

Moving to Northwest Arkansas? Start Here.

The honest guide to choosing the right town, understanding the one contract term that surprises almost every out-of-state buyer, checking schools for yourself, and planning your move.

FOR BUYERS COMING FROM LITTLE ROCK · DALLAS-FORT WORTH · AUSTIN · AND BEYOND



LOCAL REALTOR® · FORMER EDUCATOR

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My Ozark Heritage · Bentonville, Arkansas



Welcome to Northwest Arkansas.

I'm Gregory Melvin, a buyer's agent with Keller Williams Market Pro Realty in Bentonville. Before real estate, I spent 14 years in education — eight as a special educator and six as an assistant principal and principal. I also own First Homeschool Bookstore in Springdale.

That background shapes how I work. I explain without pressure, I research the questions you haven't thought to ask yet, and I give you the facts so you can make your own call.

This guide is the conversation I'd have with you before your first visit: the town-by-town picture, the contract term that surprises most out-of-state buyers, how to check schools yourself, and a plan for your move.



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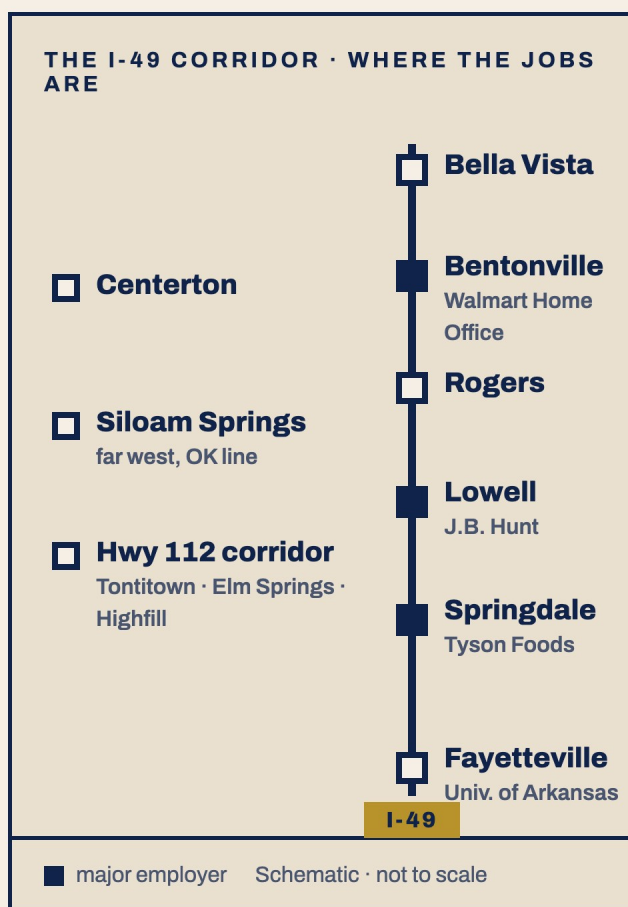


DOWNTOWN BENTONVILLE SQUARE

In NWA, the Town Is the Decision

Most people moving here pick a house and then find out about the town around it. In Northwest Arkansas that's backwards. The four anchor cities and the towns around them sit close together on a map, but they live very differently — different prices, different drives, different school districts, different daily rhythms.

- 1 Walmart's Home Office is in Bentonville. Tyson Foods is headquartered in Springdale. J.B. Hunt is in Lowell. **Where you work should shape where you look before anything else does.**
- 2 **The market has shifted.** In August 2026 the University of Arkansas's CBER director described NWA as "more of a buyer's market than a seller's market" for the first time in many years (Skyline Report, Talk Business & Politics, Aug 21, 2026). That gives you time to compare towns instead of rushing.
- 3 There's one question I get from almost every buyer moving in from out of state: **"Why does the seller want money I can't get back?"** It's called a non-refundable deposit, it's written into the standard Arkansas contract, and it works differently from what most people are used to. Section 5 walks through it.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read Sections 2–4 to narrow your list to two or three towns. Read Section 5 before you ever write an offer. Use Sections 6–8 to plan.

Coming From Little Rock, Dallas or Austin?

Where you're coming from changes what will surprise you here. The prices below come from different sources and measure slightly differently, so treat them as a rough comparison, not an apples-to-apples match.

MEDIAN SALE PRICE · THERE VS. HERE		
Little Rock		\$295,000 · Redfin, 3 mo. ending Aug 2026
Benton County, NWA		\$363,000 · ArkansasONE MLS, Aug 2026
Washington Co., NWA		\$398,450 · ArkansasONE MLS
Dallas–Fort Worth		\$399,000 · Homes.com, Aug 2026
Austin metro		\$421,000 · Unlock MLS, Sep 2026

Little Rock / central Arkansas What changes: expect to pay more for comparable space here. Same state, so your taxes work the same way, and you'll be working with the same statewide contract form. What to plan for: NWA's job centers are spread along I-49, so pick your town around your new commute, not around what felt normal at home.	Dallas–Fort Worth What changes: prices are in the same range as NWA, so the difference isn't the sticker price. It's the carrying cost. The contract: no option period like you're used to. See Section 5.	Austin What changes: the same tax trade-off as DFW applies — lower property tax rates here, a state income tax you didn't have. The contract: same note as DFW. Section 5 is the one to read twice.
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FROM TEXAS: PROPERTY TAX	FROM TEXAS: INCOME TAX
Arkansas 0.541% Texas 1.245% Average effective rate, owner-occupied homes (Construction Coverage analysis of U.S. Census 2024 American Community Survey data). As a rough illustration only, on a \$400,000 home that's about \$2,164 a year at Arkansas's average rate versus about \$4,980 at Texas's. Your actual bill depends on the county, the millage, and the assessment.	Texas has no state income tax. Arkansas does — the top rate is 3.7% for 2026. EY Tax News, June 2026. Whether you come out ahead depends on your income and your home price, so run both numbers with your own tax professional.

Coming from Tulsa or Kansas City? The town-by-town pages and Section 5 apply to you just the same.

Where to Live: Five Places to Start



Every block uses the same shape so you can compare at a glance. Prices are the latest sourced figures; Movoto figures are lower-confidence and best read as a general level, not a precise number.

Bentonville

\$468,590

median · Redfin, Jun–Aug 2026



The Ledger, Bentonville

Homes: older homes and new builds, with smaller lots closer to downtown

Near: Walmart's Home Office, The Ledger, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the downtown square, the trail system

Schools: Bentonville School District (confirm the assigned school for any address — see Section 6)

The honest trade-off: the highest prices of the five, and the closer you get to downtown, the less lot you get for the money

Day-to-day feel: the most walkable core in the region

Rogers

\$441,708

median · Redfin, Jun–Aug 2026



Uptown, Rogers

Homes: established neighborhoods, newer subdivisions, and homes with Beaver Lake access

Near: Pinnacle Hills, the AMP amphitheater, downtown Rogers, Beaver Lake

Schools: Rogers School District for much of the city — district lines don't follow city limits, so check each address

The honest trade-off: homes sold in a median of 20 days, less than half of Bentonville's 42 over the same period (same source), so well-priced homes don't wait long

Day-to-day feel: a revitalized downtown on one side, lake life on the other

Centerton

\$389,000

median · Movoto, Aug 2026



Centerton

Homes: mostly new construction

Near: a short drive west of Bentonville and Walmart's Home Office

Schools: Bentonville School District attendance (verify by address)

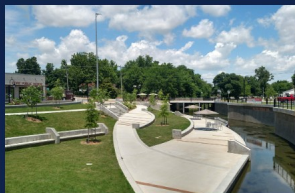
The honest trade-off: newer neighborhoods mean ongoing construction nearby and roads that are still catching up with growth

Day-to-day feel: quieter streets, newer homes, a short drive into Bentonville

Springdale

\$399,700

median · Movoto, Aug 2026



Walter Turnbow Park, downtown Springdale

Homes: the widest range in this guide — starter homes through upscale

Near: Tyson Foods headquarters, the Razorback Greenway, central access to both Benton and Washington counties

Schools: Springdale School District, the largest district in Arkansas

The honest trade-off: a big, varied city — one street can feel very different from the next, so drive the specific street, not just the town

Day-to-day feel: central to everything; you can reach most of the region from here

The Highway 112 corridor

Tontitown · Elm Springs · Highfill

\$345,000

Highfill median, Sep 2026 · only 14 sales (Movoto)



Tontitown

Price: published data is thin here. Highfill's median was \$345,000 in September 2026, but on only 14 sales (Movoto), so treat it as a snapshot, not a trend.

Homes: newer builds, with larger lots in Elm Springs

Near: west of Springdale and Bentonville; growth has been pushing this direction

Schools: the corridor crosses more than one district line — check each address

The honest trade-off: fewer shops and services nearby today, so most errands mean a drive. This is a direction the region is growing, not a guarantee of anything.

Day-to-day feel: more space, more quiet, more driving

THE FIVE AT A GLANCE · MEDIAN PRICE



Bentonville \$468,590 Redfin · 3 mo. to Aug 2026	Rogers \$441,708 Redfin · 3 mo. to Aug 2026	Springdale \$399,700 Movoto · Aug 2026	Centerton \$389,000 Movoto · Aug 2026	Highfill \$345,000 Movoto · Sep 2026 · 14 sales
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NWA'S PAVED TRAIL NETWORK

Quick Takes: Bella Vista, Fayetteville, Siloam Springs

Three more places that belong on many shortlists.

Bella Vista \$395,000 median · Movoto, Sep 2026 WHAT IT IS A large planned community at the northern edge of Benton County, with lakes, golf courses, and an extensive trail network.	Fayetteville \$414,200 median · Movoto, Sep 2026 WHAT IT IS Home to the University of Arkansas, Dickson Street, and Razorback game days; the southern anchor of the region. SCHOOLS Fayetteville School District	Siloam Springs \$324,900 median · Movoto, Aug 2026 WHAT IT IS The western edge of the region, on the Oklahoma line, home to John Brown University and a historic downtown. SCHOOLS Siloam Springs School District
THE HONEST TRADE-OFF Most homes carry a mandatory property owners' association assessment, and the drive into Bentonville and Rogers runs through a busy stretch at commute times. Ask for the current assessment on any home you consider.	THE HONEST TRADE-OFF It's the farthest of the four anchor cities from the Bentonville and Rogers job centers, and home-game weekends change traffic noticeably.	THE HONEST TRADE-OFF One of the longer drives in this guide to the Bentonville and Rogers job centers — worth it for some, a dealbreaker for others.

Choosing "NWA" isn't a decision. Choosing two or three towns is.

The Money You Can't Get Back

The non-refundable deposit — and how to make sure it works for you, not against you.

If you're buying here from out of state, this is the term most likely to stop you mid-offer. Here's what it actually says and how it works.

WHAT IT IS

The standard Arkansas REALTORS® Association residential contract (2026 form) has a paragraph called the Non-Refundable Deposit. It's money the buyer pays directly to the seller to compensate them if the buyer fails to close — for their time, expenses, and the cost of taking the home off the market.

WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT

1 It goes straight to the seller. It isn't held by either brokerage and isn't kept in an escrow or trust account.	2 It comes back to you only if the deal fails exclusively because of the seller, or if the seller can't deliver clear title.	3 If you close, it's credited to you at closing. It's not an extra cost — it's part of your purchase price paid early.
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How it's different from earnest money

The same contract has a separate, optional paragraph for earnest money. Under the inspection section, if you terminate after your inspection, the contract returns your earnest money. The deposit doesn't work that way. The two are separate line items, and a contract can use either, both, or neither.

If you're coming from Texas

You're used to paying an option fee for a set option period, plus earnest money held by a title company. Arkansas's form doesn't have an option period. The deposit is the closest thing, and it carries more risk if you're not careful about timing.

Timing Is the Part That Protects You

The contract lets you choose when the deposit is paid:

Option i Within a set number of days after the contract is signed	Option ii Within three business days after you and the seller agree on repairs following your inspection	Option iii Another arrangement you negotiate
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WHEN YOUR DEPOSIT IS ON THE LINE				
Contract signed	Inspection period	Repairs agreed	Loan, appraisal, final steps	Closing credited to you
Option i	AT RISK FROM SIGNING, INCLUDING THE INSPECTION PERIOD			
Option ii	NOT YET PAID		AT RISK AFTER REPAIRS	

Illustration of the order of events, not a schedule. Your contract sets the actual dates.

Choosing the second option means your money isn't on the line while you're still finding out what the inspection turns up. The amount is negotiable too.

Using FHA, VA, or other government financing?

The contract itself tells buyers to confirm with their lender and an attorney whether a non-refundable deposit is allowed with their loan.

MY TAKE

In my experience, many NWA sellers expect a non-refundable deposit. It's a local norm, not a red flag. What matters is the amount and the timing, and that's something we decide together before your offer goes in.

This page explains a standard form in plain language. It isn't legal advice. Contract forms are updated regularly — always read your actual contract, and talk to your agent or a real estate attorney about your situation.

Schools: How to Check Any Address Yourself

I spent 14 years in education — as a special educator, then as an assistant principal and principal — so this is the question I'm most comfortable answering. And the most useful thing I can tell you is how to find the facts yourself, from the official sources.

1

Find the assigned school for the specific address

School district lines don't follow city limits. Two homes a few streets apart can be assigned to different schools or even different districts. Check the district's attendance-zone lookup, or call the district office, for every address you're seriously considering.

2

Look up the state's report card

The Arkansas Department of Education publishes a report card for every public school and, starting in 2025, an A–F letter grade for every district. The 2025–26 district grades were released September 17, 2026. Search any school or district at myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov.

3

Visit, call, and ask

Numbers tell part of the story. A campus visit and a conversation with the front office tell you the rest — programs, schedules, transportation, and how enrollment works for a family arriving mid-year.

OTHER OPTIONS TO KNOW ABOUT

Public charter schools: publicly funded and tuition-free, with their own enrollment processes. The Arkansas Department of Education keeps the current list.	Private schools: faith-based, classical, and independent options across the region. Tuition and enrollment vary by school.
Homeschool: Arkansas has its own notice requirements for homeschooling families. Check the Arkansas Department of Education for current rules.	Education Freedom Accounts: the Arkansas LEARNS Act created state-funded accounts that eligible families can use for approved education expenses. Check the official program site for current eligibility.

Districts serving the communities in this guide include Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale, Fayetteville, and Siloam Springs, plus several smaller districts across the region.

WHAT I'LL DO FOR YOU

For any home you're considering, I'll confirm the assigned schools, look up the bus schedule for that address, and point you to the official report cards. I won't rank schools or tell you which one to choose — that's your call, and you'll have the facts to make it.

Program details, boundaries, and eligibility change. Always verify with the school, district, or official program before making a decision.

What Nobody Tells You About Living Here

I-49 at rush hour is a real commute

The whole region runs along one north-south interstate. On a map, Fayetteville to Bentonville looks like an easy drive. At 8 a.m. on a Tuesday, it's a different trip than at noon on the Saturday you visited. Before you choose a town, drive your actual commute at the actual time you'll be driving it — or ask me to.

The towns aren't interchangeable

From a thousand miles away, Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale, and Fayetteville look like neighborhoods of the same city. They're not. Each has its own downtown, school district, price level, and pace. Choosing "NWA" isn't a decision. Choosing two or three towns is.

Bentonville isn't the only answer

It's the name everyone knows, and it's the most expensive of the five places in Section 3. Plenty of buyers find a better fit a few minutes away, with more house or a shorter drive.

The contract will surprise you

The non-refundable deposit (Section 5) catches nearly every out-of-state buyer off guard. Knowing it's coming before your offer changes everything.

THE MISTAKES I SEE MOST OFTEN

- 1 Choosing a town from a map or a single weekend visit
- 2 Testing the commute on a weekend instead of a weekday morning
- 3 Assuming the city name tells you the school district
- 4 Waiting until you've moved to get pre-approved — good homes in popular areas still move fast
- 5 Trusting listing photos over a real walkthrough of the street, the yard, and what's next door
- 6 Missing ongoing costs like a property owners' association assessment



I-49 THROUGH ROGERS

Your Move, Step by Step

90+ DAYS OUT

- ☐ Get pre-approved with a lender so you know your real budget across every town
- ☐ Narrow to two or three towns based on your job location, commute, and budget
- ☐ Start a targeted home search for just those towns

60 DAYS OUT

- ☐ Review narrated video walkthroughs of homes on your shortlist before you travel
- ☐ Check assigned schools for specific addresses using Section 6
- ☐ Drive (or have me drive) your commute at rush hour
- ☐ Look into utilities, internet providers, and any property owners' association rules

30 DAYS OUT

- ☐ Plan one focused visit: your top towns and a short list of homes that already passed the video test
- ☐ Get offer-ready: confirm your pre-approval is current and decide your deposit approach (Section 5)
- ☐ Book movers early

MOVING WEEK AND AFTER

- ☐ Set up utilities, internet, and mail forwarding before the truck arrives
- ☐ Update your address with the post office, your bank, employer, insurance, and the state for your license and vehicle
- ☐ Find your first trail, coffee shop, and Saturday spot — that's when it starts to feel like home

This is a framework, not a rulebook. Your timeline will flex around your job start date and what the market is doing.

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What It Looks Like Done Right

One family I worked with relocated from central Arkansas to Pea Ridge. They were coordinating a move, a new area, and more than one property at once.

1 A move	2 A new area	3 More than one property
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WHAT THEY SAID AFTERWARD

"No pressure, but when it was time to drive he was gassed up and ready."

— Pea Ridge buyer, relocated from central Arkansas

That's how I try to work with every relocating buyer. I don't push. I research the questions you haven't thought to ask yet, I keep the communication clear when there are several homes in play, and when it's time to move quickly, I'm ready.

Ready for the Next Step?

If you've read this far, you already know more about moving to Northwest Arkansas than most people do when they arrive.



When you're ready for help with the next step, here's what working with me looks like:

Narrated video walkthroughs, so you can evaluate homes honestly before you travel	Education navigation — assigned schools, bus schedules for a specific address, and program details
A CMA plus my own read on value for every home you seriously consider	Offer strategy, including how to handle the non-refundable deposit
Coordination with your lender, title company, inspector, and the listing agent	A vetted list of local inspectors, lenders, and title companies
Check-ins and market updates after you close	There's no pressure and no sales pitch. Reach out whenever it's useful — a question, a second opinion on a town, or a full search.

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