A GUIDE FOR ACADIANA BUYERS & SELLERS

Carrie Billeaud

The Acadiana Home Buyer's & Seller's Guide

Six things Louisiana does differently — flood zones, the homestead exemption, notary closings, zero-down USDA loans, seller disclosures, and how the towns around Lafayette compare — compiled into one guide, with sources.

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EXP REALTY · LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA

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About This Guide

This guide compiles publicly available information in plain language for people buying or selling a home in the Acadiana area. **It is not legal, tax, lending, or insurance advice**, and it is not a substitute for guidance from a licensed attorney, notary, lender, insurance agent, or tax professional.

Laws, flood maps, program rules, and market figures change over time. Verify anything that matters to your decision with the relevant licensed professional or public agency before you rely on it. Facts throughout this guide are marked with their source in small type; full source detail is available from Carrie on request.

Sourced 2026 — verify current rules before relying on any figure.

Prepared for clients and friends of Carrie Billeaud, REALTOR®, eXp Realty — Lafayette, Louisiana.

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What's Inside

01 Flood Zones & Flood Insurance in Lafayette Parish

02 The Louisiana Homestead Exemption

03 How Closing Works in Louisiana (the Act of Sale)

04 Zero-Down USDA Loans Around Acadiana

05 What Louisiana Sellers Must Disclose (and When)

06 Which Acadiana Town Fits You? — a Comparison

Work With Carrie

01
Flood Zones & Flood Insurance in Lafayette Parish

Before you fall in love with a house, find out what flood zone it's in — it affects whether flood insurance is required, what it costs, and what your real risk looks like. FEMA defines a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) as an area with at least a 1% annual chance of flooding — the "base flood" or "100-year flood." *Source: FEMA*

Zone A HIGH RISK — at least a 1% annual chance of flooding. Flood insurance is mandatory with a federally backed mortgage. *Source: FloodSmart.gov*

Zone AE HIGH RISK — same 1% annual chance, with a mapped base flood elevation; same mandatory-insurance rule for federally backed mortgages. *Source: FloodSmart.gov*

Zone X (shaded) MODERATE — usually the area between the 100-year and 500-year flood limits. *Source: FloodSmart.gov*

Zone X (unshaded) MINIMAL — outside the SFHA and above the 0.2%-annual-chance (500-year) flood level. *Source: FEMA*

> **"Low risk" isn't "no risk"**
>
> Zone X sits outside the SFHA, but low flood risk does not mean zero flood risk. Nationally, more than 1 in 3 NFIP flood insurance claims come from properties in moderate- to low-risk zones. *Source: FloodSmart.gov; Neptune Flood*
>
> The August 2016 Louisiana flood — a National Weather Service–characterized less-than-1-in-1,000-year rainfall event — damaged roughly 146,000 homes statewide, and most affected homeowners lacked flood insurance. *Source: NWS/NOAA data, via Wikipedia*

When it's required, and how to check an address

Flood insurance is mandatory for homes in high-risk zones (A and AE) with a mortgage from a federally regulated or government-backed lender. *Source: FEMA; Louisiana Dept. of Insurance* Outside those zones it's optional but worth pricing out — confirm the requirement for your loan with your lender. Flood zone lines can split a single street, so check the specific address on FEMA's Flood Map Service Center (msc.fema.gov), the LSU AgCenter FloodMaps portal, or Lafayette Consolidated Government's flood maps page.

What it costs

FEMA fully implemented Risk Rating 2.0 as of April 1, 2023, pricing a property by distance to water, flood frequency, flood type, elevation, and rebuild cost rather than zone alone. About 80% of Louisiana NFIP policyholders saw premiums increase under the new model. *Source: FEMA; Chabert Insurance*

$350–$743
Typical Lafayette-area annual premium

~$569
Zone X Louisiana average / year

~$850–$1,400
Zone AE Louisiana average / year

30 days
Standard NFIP waiting period before coverage begins

Ways to lower the cost *(confirm with a professional)*

Private flood insurance is often 20–40% cheaper than NFIP for homes in Zone X or a lower-risk part of Zone AE with good elevation, and an elevation certificate can adjust NFIP premiums downward. *Source: Chabert Insurance* Ask a licensed flood insurance agent whether either applies to a specific property. Because NFIP carries a 30-day waiting period, arrange coverage well before closing — not the week of.

02
The Louisiana Homestead Exemption

The homestead exemption is one of the simplest, most valuable things a new Lafayette Parish homeowner can file for — and one of the easiest to forget. It exempts the first $7,500 of a home's assessed value — equivalent to $75,000 of market value — from property taxation, for owner-occupied primary residences. *Source: Lafayette Parish Assessor* It's governed by Louisiana Constitution Article VII, Section 20. Louisiana residential property is assessed at 10% of fair market value, which is why $75,000 of market value equals $7,500 of assessed value. *Source: Louisiana Legislature; Louisiana Law Help*

$75,000	$7,500	Dec 31
Market value exempted from property tax	Assessed value exempted (10% assessment ratio)	Filing deadline for the year you acquire

Actual dollar savings depend on your specific millage rate — the Lafayette Parish Assessor's online estimator can show your exact figure. *Source: Lafayette Parish Assessor*

Who qualifies — Owner-occupied as your primary residence as of January 1 of the tax year; only one exemption is allowed per person or household. *Source: Louisiana Legislature*

What to bring — Proof of ownership (deed or act of sale) and a valid Louisiana driver's license or state ID, taken to the assessor's office. *Source: Louisiana Law Help*

The deadline — File by December 31 of the year you acquire the property to get the exemption for that tax year. Miss it and you'll likely wait a year.

Where to go — Lafayette Parish Assessor's office, 213 West Vermilion Street, Lafayette, LA 70501 · (337) 291-7080.

> **It's permanent — mostly**
>
> Once filed, the exemption does not require annual reapplication as long as you continue to own and occupy the home. Some parishes ask for periodic occupancy confirmation — confirm current Lafayette Parish practice with the assessor's office directly. The exemption applies to parish and state ad valorem taxes but not municipal (city) taxes, except in specific circumstances such as certain school taxes. *Source: Lafayette Parish Assessor; Louisiana Legislature*

Extra exemptions for veterans, seniors & disabled homeowners

Disabled veterans, 50–69% — an additional $2,500 of assessed value exemption on top of the standard exemption.

Disabled veterans, 70–99% — an additional $4,500 of assessed value exemption.

Disabled veterans, 100% — exempt from all ad valorem taxation except certain municipal assessments.
Source: LA Dept. of Veterans Affairs

Seniors 65+ & permanently disabled — may apply for a Special Assessment Level "freeze" that locks assessed value if income requirements are met; Lafayette Parish sets the threshold at $100,000 or less AGI.
Source: Lafayette Parish Assessor

> **The freeze isn't a tax-rate freeze *(confirm with a professional)***
>
> The senior/disability freeze locks your assessed value, not the millage rate — your bill can still rise if taxing bodies raise their millage. *Source: Jefferson Parish Assessor* Income thresholds change year to year, so confirm the current figure with the Lafayette Parish Assessor before applying.

03
How Closing Works in Louisiana (the Act of Sale)

If you've bought a home anywhere else in the U.S., Louisiana's closing process will feel unfamiliar. Louisiana is the only U.S. state that operates under a civil law system, derived from the Napoleonic Code and French and Spanish colonial law, rather than English common law. *Source: Quill Title & Closing* Instead of an escrow-held closing, property transfers happen through an **act of sale** — a formal, notarized document executed before a notary public and two witnesses, signed by each party, each witness, and the notary, under Civil Code Article 1833. *Source: Justia; NOLA Title Authority*

Either an attorney-notary or a non-attorney notary can conduct the act of sale — but for title insurance purposes, an attorney must still examine the title and issue a title opinion even when a non-attorney notary handles the signing. *Source: Quill Title & Closing*

From offer to act of sale: the general timeline (30–60 days)

1. Purchase agreement signed — REALTOR® members statewide typically use the Louisiana Association of REALTORS standard residential purchase agreement.

2. Earnest money deposited — typically within 24 hours of contract ratification.

3. Attorney title examination — typically 14–30 days after the purchase agreement; surfaces liens or ownership issues before closing.

4. Act of sale executed — buyer, seller, two witnesses and the notary sign, transferring ownership under Article 1833.

5. Act of sale recorded — the notary records with the parish Clerk of Court within 15 days outside Orleans Parish, or 48 hours inside Orleans Parish.

6. Transfer is final — once recorded, the transfer is effective against third parties.

Source: Louisiana Association of REALTORS; Quill Title & Closing; Louisiana Legislature

> **Earnest money works differently here**
>
> Under Louisiana Civil Code Article 2624, if a seller recedes (backs out) without a contractual cause, the seller must return the buyer's earnest money *plus an equal amount* — the "double-return" rule. *Source: Quill Title & Closing* Ask Carrie to walk through your specific purchase agreement's terms, and confirm anything contract-specific with your closing attorney or notary.

Buyer closing costs — typically 2%–5% of the purchase price. *Source: Southern Title*

Seller closing costs — average around 3.15% of the purchase price. *Source: Clever Real Estate*

Title insurance — not required for buyers but highly recommended; lenders always require a mortgagee policy. *Source: Crescent Title*

Recording is local — Louisiana has 64 parishes, each with its own Clerk of Court, fees, and turnaround times.

> **Married buyers: community property matters *(confirm with a professional)***
>
> Louisiana presumes property owned by a married person is community property, with exceptions for gifts, inheritances, and property acquired before marriage; both spouses generally must concur in the sale, mortgage, or lease of community real estate. *Source: Louisiana Law Help* How you hold title affects the paperwork from day one — raise it with your closing attorney or notary early. This is general information, not legal advice for your situation.

04
Zero-Down USDA Loans Around Acadiana

If you're house-hunting near Youngsville, Scott, Maurice, or Carencro, a USDA loan can mean buying with no down payment at all — but eligibility is tied to the exact address, not the town name. The USDA Section 502 Guaranteed Loan Program provides 100% financing for eligible rural homebuyers; USDA gives participating lenders a 90% loan note guarantee, the loans are 30-year fixed-rate, and reasonable closing costs can sometimes be financed in. *Source: USDA Rural Development*

$0	115%	$119,850	$158,250
Down payment required	Max household income vs. area median	2026 income limit, 1–4 person household	2026 income limit, 5–8+ person household

For context, Lafayette Parish's median household income is $67,451 (2020–2024 data). *Source: U.S. Census Bureau* As of 2026, published USDA income limits allow households of 1–4 up to $119,850 and 5–8+ up to $158,250. *Source: Neighbors Bank* The **Guaranteed** program doesn't apply a fixed area loan limit or maximum sale price — a lender qualifies you against income limits and standard debt-to-income underwriting instead.

Where it applies around Youngsville, Scott, Maurice & Carencro

USDA eligibility is address-specific. Roughly 42.3% of Lafayette Parish is ineligible for traditional USDA loans, and core Lafayette city addresses generally don't qualify. *Source: USDAProperties.com*

Youngsville OFTEN ELIGIBLE — higher eligibility likelihood per USDA property databases; address-specific verification still required.

Scott OFTEN ELIGIBLE — also flagged with higher eligibility likelihood in Lafayette Parish USDA data.

Maurice 100% ELIGIBLE PARISH — Vermilion Parish carries no geographic USDA restrictions, per official eligibility data. *Source: USDAProperties.com*

Carencro OFTEN ELIGIBLE — named among the surrounding areas commonly eligible outside Lafayette's ineligible core.

> **Always verify the exact address *(confirm per address)***
>
> Property eligibility must be checked address-by-address on USDA's official eligibility map, not assumed from a town name. *Source: USDA eligibility map* USDA updated rural-area maps based on 2020 Census data, so a fast-growing edge of Youngsville or Scott may have shifted. Some eligibility above is inferred from property-listing data (medium confidence) — ask Carrie or a lender to check the current map.

Credit — no federal minimum score, but many lenders look for 620+.

Debt-to-income — 29%/41% standard for automatic approval; 32%/44% maximum allowed.

Occupancy — owner-occupied primary residence only; no investment or rental use.

Property types — detached, attached, condo, PUD, modular, and qualifying manufactured homes.

Source: USDA Rural Development; Neighbors Bank. A separate USDA Direct program (not covered here) uses a published area loan limit.

05
What Louisiana Sellers Must Disclose (and When)

Before you sign a listing agreement, it helps to know exactly what Louisiana law requires you to tell a buyer — and when. Louisiana sellers of residential property with 1–4 units must complete and deliver a Property Disclosure Document, as mandated by LSA-R.S. 9:3196–3200. *Source: La. R.S. 9:3196, via Justia* The form is not a warranty and is not part of any contract; the current official version is prescribed by the Louisiana Real Estate Commission. Real estate licensees cannot fill it out for you — the representations are the seller's, not the agent's. *Source: LREC*

> **Timing gives the buyer an out if you're late**
>
> The disclosure must be delivered no later than the time a buyer makes an offer. *Source: srossie.com* If it's delivered after the offer, the buyer may terminate or withdraw for up to 72 hours after receiving it — without penalty, with a full return of any deposit or earnest money.

A “known defect” is a condition actually known to the seller that (a) substantially hurts value, (b) significantly impairs future occupants' health or safety, or (c) if left unaddressed would significantly shorten the property's expected normal life. *Source: Justia* Since January 1, 2018, the form allows only YES or NK (No Knowledge) on each item — the old NO option was removed to stop blanket “no defects” answers. *Source: Steeg Law* Complete it in good faith as of the date you sign, and promptly correct it if something changes before closing.

What the form asks about

Structure & systems — structures and additions, roof age, foundation repairs, plumbing, gas, sewerage, electrical, HVAC, and appliances.

Pests & hazards — termites and wood-destroying insects, lead-based paint (required for pre-1978 homes), and methamphetamine labs.

History & land — land and servitudes, property damage history, and flood history and flood insurance.

Legal & community — zoning and restrictive covenants, plus HOA, COA, or POA information.

If your property has flood history, disclose known flood claims and provide flood insurance declarations, elevation certificates, and FEMA documentation if you have them. For homes built before 1978, provide the EPA/HUD lead-based paint pamphlet and complete the lead-based paint addendum.

Source: srossie.com; Property Disclosure Document

> **You can't skip it by selling "as-is" *(confirm with a professional)***
>
> An "as-is" clause doesn't erase the requirement. Willful misrepresentation or fraud on the form can still expose a seller to fraud and redhibition claims — Louisiana's doctrine letting a buyer pursue latent defects that existed at sale, potentially resulting in rescission, price reduction, recovery of expenses, and attorney's fees. *Source: srossie.com* Sellers aren't automatically liable for good-faith errors based on their best information, knowledge, and belief. Some transfers are exempt (court-ordered, post-foreclosure, certain fiduciary, never-occupied new construction, between co-owners or to a spouse/blood relative, and more) — confirm exemption with a real estate attorney before assuming.

06
Which Acadiana Town Fits You? — a Comparison

Six Acadiana towns, six different price points. These figures aren't all the same measure — some are median closed-sale prices, others are Zillow's estimated average value, and one is a median asking (listing) price; each row is labeled with its measure and source. For reference, Lafayette itself has a median sale price of $240,606 (Redfin, May–June 2026), down 2.7% year-over-year.

Home price measure, growth trend, and school district by Acadiana town, as sourced and dated in each row.

TOWN	PRICE (MEASURE · SOURCE · AS OF)	TREND	SCHOOL DISTRICT
Youngsville	$314,812 — median sale price (Redfin, Jun 2026)	Population up 300% over three decades (KATC)	Lafayette Parish School System
Broussard	$282,154 — average value, Zillow Zestimate (mid-2026)	Up 3.8% over past year (Zillow)	Lafayette Parish School System
Milton	$313,500 — median listing price (Realtor.com, mid-2026)	Small, established community, 2,590 residents (NeighborhoodScout)	Lafayette Parish School System
Scott	$247,084 — median sale price (Redfin, May 2026)	Up 5.5% year-over-year (Redfin)	Lafayette Parish School System
Maurice	$252,357 — average value, Zillow Zestimate (mid-2026)	Up 3.0% year-over-year (Zillow)	Vermilion Parish School Board; zoning near the parish line can vary by address
Carencro	$222,455 — median sale price (Redfin, May 2026)	Up 6.8% year-over-year (Redfin)	Lafayette Parish School System

Broussard and Maurice figures are Zillow's estimated average value, not a median closed-sale price; Milton's is a median listing (asking) price. Five of the six are in the Lafayette Parish School System, which operates 44 school sites; Maurice sits in Vermilion Parish. School zoning can change — confirm your specific address with LPSS or VPSB directly.

If one thing matters most

Lowest price point — Carencro has the lowest median in this group at $222,455, up 6.8% year-over-year; Scott is close behind at $247,084. *Source: Redfin*

Growth & new construction — Youngsville's population has grown 300% over three decades, and its Sports Complex draws roughly 1 million visitors a year. *Source: KATC*

Dining & shopping close by — Broussard features local Cajun cuisine restaurants and shopping centers, with a home value up 3.8% over the past year. *Source: Zillow*

Small & established — Milton is a community of 2,590 residents, mostly owner-occupied single-family homes. *Source: NeighborhoodScout*

> ### Draw your own conclusions on schools & safety
>
> For school ratings and crime data, review official sources yourself — LPSS, VPSB, and NeighborhoodScout — and draw your own conclusions. Exact commute times weren't available from a sourced dataset for this edition; confirm with Carrie.

WORK WITH CARRIE

Ready to make a move in Acadiana?

Carrie Billeaud is a REALTOR® with eXp Realty serving Lafayette and the greater Acadiana communities. Whether you're buying your first home, relocating from an escrow state, or preparing to list, she walks each step personally: pulling flood zones and USDA eligibility before you tour, explaining the act-of-sale process so nothing at the notary's table is a surprise, and reviewing the Property Disclosure Document line by line before it reaches a buyer.

Service areas: Lafayette · Youngsville · Broussard · Carencro · Scott · Maurice · Milton

From pre-approval and offers through closing and your after-closing homestead exemption filing, you'll get straight answers and a clear plan — built for first-time buyers, anyone relocating to Acadiana, and sellers who want their home in front of the right buyers.

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Buyer-agent compensation depends on the listing, the offer terms, and your buyer-agency agreement; Carrie will walk through exactly what applies before you tour homes. This guide is informational only and is not legal, tax, lending, or insurance advice — verify current details for your specific situation with the relevant licensed professional or public agency before making a decision.