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She works with primary-home, relocation and second-home buyers throughout the Charleston area, with an emphasis on education, local geography, practical decision-making and helping buyers understand how a property fits into everyday life.

Where Smart Home Buying Begins.

# 1. What Should I Know Before Moving to Charleston, SC?

The first thing to understand about Charleston is its geography.

Greater Charleston is made up of distinct municipalities, islands, peninsulas, and communities connected by rivers, bridges, highways, and waterways.

When someone says, “I live in Charleston,” that could mean the historic Charleston peninsula, Mount Pleasant, West Ashley, James Island, Johns Island, Daniel Island, Sullivan’s Island, Isle of Palms, or one of the many other communities that make up the greater Charleston area.

And those locations are not interchangeable.

I learned some of this myself when I relocated to Charleston. I underestimated how much traffic on the major highways could affect getting around during peak hours. I also hadn’t fully appreciated something distinctly Lowcountry: some of our bridges open for boat traffic. Depending on your route and timing, even that can become part of getting from one place to another.

Two homes that look close together on a map can feel very different in daily life depending on which side of rivers, bridges, and major routes they sit on and how you actually need to travel between them.

It’s also easy when researching Charleston from another state to misunderstand how distinct its different areas really are. James Island and Daniel Island, for example, may both have “island” in the name, but they occupy completely different parts of the Charleston map and have very different relationships to downtown, beaches, major roads, and surrounding communities.

This is why one of the first things I want to know when helping someone relocate isn’t simply where they think they want to live.

I want to know where they need to go.

Where will you work? Will you travel frequently and need regular access to Charleston International Airport? Are there specific schools you have independently selected, extracurricular activities, family members, medical facilities, or other destinations you already know will be part of your routine?

Those answers begin to reveal which parts of the Charleston area may make practical sense for you to investigate.

I call this buying for proximity rather than simply mileage.

## **Buying Smart: Come Experience Charleston Before You Choose It**

If I could give someone one piece of advice before they begin seriously looking at homes, it would be this:

**Come for an exploratory visit.**

And make it enjoyable.

Plan some fun activities. Eat some delicious food. But don’t spend the entire trip downtown or at the beach. Intentionally experience several different parts of the Charleston area.

Drive around.

Pay attention to the bridges.

Travel Highway 17, I-26 and I-526 at different times.

Go from Mount Pleasant to downtown. Explore James Island. Drive through West Ashley. Visit Daniel Island. If the islands interest you, spend some time on Sullivan's Island and Isle of Palms.

And don't just look at houses.

Look at how Charleston works.

By the end of that exploratory trip, the goal isn't necessarily to know exactly where you want to buy. It's to narrow a very large Charleston map into perhaps one or two areas you genuinely want to explore further.

That makes the eventual home search far more focused.

You are not simply choosing a house.

You are choosing where that house sits within your life.

## 2. Where Should I Live in Charleston?

When someone is relocating to Charleston, I find it helpful to stop thinking about our area as one large collection of neighborhoods and start with the geography.

Personally, I organize Charleston around three major river crossings, with the downtown Charleston peninsula as the central reference point.

Once you understand these crossings, the Charleston map begins to make much more sense.

### **Crossing the Cooper River: The Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge**

The Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge carries US-17 across the Cooper River between downtown Charleston and Mount Pleasant.

Cross the Ravenel from downtown and you enter Mount Pleasant, with Sullivan's Island and Isle of Palms accessible beyond it.

This side of the Charleston area includes a wide range of housing, from established Mount Pleasant neighborhoods and newer planned communities to condominiums, waterfront properties, and barrier-island homes.

For someone considering Mount Pleasant, Sullivan's Island, or Isle of Palms, the Ravenel Bridge becomes an important geographic reference point because it connects those areas back to the Charleston peninsula.

### **Crossing the Ashley River: West Ashley, James Island, Johns Island and Beyond**

Travel west from the downtown peninsula across the Ashley River and the Charleston map opens toward West Ashley and the communities southwest of downtown.

West Ashley itself contains a large variety of established neighborhoods, newer development, condominiums, townhomes, shopping, restaurants, and major transportation routes.

From this side of Charleston, other routes lead toward James Island, Johns Island, Folly Beach, and farther southwest toward areas such as Kiawah Island and Seabrook Island.

This is also a good example of why simply saying a property is "near downtown Charleston" doesn't tell the whole story. Which river you need to cross, which road you need to use, and where you ultimately need to go all matter.

### **Traveling the I-526 Corridor: North Charleston, Daniel Island and Mount Pleasant**

The third major piece of the map is I-526.

I-526 forms an important transportation corridor around Charleston, connecting areas west of the peninsula with North Charleston and continuing east across the Cooper River via the Don Holt Bridge to Daniel Island, then across the Wando River toward Mount Pleasant.

This helps explain something that can initially be confusing to relocation buyers:

Daniel Island and James Island are not simply two Charleston islands that happen to have different names.

They sit in very different parts of the Charleston transportation network.

Daniel Island is positioned along the I-526 corridor between North Charleston and Mount Pleasant. James Island sits south of the downtown peninsula between Charleston and Folly Beach.

Understanding those relationships is much more useful than simply memorizing a list of community names.

## **Start With the Bridges, Then Narrow the Neighborhoods**

This is how I would encourage you to begin thinking about where to live in Charleston:

Put downtown Charleston in the middle of the map. Then look at the rivers and the major crossings around it.

From there, start layering in your own life.

Where will you work?

Which destinations are you likely to visit regularly?

Will you frequently use the airport?

Do you hope to enjoy a particular beach often?

Do you want to be close to a golf course?

Identify any activities and places you already know will become important to your everyday lifestyle.

Then begin exploring the communities that make geographic sense for your answers.

You may ultimately choose Downtown Charleston, Mount Pleasant, Daniel Island, West Ashley, James Island, Johns Island, Sullivan's Island, Isle of Palms, or somewhere else entirely.

The purpose of understanding the bridges is to simply give you a framework for understanding how Charleston fits together.

## **Buying Smart**

When you're researching Charleston from another state, don't begin by trying to answer:

**"What's the best Charleston neighborhood?"**

Begin with:

**"Which part of the Charleston map makes sense for the places I need and want to go?"**

Once the map starts making sense, Charleston becomes a lot more fun to explore. And that's when you can start discovering which parts of it you want to know better.

### 3. How Important Are Bridges and Traffic When Choosing Where to Live in Charleston?

Traffic and commute patterns are worth considering when choosing a home in Charleston, but how important they are depends largely on your own priorities and what you're accustomed to.

When someone relocating to Charleston tells me where they will be working, I immediately start thinking about the possible routes between work and the areas they are considering.

But before I make too much of the commute, I ask questions.

How important is commute time to you? What are you accustomed to now? If you're relocating from a much larger metropolitan area, Charleston traffic may not feel particularly significant to you. Someone accustomed to a long commute may evaluate a particular location very differently than someone who considers 20 minutes in the car a long time.

My job isn't to decide what an acceptable commute looks like for you.

It's to help you understand how Charleston's transportation system works so you can decide for yourself.

#### Charleston Traffic Isn't Just About Traffic

When I moved to Charleston from Albuquerque, New Mexico, one of the biggest differences I noticed wasn't necessarily the amount of traffic.

It was the roads themselves.

Albuquerque is largely built around a grid system. If one road becomes congested, there are often several other ways to get where you're going.

Charleston doesn't work that way.

Rivers, creeks, marshes, bridges and waterways shape our road network. Roads don't always run in straight lines, and depending on where you live and where you're going, you may have only one or two practical routes.

That means an accident, bridge opening or heavy traffic along one important corridor can affect your trip in a way that isn't obvious when you're simply looking at mileage on a map.

I experience this myself.

I live in Belle Hall in Mount Pleasant. If I'm heading toward Costco or the soccer fields in the northern part of Mount Pleasant, my most logical route takes me from Long Point Road to Highway 17. If traffic backs up along that route, I can try a longer way around to reach Highway 17, but ultimately Highway 17 is still where I need to go.

That's an important distinction for someone moving here to understand.

The question isn't only, "How far away is it?"

It's also:

**“How many practical ways do I have to get there?”**

## **A 20-Minute Drive Isn't Always a 20-Minute Drive**

This may be one of the hardest things about Charleston transportation to explain to someone who doesn't live here yet.

A route that normally takes 15 or 20 minutes can sometimes take considerably longer.

From my home in Belle Hall, for example, I can get to Sullivan's Island in approximately 15 minutes under favorable conditions. Depending on traffic or a bridge opening along my route, that trip can take 25 minutes or longer.

I encounter the same thing traveling from Mount Pleasant toward Hanahan. I may normally allow around 20 minutes, but congestion can quickly make the trip considerably longer.

That doesn't mean I consider either destination “too far.”

It means I've learned to build flexibility into my expectations.

So when someone tells me they're comfortable with a 20-minute commute, my advice is generally to consider what happens when that 20-minute trip isn't 20 minutes.

If being somewhere at a particular time really matters, give yourself some padding.

## **Buying Smart: Think Beyond Your Workplace**

Your commute to work is only one piece of your Charleston map.

Depending on your own circumstances and priorities, you may also want to consider Charleston International Airport, Downtown Charleston, beaches you expect to visit, medical facilities or providers, schools you have independently selected, extracurricular activities, golf or recreational destinations, family members or friends you expect to visit regularly, and other places that will routinely be part of your life.

There is no universal answer about how close you should live to any of these places.

Instead, identify your frequent destinations and investigate what traveling between them and the properties you're considering actually looks like.

And when you're visiting Charleston before a move, drive some of those routes yourself.

## **Give Yourself Margin**

Even after living here, I still check my preferred mapping app before I leave for somewhere important.

And if I'm heading to the airport or an important meeting, I give myself plenty of extra time.

I've learned this one from experience. I've both arrived late and nearly missed a plane because I didn't leave enough margin for the unexpected.

I'd much rather arrive early and have time to grab a coffee.

The goal isn't to find a Charleston location where you'll never encounter traffic. It's simply to understand your routes well enough that you can choose a location that works for your life, with a little margin for the

unexpected.

And once you know that, you can get back to the much more enjoyable part: exploring Charleston and finding the places you love.

## 4. Is Mount Pleasant a Good Place to Live When Moving to Charleston?

Mount Pleasant is one of the areas that frequently comes up when people begin researching a move to Charleston.

But asking whether Mount Pleasant is a “good” place to live isn't the question I want to answer for you.

A better question is:

**Does Mount Pleasant offer the location, housing, price point and amenities you want to consider for your home search?**

That's something we can actually investigate.

And the first thing I would tell someone researching Mount Pleasant from another state is that Mount Pleasant is not one uniform housing market.

### Understanding Mount Pleasant Home Prices

Pricing can be one of the more confusing things about Mount Pleasant.

Two homes with similar square footage can have substantially different values depending on location, neighborhood, proximity to the water, distance from downtown Charleston, lot characteristics, age and condition, neighborhood amenities, and other property-specific factors.

Consider three very different Mount Pleasant neighborhoods: Old Village, Snee Farm and Charleston National.

Simply comparing bedrooms and square footage across those three communities wouldn't tell you enough. They represent different locations within Mount Pleasant, different housing stock, different neighborhood characteristics and different relationships to the rest of Charleston.

This is one reason I encourage relocation buyers to understand the area before trying to determine what a particular budget should buy.

### South Mount Pleasant vs. North Mount Pleasant

For simplicity, I generally begin by helping relocation buyers think about Mount Pleasant in two broad geographic areas:

South Mount Pleasant and North Mount Pleasant, using the Highway 41 area as a general dividing point.

This isn't meant to suggest that every neighborhood on one side of that line is alike. They're not.

It's simply a useful starting framework.

As you move through Mount Pleasant, you'll find differences in proximity to downtown Charleston, the beaches, major transportation routes, shopping and recreation, as well as differences in housing inventory and price.

That's when we can begin narrowing the map further and looking at individual neighborhoods.

## **Housing in Mount Pleasant Is Surprisingly Varied**

Another misconception is that there is one particular “Mount Pleasant house.”

There really isn't.

Depending on where you look, you'll find older established neighborhoods, newer master-planned communities, traditional subdivisions, condominiums, townhomes, waterfront properties, new construction and homes on a wide variety of lot sizes.

You'll also encounter communities with extensive amenities and homeowners associations as well as properties with very different ownership structures and neighborhood characteristics.

For a relocation buyer, that variety can be a real advantage because it gives you quite a bit to compare.

But it also means that searching “homes for sale in Mount Pleasant” without first understanding the different parts of Mount Pleasant can produce a very broad and sometimes confusing set of results.

## **Why Does Mount Pleasant Come Up So Often in Charleston Relocation Searches?**

Geography is certainly part of it.

Mount Pleasant sits across the Cooper River from the Charleston peninsula and provides access toward Sullivan's Island and Isle of Palms. It also has extensive shopping, dining, parks, recreation, medical services and other everyday amenities within the town itself.

The housing inventory is broad, too.

But those facts don't automatically mean Mount Pleasant should be part of your home search.

Your priorities may lead you toward Mount Pleasant, or they may lead you somewhere completely different.

That's why I prefer to start with your criteria and then evaluate the area against them.

## **Buying Smart: Don't Shop Mount Pleasant by Price Alone**

If you're considering Mount Pleasant, don't assume that a home priced differently from another seemingly similar property is necessarily overpriced or underpriced.

First ask why.

Where is it located?

What neighborhood is it in?

How close is it to the water?

What is the housing stock around it?

What amenities or HOA costs come with the property?

How does its location relate to downtown, the beaches and the places you expect to frequent?

What other property-specific factors may be affecting its value?

Mount Pleasant is a particularly good example of why understanding a local real estate market requires more than looking at price per square foot.

The better you understand the differences within Mount Pleasant, the easier it becomes to understand what you're actually comparing. And that's when a very broad home search can start becoming a much more enjoyable exploration of the neighborhoods and homes that catch your attention.

## 5. Mount Pleasant or Daniel Island: How Do I Compare Them?

Mount Pleasant and Daniel Island often come up in the same Charleston home search.

Geographically, they're relatively close to one another. But when you actually spend time in both, you'll quickly see that they are organized very differently.

So, the better question is:

**What are the differences between Mount Pleasant and Daniel Island that matter to your individual home search?**

### The Biggest Difference: One Is a Town, One Is Master-Planned

Mount Pleasant is a large town made up of many individual neighborhoods and communities that developed at different times and offer a wide range of housing, amenities and locations.

Daniel Island is much more intentionally master-planned.

That distinction is noticeable when you visit.

Daniel Island has a coordinated physical environment with residential areas, parks, trails, recreational amenities and commercial areas incorporated into the larger community plan. Architectural standards and property-owner associations also play an important role in how the island is organized and maintained.

For a buyer, those aren't simply aesthetic differences.

They can affect the type of property you're purchasing, applicable association requirements and fees, architectural guidelines, amenities and other ownership considerations.

### Housing Options in Daniel Island

One thing Daniel Island does particularly well is offer a range of housing types within the larger planned community.

You'll find condominiums and townhomes as well as single-family residences, larger properties and high-end waterfront homes.

Mount Pleasant also offers tremendous housing variety, as we discussed in the previous section, but that variety is spread across a much larger geographic area and among many distinct neighborhoods.

So if you're comparing homes in both areas, don't just compare price and square footage.

Compare the property itself and what comes with its location.

What type of housing are you considering?

What association applies to the property, and what are its fees and requirements?

What amenities are included or available?

What architectural or property-use restrictions apply?

What are the property's flood and insurance considerations?

And how does that particular address relate to the places you expect to frequent?

## **Geography Still Matters**

Daniel Island sits along the I-526 corridor between North Charleston and Mount Pleasant, which gives it a different geographic relationship to Charleston than many parts of Mount Pleasant.

If you're considering Daniel Island, I recommend looking beyond the island itself and evaluating the routes you'll use when you leave it.

Where will you work?

How frequently will you travel to downtown Charleston, the airport, Mount Pleasant or the beaches?

What other destinations will regularly be part of your routine?

I-526 can play an important role in many of those trips, so traffic conditions and route options are worth experiencing yourself during an exploratory visit.

The purpose is to simply understand what the trip actually involves and decide whether it works for you.

## **What If You Like Both?**

This happens.

And sometimes there isn't a formula for choosing between them.

Once we've discussed your budget, property type, commute and other priorities, we can explore homes in both Mount Pleasant and Daniel Island.

In fact, I often think that's useful.

You may discover that one area offers more of the housing inventory you're looking for. You may find a particular property that changes your thinking. Or after spending time in both locations, you may simply develop a preference of your own.

My job is simply to make sure you have enough information to make a smart choice.

## **Buying Smart: Compare the Details That Matter**

When comparing Mount Pleasant and Daniel Island, focus on the characteristics that are most relevant to your home search and daily routine, then use your own preferences to decide which location feels like the better fit for you.

Compare what you can actually evaluate: property types and current housing inventory; purchase price and total ownership costs; association fees, requirements and amenities; property restrictions and architectural guidelines; flood and insurance considerations; proximity to your frequent destinations; transportation routes; access to the places and activities that matter to you; and property-specific characteristics.

Then go spend time in both.

Drive around. Look at homes. Experience the geography. See what your budget buys in each location.

Sometimes the best way to choose between two places you like is simply to give yourself permission to like them both until one feels like home.

## 6. Mount Pleasant or West Ashley: How Do I Compare Them?

Mount Pleasant and West Ashley are both relatively close to downtown Charleston, but they offer very different landscapes to explore when you're looking for a home.

This is another comparison where I don't think there's a useful answer to:

**“Which one is better?”**

Instead, let's look at what makes them different.

### One of West Ashley's Strengths Is Its Variety

West Ashley isn't one master-planned community or a collection of neighborhoods that all look alike.

It's a large area made up of established neighborhoods, commercial corridors, waterfront and creekside areas, newer development and pockets that have evolved at very different times.

That history is visible.

You'll find older shopping corridors alongside areas undergoing redevelopment and revitalization. You'll also find established neighborhoods with mature landscaping and older homes, renovated properties, condominiums and townhomes, as well as newer communities and construction.

Areas such as Avondale, Byrnes Downs, Old Windermere and other established West Ashley neighborhoods each have their own housing characteristics and relationship to the larger area.

That makes West Ashley itself something you need to explore, rather than treating every West Ashley address as interchangeable.

### How Does the Housing Compare With Mount Pleasant?

One of the reasons West Ashley deserves consideration in a Charleston relocation search is housing value.

In general, buyers may find opportunities at lower price points in West Ashley than in many parts of Mount Pleasant, although pricing varies considerably by neighborhood, property type, condition, lot, proximity to the water and other property-specific factors.

The housing stock is different, too.

West Ashley has a substantial inventory of older homes, including properties that have been renovated or updated over time. You'll also find newer construction, condominiums, townhomes and communities with homeowners associations.

Mount Pleasant offers its own broad range of housing, but the point isn't to decide which inventory is better.

It's to understand what your budget and priorities allow you to explore in each.

A buyer who assumes Mount Pleasant is the only area worth investigating could miss properties in West Ashley that deserve a look. And a buyer focused only on price could miss a Mount Pleasant property that happens to meet their priorities beautifully.

That's why I prefer to keep the search open until the buyer starts developing preferences of their own.

## West Ashley's Geography

West Ashley sits immediately west of the Charleston peninsula, across the Ashley River. Locals call this “west of the Ashley”.

Depending on the specific location, buyers can evaluate routes toward downtown Charleston, Charleston International Airport, I-26, I-526, James Island, Johns Island and other destinations west and south of the peninsula.

For beach trips, Folly Beach is one option buyers may want to map from a particular West Ashley property, just as Sullivan's Island and Isle of Palms frequently become reference points when evaluating locations in Mount Pleasant.

But we've already talked about the importance of Charleston geography earlier in this guide.

So rather than assuming one side of Charleston is more convenient than another, pull up the addresses you're actually considering and look at your map.

Your workplace. Your airport route. Your preferred beach. Your regular activities. Your favorite places.

That's the comparison that matters.

## Don't Overlook West Ashley

West Ashley can sometimes be overlooked by relocation buyers who begin their Charleston research with the areas they've heard the most about.

I think that's a mistake.

Not because West Ashley is the “right” choice, but because relocation is a process of discovery. If an area offers homes within your budget and meets the objective criteria you've identified, there's very little downside to going to see it.

You don't have to decide beforehand that you're a “Mount Pleasant person” or a “West Ashley person.”

You can simply explore both.

## Buying Smart: Try the Optometrist Approach

I sometimes compare a relocation search to going to the optometrist.

You know that moment when you're looking through the machine and the doctor asks:

**“Number one...or number two?”**

Then something changes slightly.

**“Number one...or number two?”**

That's often how I help buyers narrow Charleston.

We might start with Mount Pleasant and West Ashley.

After exploring both, you may prefer one.

Then we compare two smaller areas.

Then two neighborhoods.

Eventually, we're no longer comparing entire sections of Charleston. We're comparing the specific locations and homes that genuinely interest you.

And you don't have to know the answer at the beginning.

Sometimes finding home is simply a matter of exploring, comparing, and letting your own preferences become clearer along the way.

## 7. Downtown Charleston or Mount Pleasant?

Downtown Charleston and Mount Pleasant can both end up on the same relocation buyer's list, but they offer two very different home searches.

I've worked with buyers who were genuinely considering both.

And when someone tells me they're interested in living downtown, one of my first questions is:

**“Paint me a picture. What does living in downtown Charleston look like to you?”**

That answer tells me much more than simply knowing they want a Charleston address.

### What Do You Mean by “Downtown Charleston”?

For one buyer, downtown Charleston might mean walking out the door and heading to a coffee shop or restaurant.

Someone else may be drawn to historic architecture and preservation.

Another buyer may want a harbor view, proximity to the College of Charleston or MUSC, or convenient access to galleries, museums, theaters, shopping and cultural events.

Those are very different priorities, and downtown Charleston itself contains distinct areas and property types.

So before we compare Downtown Charleston with Mount Pleasant, I want to understand what you're hoping to experience downtown in the first place.

### Visiting Downtown and Living Downtown Are Different Experiences

I understand the appeal personally.

When I first visited Charleston, I absolutely loved downtown.

I loved the old-world character, cobblestone streets, historic architecture, horse-drawn carriages, shops, coffee houses and restaurants. I loved that so much of Charleston's history seemed visible everywhere I looked.

I still love showing property downtown for many of those same reasons.

The homes can be extraordinary.

Historic details, architecture, piazzas, brickwork, ironwork and craftsmanship can give individual properties a character that is difficult to replicate somewhere else.

But when you're considering actually buying downtown, I encourage you to experience it through a slightly different lens.

Instead of only asking, “Do I love being here?”

Also ask:

**“What would my everyday life look like here?”**

## **Downtown Homeownership Comes With Different Considerations**

A downtown home search can involve considerations that may not be as prominent in many Mount Pleasant searches.

Depending on the particular property and location, buyers may need to investigate historic-district requirements, renovation or alteration restrictions, flood considerations, insurance, parking, property condition, lot size and other ownership factors.

Charleston's historic preservation is part of what makes the city so distinctive. It can also mean that changes to certain properties aren't simply a matter of deciding what you'd like to renovate.

The City of Charleston's Board of Architectural Review has review authority over certain work within designated historic districts and on certain historic properties. If you're considering one of these homes, we'll identify the questions that need to be asked and direct specialized questions to the appropriate City staff or qualified professionals.

Parking deserves attention, too.

Some downtown properties have private off-street parking. Others may rely partly on street parking or fall within one of the City's residential parking districts. The City maintains a residential parking permit program covering much of downtown Charleston.

The important thing is to investigate the actual property, rather than assume every downtown home comes with the same ownership experience.

## **How Does Mount Pleasant Compare?**

This is where the contrast becomes much clearer.

As we've already discussed, Mount Pleasant covers a large geographic area with a broad mix of housing: established neighborhoods, newer communities, condominiums, townhomes, waterfront properties and homes on varying lot sizes.

Downtown Charleston is a much more location-specific search.

Depending on where you're looking, homes may sit closer together, lots can be smaller, and parking may play a larger role in the buying decision.

The surrounding environment is different as well.

Downtown is the historic and cultural center of Charleston, with residences sharing the peninsula with restaurants, shops, businesses, institutions, hotels, visitors, pedestrians and major cultural attractions.

Mount Pleasant offers a different physical landscape and a much larger geographic footprint.

Neither is inherently better.

They're simply very different ways to experience Charleston.

Here's one exercise I think is particularly helpful when you're torn between two places you genuinely like.

Where are you going?

How often are you getting in your car?

Where will you park when you come home?

What places would you actually walk to?

How much outdoor space do you want with your property?

What destinations will be part of your regular routine?

And then picture Saturday, too.

Maybe what you love most is walking to coffee, browsing King Street, visiting a gallery, heading to the theater or simply being surrounded by Charleston's historic architecture.

Or maybe you discover that you love having downtown nearby while choosing a home somewhere else.

Both are perfectly reasonable conclusions.

The goal isn't to talk yourself into or out of downtown Charleston.

It's to give yourself enough time there to understand the difference between loving a place and loving the way you would live in that place.

And if you still love both Downtown Charleston and Mount Pleasant?

Wonderful. Keep exploring both. Sometimes having two very different choices makes it even easier to recognize home when you find it.

## 8. Sullivan's Island or Isle of Palms: What's the Difference for a Home Buyer?

Sullivan's Island and Isle of Palms sit right next to one another along the Charleston coast.

Drive across Breach Inlet and you've gone from one island to the other. But spend some time exploring both and you'll quickly discover two distinct coastal home searches.

And this is one comparison that's especially fun to experience in person.

### **Sullivan's Island: Distinctly Lowcountry**

Sullivan's Island combines historic architecture, beach cottages, distinctive older homes and extraordinary newer coastal properties with beautiful stretches of beach and a compact commercial district along Middle Street.

The Town has intentionally prioritized preservation of its residential character, historic resources and open spaces.

All of that contributes to what I personally experience as a quieter, distinctly Lowcountry coastal atmosphere.

That doesn't mean Sullivan's Island is undiscovered. Summer weekends can bring plenty of beach traffic and visitors. But when I'm choosing a Charleston beach for myself, Sullivan's is usually where I go.

### **Isle of Palms: Classic Beach Energy**

Cross Breach Inlet onto Isle of Palms and the physical environment begins to change.

Isle of Palms offers a broad mix of residential and vacation-oriented properties, along with beach access, restaurants and businesses serving both residents and visitors.

And then there's Wild Dunes, the resort and residential community located toward the northeastern end of the island, which adds another collection of properties and amenities to an IOP home search.

To me, Isle of Palms has more of that classic "grab your flip flops and head to the beach" energy.

That's not better or worse than Sullivan's. It's simply another way to experience Charleston's coast.

### **Housing and Intended Use Matter**

Both islands offer remarkable coastal properties, but their housing inventories aren't identical.

Sullivan's Island is primarily a single-family home market, with historic properties, cottages, renovated homes, newer construction and high-end coastal residences.

Isle of Palms offers a broader mix that also includes more condominium, townhome and resort-oriented options.

If you're considering a second home or a property you may eventually rent, intended use becomes particularly important.

Sullivan's Island generally prohibits establishing new vacation-rental uses, although certain legally established vacation rentals remain. Isle of Palms has its own short-term-rental regulations and licensing requirements.

Association or regime rules may add another layer, so rental potential should always be verified for the specific property rather than assumed based on the island.

We'll get much deeper into coastal due diligence and second-home considerations later in this guide. For now, just know that how you intend to use the property can help shape which homes are worth exploring.

## **Sometimes the Little Things Help You Decide**

When you're comparing two beautiful barrier islands, the deciding factor doesn't always have to be monumental.

Maybe property type matters most. Maybe it's rental flexibility. Maybe it's the restaurants and amenities you want nearby. Maybe it's simply how you imagine spending an ordinary day at the beach.

Those preferences often become much clearer once you spend time on both islands.

## **Buying Smart: Go Spend a Day at the Beach**

This may be the easiest homework I give you in the entire relocation guide.

Go experience both.

Drive Sullivan's Island. Walk the beach. Explore the residential streets and Middle Street.

Then cross Breach Inlet.

Explore Isle of Palms. Walk another stretch of beach. Drive through different parts of the island and see how the housing changes as you go.

If you're seriously considering buying on either island, we'll review the important details: flood risk, insurance, elevation, rental rules, association documents and property-specific due diligence.

But first, go enjoy the beach.

Start with the fun part. Put your feet in the sand, explore both islands, and give yourself a little room to dream about what having a home at the beach could actually look like.

## 9. What Should I Know About Flood Zones Before Buying in Charleston?

Flooding is an important consideration when buying property in coastal South Carolina.

But it doesn't need to make you afraid of buying a home here.

When relocation buyers ask me, "Is this house in a flood zone?" I encourage them to look beyond that single question.

FEMA maps identify different levels of flood risk, and being located within a higher-risk flood zone does not tell you whether a particular home has previously flooded. Likewise, a home being elevated does not necessarily mean floodwaters have reached that height before.

The goal is to understand the specific property and its risk factors.

### What Should You Investigate?

When we're seriously considering a property, we'll identify the information and resources available to help you investigate it.

Depending on the property, that may include reviewing FEMA flood-zone information, obtaining an available Elevation Certificate, reviewing seller disclosures, asking appropriate questions about known flood history and considering property-specific conditions during your inspections.

I also encourage buyers to contact their insurance provider early in the process for property-specific quotes.

This is particularly important because flood insurance costs aren't the same for every Charleston property. Don't assume that buying near the coast automatically means an extremely expensive flood-insurance policy.

Get an actual quote for the property you're considering.

### Buying Smart: Investigate, Don't Assume

Living near the coast comes with environmental considerations, just as living in other parts of the country comes with different ones.

The important thing isn't to eliminate every possible risk from a home purchase. That's impossible.

It's to understand the risks that may apply to your particular property, gather reliable information and decide what you're comfortable with.

I prefer to be the person who helps you find the right sources, rather than pretending to be the authority on something outside my expertise.

We'll use FEMA and other authoritative resources for flood information, insurance professionals for coverage and pricing, and qualified inspectors or other professionals when a property requires further investigation.

Flooding is something to take seriously when buying in Charleston, but not something you need to fear simply because you're buying near the coast. Ask questions, investigate the property, get the right

information, and make the decision that's right for you.

## 10. How Much Does It Cost to Live in Charleston?

This is a question I hear all the time from people considering a move to Charleston.

And my answer is usually:

**“Compared to where?”**

Someone relocating from an area with high property taxes may be pleasantly surprised by certain ownership costs in South Carolina. Someone moving from another part of the country may find Charleston more expensive than they're accustomed to.

That's why I don't find a single “Charleston cost of living” number particularly helpful.

Your cost of living here depends on where you choose to live within Charleston, what you choose to buy and what you define as a comfortable lifestyle.

### Look Beyond the Purchase Price

When evaluating a home, I encourage buyers to look at the total cost of owning that particular property.

That can include mortgage payment, if financing; property taxes; homeowners and applicable flood insurance; HOA or condominium regime fees; utilities; and property-specific maintenance and ownership costs.

South Carolina also treats qualifying owner-occupied legal residences differently for property-tax purposes than properties that don't qualify, such as many second homes or investment properties. Rather than estimating those taxes yourself, verify the current requirements and property-specific information through the appropriate county resources.

And don't forget some of the costs that come with the move itself.

Moving expenses, furnishing a new home and even expenses you may not have had in your previous state, such as annual personal property taxes on vehicles, can become part of your new budget.

### What About Groceries, Gas and Utilities?

I get these questions, too.

Sometimes a buyer will ask me what I spend on groceries, what dinner out typically costs or what we pay for utilities.

I'm happy to share my own experience when it's helpful, but those numbers are so dependent on household size and lifestyle that I wouldn't use my family's budget to predict yours.

There are cost-of-living comparison tools that can be useful for estimating those everyday expenses when you're comparing Charleston with the city you're leaving.

### Buying Smart: Know Your Comfortable Number

If you're financing your purchase, getting pre-qualified with a lender early can help you understand not only your purchase-price range, but what different properties may mean for your monthly housing costs once

taxes, insurance and other expenses are considered.

If you're paying cash, the question changes slightly:

**What are you comfortable spending each year to own the property?**

Two homes with the same purchase price can have very different ongoing costs.

So rather than asking whether Charleston itself is “expensive” or “affordable,” start with your own numbers.

Once you know what feels comfortable for you, we can explore where that budget takes you in Charleston.

## 11. What Does My Budget Buy in Charleston?

When someone tells me, “My budget is \$X. What can I buy in Charleston?” my answer is usually:

**“That depends. What matters most to you?”**

Your budget can buy very different properties depending on location, square footage, lot size, condition, property type, amenities and proximity to the places you value.

That's why I don't begin by telling you where your budget says you should live.

We begin by comparing.

### See What Your Budget Buys Across Charleston

If we've established the characteristics you're looking for in a home, we can look at what your budget currently buys in several areas.

What does it buy in Mount Pleasant?

What does it buy on James Island or in West Ashley?

What about North Charleston, Hanahan or farther into the greater Charleston area?

The differences can be significant.

Even within one area, the same budget can buy very different homes. As we've already seen with Mount Pleasant, two properties at the same price point may offer completely different combinations of location, condition, lot size, amenities and proximity.

Rather than making assumptions about where you should look, I prefer to let the actual market give us something concrete to compare.

### Every Budget Comes With Choices

Most of us can create a dream-home wish list that exceeds our budget. That's just human nature.

So early in the process, I like to separate two things:

**What do you need?**

And:

**What would you really love to have?**

From there, we can begin identifying the trade-offs you're comfortable making.

Maybe you'd choose less square footage for a particular location.

Maybe you'd travel a little farther for a larger lot.

Maybe you'd prefer new construction over an established location, or an older home in exchange for proximity to the water.

Maybe neighborhood amenities are important enough that you're comfortable with the associated HOA costs.

There really isn't a "right" answer.

Every buyer gets to decide which concessions are worth making and which ones aren't.

## **Location Can Change the Equation Quickly**

Location is often one of the biggest drivers of what a particular budget buys in Charleston.

A buyer comparing homes in Summerville and Mount Pleasant, for example, may find very different housing options at the same price point. The same can be true when comparing properties on Johns Island with Isle of Palms or looking at communities farther inland versus certain coastal locations.

And once you begin adding waterfront or oceanfront property to the search, the equation can change dramatically again.

This is why browsing listings without understanding Charleston geography can sometimes create unrealistic expectations.

The photos may look similar.

The prices may not.

And often, location helps explain why.

## **Buying Smart: Let the Market Help You Prioritize**

You don't have to know all of your compromises before we begin looking.

Sometimes seeing the differences is what helps you decide.

We can compare areas, look at actual homes within your budget and gradually determine which features you're willing to trade and which ones have become non-negotiable.

Your budget isn't simply a limitation.

It's one of the tools we use to turn a very large Charleston home search into one that reflects what matters most to you.

And because the market is always changing, the best answer to "What does my budget buy in Charleston?" will always come from looking at what's actually available when you're ready to begin.

## 12. Is Charleston a Good Place to Buy a Second Home?

I may be a little biased, but I think Charleston is a wonderful place to own a second home.

It's a beautiful coastal destination filled with Lowcountry history and charm, which is one reason so many people consider Charleston for a place to retreat, spend extended time or eventually call home.

But once the dreaming turns into a serious home search, I start with a practical question:

**How do you intend to use the property?**

### Start With Your Plan for the Home

Second-home buyers come to me with very different goals.

Some want a beach house their family can enjoy throughout the year. Others are looking at Kiawah, downtown Charleston or another part of the Lowcountry for extended stays or a future retirement home.

And many would like to enjoy the property themselves while renting it when they're away.

That distinction matters.

If short-term rental income is part of your plan, we want to investigate that before you become emotionally invested in a property.

Short-term rental regulations vary throughout the Charleston area. Municipal rules, zoning, permitting requirements and individual HOA or condominium regime restrictions can all affect how a particular property may be used.

Rather than assuming a home can be rented because you saw similar properties advertised online, we'll investigate the rules that apply to the specific property and direct specialized questions to the appropriate authorities or professionals.

### Be Conservative With Rental Income

If rental income is important to making the numbers work, I encourage buyers to be conservative.

When a property has an established rental history, I would much rather evaluate actual historical numbers than rely solely on projections of what someone believes the property could earn.

Consider vacancy, property-management expenses, taxes, insurance, regime or HOA fees, maintenance and other ownership costs when evaluating the bigger financial picture.

A beautiful projected rental number isn't the same thing as guaranteed income.

And if the purchase only works financially when every projection goes perfectly, that's worth knowing before you buy.

### Buying Smart: Remember Why You're Buying It

There is a financial side to buying a second home, but there can also be a wonderfully personal one.

For many of my clients, this is something they've dreamed about for years.

It's the place they come when they need to slow down. Maybe they put their feet in the sand, sit by the water, spend longer stretches in Charleston or create a place where family and friends can make memories together.

Some owners may also choose to rent their property when they're away, helping offset some of the ownership costs while allowing other people to enjoy it.

To me, a successful second-home purchase isn't defined only by what the property does financially.

It's also about what the property adds to your life.

So yes, dream about the beach house!

Then we'll do the practical work to make sure the property you're considering makes sense for the way you actually want to use it.

Because the best second home isn't just a smart purchase. It's a place you can't wait to come back to.

## 13. How Do I Buy a Home in Charleston From Out of State?

Believe it or not, many of my relocation and second-home clients complete much of the Charleston home-buying process while living somewhere else.

Consultations, home searches, virtual showings, electronic signatures, inspections, lender and attorney communication, and many other parts of the transaction can often be coordinated remotely.

But just because technology makes buying from another state possible doesn't mean I want you buying a house based on beautiful listing photos alone.

**If you can't be here, my job is to help you see what the listing can't show you.**

### What Does a Virtual Showing Look Like?

When a promising property comes on the market and my buyer can't be in Charleston, I'll go see it for them.

Whenever possible, we'll walk through together by FaceTime or another video platform. If schedules don't allow that, I can record video so they can see the property beyond the professional photography.

I want you to see the street.

The neighboring properties.

The backyard.

The condition of the home.

How the rooms actually relate to one another.

And anything else I notice that may not be apparent online.

Sometimes a home looks every bit as wonderful in person as it does in the photographs.

Sometimes it doesn't.

Either way, I'll tell you what I see.

My goal isn't to convince you to love a property. It's to give you the most realistic picture I can so that you can decide what you think of it.

### Do I Recommend Buying Completely Sight Unseen?

If at all possible, I would much rather have you experience Charleston and the property yourself before you close on it.

If you've never been to Charleston, I feel even more strongly about that.

This is one reason I recommend an exploratory visit early in the relocation process. If you've already experienced Charleston, driven the areas you're considering and narrowed your search, handling the eventual purchase remotely can feel much more manageable.

There are circumstances where an entirely remote purchase may be necessary or appropriate. A job or military relocation, for example, may not give someone the luxury of multiple trips to Charleston.

In those situations, communication becomes even more important.

## **Buying Smart: Methodical Doesn't Have to Mean Slow**

Buying from another state can create an interesting challenge.

You don't want to rush into a property simply because you're afraid of losing it.

But you also don't want to spend so long analyzing a home you genuinely want that someone else purchases it while you're still deciding.

I believe you can be both thoughtful and decisive.

If we've already done the work of understanding your budget, priorities, Charleston geography and non-negotiables, then when the right property appears, you're in a much better position to make a timely decision.

From there, we'll work through the appropriate inspections, investigations and other due diligence provided for in your contract.

## **Your Eyes and Ears in Charleston**

Buying a home is a significant decision. Buying one from hundreds of miles away requires another level of communication and trust.

I don't want you to feel pushed toward a particular house.

I want you to know what I see, understand what we're investigating and feel comfortable asking as many questions as you need to ask.

I'll be candid when something concerns me, and just as happy to tell you when a property is even better than the pictures.

Trust isn't something I expect simply because you've chosen me as your Realtor. It's something I want to earn by serving you well throughout the process.

And if I can be your eyes and ears in Charleston when you can't be here yourself, that's exactly what I intend to do.

## 14. When Should I Contact a Realtor Before Moving to Charleston?

Ideally, I like to begin actively working with relocation buyers about three to six months before they expect to move.

That gives us time to approach the process methodically rather than trying to figure everything out at once.

**But if Charleston is on your radar a year or even two years from now, I'm happy to start the conversation much earlier.**

In fact, I have clients I'm staying in touch with right now who are still a year or two away from a possible move.

### You Don't Have to Be Ready to Buy a House

I understand why people hesitate to contact a Realtor early.

It can feel a little like walking into a clothing store and immediately having a salesperson ask, "What can I help you find?"

Sometimes you're not ready for help yet.

You're just looking.

I don't see my role that way. I see it as a service.

If you're simply considering Charleston, we can start with a conversation. I can answer questions, help you understand the different areas and set up a broad property search so you can begin seeing what homes and price points look like here.

If you're a year or two away, that may be all we do for a while.

I can stay in touch, send occasional market information and be available when questions come up. You may also want to plan an exploratory trip to Charleston. We can grab coffee, talk through what you're considering and give you plenty of time to experience the area for yourself.

There is no pressure to turn that conversation into an immediate home search.

### When You're Three to Six Months Away

As your timeline becomes more definite, our planning becomes more specific.

We can start narrowing the areas you're considering, talk more specifically about your budget and priorities, and begin preparing for the financial and logistical pieces of the purchase.

If you're also selling a home in another state, planning ahead becomes even more valuable.

I can help connect you with a Realtor in your current market who can handle the sale on that end and communicate with me as we coordinate your purchase here. If you're trying to time a sale and purchase together, having everyone communicating early can make the process much smoother.

This is also around the time we may begin talking with a lender if you're financing your purchase, so you have a clearer understanding of your buying power before we're seriously looking at homes.

### **What Should You Know Before You Call Me?**

Very little.

If you know your possible timeline, that's a great place to start.

If you know where you'll be working, what you're hoping to spend or some of the things you'd like in a home, even better.

But you don't need to have Charleston figured out before you call me.

That's part of what I'm here to help you do.

### **Buying Smart: Start the Conversation Before the House Hunt**

One of the easiest mistakes to make when you're relocating is spending months scrolling through listings without really understanding the area you're searching.

You certainly can browse Zillow and other real estate sites. Just remember that a listing can show you a beautiful kitchen. It can't necessarily explain how that address fits into the larger Charleston map or into your life.

So if Charleston is something you're seriously considering, even if it's still just a "maybe," reach out.

We can start slowly.

Ask questions. Explore the possibilities. Come visit. Learn the market.

Then, if and when Charleston becomes your next move, you'll already have a much better idea of where to begin.

**You don't have to be ready to buy a house to start a conversation with me.**

## 15. How Do I Choose a Charleston Realtor for a Relocation?

If I were helping a close friend choose a Realtor in a city where I couldn't represent them myself, I wouldn't begin by asking how many houses that person sold last year.

I'd want to know something different:

### **What do their clients say about working with them?**

Sales experience and market knowledge certainly matter. But numbers alone don't tell you how someone communicates, whether they listen, how they handle problems or what it will actually feel like to work with them.

When you're relocating, those things matter.

### **Interview Your Realtor**

You're hiring someone to represent you in a significant financial transaction. It's perfectly reasonable to interview them.

Ask questions.

How well do you know the area I'm considering?

How do you communicate with your clients?

What would your previous clients say about working with you?

Can I read reviews or speak with a past client?

How do you work with buyers who are purchasing from another state?

And then pay attention to the conversation itself.

Are they listening?

Are they asking questions about you?

Are they trying to understand what you need, or spending most of the conversation telling you about themselves?

Sometimes the way someone handles that first conversation tells you quite a bit about what working with them may be like.

### **Look for Someone Who Will Educate You**

If I had to choose one word to describe what a good Realtor should provide a relocation buyer, it would be:

#### **Education.**

When you're moving to a new city, you don't know what you don't know.

Your Realtor should help you understand the market, ask better questions and identify things you may need to investigate before making a decision.

That doesn't mean your Realtor will have every answer.

Real estate touches insurance, lending, inspections, flood risk, zoning, municipal regulations, taxes, legal matters and many other areas that require expertise beyond a Realtor's professional scope.

A good answer sometimes sounds like:

**“I don't know, but I know where we can find out.”**

I would much rather have someone tell me that than confidently give me an answer they aren't qualified to give.

## **Local Knowledge Matters, but So Does Honesty**

Charleston is a large and varied real estate market.

I know some parts of it extremely well. There are other areas where I may need to do additional research.

I'm comfortable telling a client that.

If I don't know the answer, I'll tell you I don't know. Then I'll research it, point you toward an authoritative source or qualified professional, or, when appropriate, connect you with someone who has more expertise in that particular area.

You don't need a Realtor who pretends to know everything.

You need one who takes responsibility for helping you get reliable information.

## **Buying Smart: Choose an Advocate, Not Just a Salesperson**

I've relocated between states three times myself.

Every move has taught me something.

I've learned what it's like to research a place you don't fully understand yet, make decisions from a distance and depend on professionals in another city to help fill in the gaps.

I bring those experiences with me when I work with relocation clients.

I don't view my role as simply finding you a house.

I want to educate you, communicate with you, advocate for you and help you make decisions you feel confident making.

And I think you should expect that from any Realtor you choose.

**Don't be afraid to interview the person who will represent you. Ask good questions, pay attention to how they listen, and look at what their past clients have to say.**

## **16. What Do I Wish I Had Known Before Moving to Charleston?**

I've relocated between states three times now, and I've learned that moving is about much more than buying a house and learning a new city.

When you relocate, you leave behind an incredible amount of familiarity.

You know the roads.

You know which grocery store you like.

You recognize the people who work there, even if you've never learned their names.

You know your routines, your favorite places and the people who make up your everyday life.

Then you move, and suddenly almost everything is new.

I don't think we talk about that part of relocation enough.

### **Give Yourself Time to Put Down Roots**

I sometimes think about relocation like moving a tree.

You uproot it from the place where it has been growing, transport it somewhere new and plant it again.

It doesn't immediately have deep roots in the new soil.

Neither do we.

It takes time to learn the roads, find your favorite grocery store, settle into a new job, meet your neighbors and build friendships. If you're moving with children, they're going through their own version of that transition as they adjust to new schools, activities and friendships.

So if I could sit down for coffee with someone preparing to relocate, I would tell them to give themselves some grace.

You can be excited about where you're going and still miss where you came from.

A friend once encouraged me to give myself space to grieve what I had left behind while also being hopeful and expectant about what was ahead.

I've never forgotten that.

### **Some Things Will Surprise You**

There were certainly practical things I had to adjust to when I moved from the high desert of Albuquerque to coastal South Carolina.

Charleston summers are hot and humid, and the evenings don't cool down the way I was accustomed to out West. Hurricane season was new to me. So were some of the flooding and high-tide events that can accompany coastal weather.

And then there were the wonderful surprises.

I knew Charleston was beautiful before I moved here, but I don't think I understood what it would be like to live inside that beauty every day.

It's the waterways, dolphins and incredible birdlife. It's spotting an egret or great blue heron on an ordinary drive. It's Spanish moss hanging from an old oak tree in a random parking lot while I'm waiting for one of my children at a sports activity.

Those little moments still catch me.

## **You May Not Live Here Exactly the Way You Imagined**

Before I moved here, I probably pictured myself going downtown and to the beach far more often than I actually do now.

The first few years, I did.

Then Charleston became home.

Work, school, sports, errands and everyday life took over just as they do anywhere else.

And that's okay.

Over time, some of my priorities changed. Being relatively close to the beach is still something I enjoy, but the practicality of my everyday routes has become increasingly important to me as our family has grown and our lives have become busier.

That's another reason I encourage relocation buyers to think about the ordinary Tuesday, not only the Charleston vacation they love.

## **Buying Smart: Give Yourself Permission to Be New Here**

You don't have to arrive in Charleston and immediately feel completely settled.

Give yourself time to learn your surroundings.

Find your places.

Meet people.

Build routines.

Explore.

Go back to the beach even after you've lived here long enough to stop thinking of yourself as a tourist.

A house can become yours on closing day.

Making a new city feel like home takes a little longer.

And if I could tell the version of myself who was preparing to move here one final thing, it would simply be this:

**I wish I had known how much Charleston would steal my heart.**

It really has become home for me, and I'm grateful I get to live here every day.

## 17. How Should I Start Planning a Move to Charleston?

If you called me today and said, "We're moving to Charleston," my first response would probably be:

**Congratulations! How exciting. When are you moving?**

Because once I understand your timeline, we can begin working backward from there.

### Start With Three Questions

At the beginning, I really want to know three things:

**When do you expect to move?**

**Do you need to sell your current home before purchasing here?**

**Do you already have an idea of where in the Charleston area you'd like to live?**

If you don't know the answer to that last question, that's completely okay.

In fact, that's useful information.

It tells me that one of our first priorities is helping you understand Charleston well enough to begin narrowing the map.

### If You Have a Home to Sell, Start There Too

If your Charleston purchase depends on selling your current home, that becomes an important part of our timeline.

If you don't already have a Realtor where you live, I can help you find and interview someone who knows your local market and communicates well.

That Realtor can help you determine what may need to be done to prepare your home for the market, discuss pricing and local market conditions, and give us a better idea of how the timing of your sale may affect your purchase in Charleston.

Then we can communicate with one another and work toward making the transition between the two homes as smooth as possible.

### Separate Your Needs From Your Wish List

Next, tell me what you really need in a home.

Three bedrooms?

A home office?

A certain amount of outdoor space?

A particular property type?

A specific budget?

Then tell me everything you'd love to have.

Those are two different lists.

Sometimes buyers unintentionally eliminate a wonderful property because it doesn't have one feature that could easily be changed later.

So we'll identify your true non-negotiables and keep the rest of the wish list in perspective.

The goal isn't to find a house that checks every imaginable box.

It's to recognize which boxes actually matter to you.

## **Then We Start Putting the Pieces Together**

Depending on your timeline, the next steps may include an exploratory visit, narrowing the areas you're considering, connecting with a lender if you're financing, establishing your comfortable buying range and beginning a more focused property search.

If you're coming to Charleston specifically to look for a home, we'll use that time strategically.

If you're visiting primarily for work or another reason, we don't have to cram an entire relocation tour into the trip. We might simply explore an area or look at a few properties while you're here.

The process can move at the pace your circumstances require.

## **Buying Smart: You Don't Have to Have Everything Figured Out**

After reading this guide, I hope you understand Charleston a little better.

But I don't expect you to have your move completely figured out.

You don't need to know exactly where you want to live.

You don't need to have the perfect house identified.

And you certainly don't need to have every question answered.

You just need a place to begin.

Start with your timeline.

Think about the places and priorities that will shape your everyday life.

Come experience Charleston if you can.

And then we'll take it one step at a time.

**Moving to Charleston is a big decision. Planning for it doesn't have to feel overwhelming.**

## **Thinking About Moving to Charleston?**

You don't have to be ready to buy a house to start the conversation. If Charleston is on your radar, I'd be happy to answer your questions and help you begin thinking through what a move could look like.

## **Start a Relocation Conversation**

Sonja Schuman  
Broker Associate | RSPS  
The Cassina Group

Where Smart Home Buying Begins.

# Authoritative Resources & Important Information

- [City of Charleston Board of Architectural Review](#)
- [City of Charleston Residential Parking Permits](#)
- [City of Charleston Flood Information & FAQs](#)
- [Charleston County Legal Residence Information](#)
- [Town of Sullivan's Island](#)
- [City of Isle of Palms](#)
- [Daniel Island Property Owners Association Documents](#)

## Disclaimer

This guide is intended as general real estate and relocation information and is not legal, tax, financial, insurance, engineering, environmental, school, or other specialized professional advice. Regulations, market conditions, flood information, insurance requirements, HOA or regime rules, school information, municipal requirements, and other property-related information can change. Buyers should independently verify information material to their purchasing decisions with the appropriate authoritative source or qualified professional.

Housing is available without regard to race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, familial status, or national origin, and any additional classes protected under applicable state or local law.

Short-term rental regulations and licensing requirements can change. Verify current eligibility and requirements for a specific property with the applicable municipality and any governing association or regime before relying on rental use as part of a purchase decision.