JUSTIN HORVATH
REAL ESTATE

FREE GUIDE

What Your Money Buys in the Upper Valley

Setting a budget for a home in the upper Wenatchee Valley: what drives prices here, what the same money buys in each town, and the costs a listing won't show you.

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Start here: the same price can buy two very different homes

People ask me what their budget buys, and the honest answer is: it depends on a handful of things that matter more here than in most places. Two homes at the same price can be a newer house on a quarter acre with city water, or an older cabin on five acres with a well, a septic system and a private road to plow.

Neither is better. They're different ways of living, with different costs after you move in. This guide walks through what moves the price, how the six towns compare, and what to budget beyond the purchase price.

I keep dollar figures out of this guide on purpose, because they change every quarter. The current numbers are in MARKET, which I update quarterly. Message me the word and I'll send it.

What moves the price here

The same things move a price whether you're buying or selling: walk-to-town, water frontage and a real view, usable land, year-round access, a well and septic with clean records, a permitted history, a house built for year-round living, and whether it can be insured. VALUE walks through each one in the order I weigh them. Ten minutes' drive out of town, the same money buys noticeably more house or more land. Two more matter most from the buyer's side:

- **City or county.** Inside Leavenworth or Cashmere you get city water and sewer and city rules. Outside, it's usually a well and septic, more land, and county rules. The county side tends to trade land and privacy for more to maintain yourself.

- **A short-term rental permit? Don't pay for it.** County rental permits no longer transfer when a house sells, so a seller's permit and booking history shouldn't be in the price you pay. STR has the details.

Same money, different towns

How the six places compare, based on what's actually sold over the last couple of years:

Town	How the same budget tends to go
Cashmere	Goes the furthest. The lowest typical price and the lowest price per square foot of the six, in a full-time-resident town with less snow and a school district people move for.
Peshastin and Dryden	Bigger homes on more land. Per square foot, second only to Cashmere. Only a handful sell each year, so any one sale swings the picture.
Plain	Smaller cabins, so lower total prices than Leavenworth, but among the highest per square foot. Homes here take the longest to sell, which often means room to negotiate.
Leavenworth	The highest typical price. In town you pay for walkability; just outside you pay for views and the river. The widest range in the valley.
Lake Wenatchee	In the middle on typical price, and it swings year to year with a few waterfront sales. Homes here tend to sell quickly.

Within each town the spread is wide. A small condo near Front Street and a riverfront house two miles out are both "Leavenworth." That's why I'd rather look at your list of must-haves than a single budget number.

The costs that don't show on the listing

The monthly cost of a mountain home is more than the mortgage, taxes and insurance. What I tell buyers to budget for:

- **Insurance, first.** Wildfire risk means some homes are harder to insure than their neighbors. Get a real quote during your inspection period, not after.
- **Snow removal.** On a private road or a long driveway, someone has to plow. Either a road agreement that funds it, a contractor, or your own equipment.
- **Road dues.** Private roads usually have a maintenance agreement or an association with yearly dues. Some subdivisions have an HOA even out in the county.
- **Septic.** Pumping every 2 to 5+ years, depending on how much the house is used. A septic system is inexpensive to own.
- **The well.** Eventually a pump or pressure tank needs replacing. Like septic, a well is inexpensive to own.

- **Heat.** Many cabins run on propane or wood as well as electric. The good news: Chelan County PUD's power is among the cheapest in the country, so heat pumps and electric heat are easy math.
- **Condo dues** if you're buying in town, which can be a meaningful monthly number.
- **HOA dues,** if there's an association. Many HOAs cover road maintenance or a shared water system, which replaces those costs above.
- **Irrigation water.** If the property comes with irrigation water, ask what the yearly dues and fees are.

None of these are reasons not to buy. They're reasons to run the real monthly number before you decide what price you're comfortable with. I'll help you put one together for any house you're serious about.

Financing a mountain property

A few things work differently on a loan up here than in a city:

- **Use a lender who knows rural property.** Wells, septic, private roads and acreage all come up in underwriting, and a local lender has seen them before. The three I trust are on my site's financing page.
- **Inspections.** Plan on a home inspection, which typically runs $800 to $1,000 here. On a home with a well, I also order a water test as standard during the inspection period, and some lenders want to see it. The seller arranges the septic inspection and provides the report.
- **Second home or investment, be honest about which.** Lenders price a second home and a rental differently, and the rental usually needs a bigger down payment and a higher rate. If you plan to rent it out most of the time, it's an investment property.

Get pre-approved before we start touring. It tells you your real number, and sellers here take an offer more seriously with it.

Where the numbers live, and how I help

This guide stays the same year to year. The numbers don't: what's selling, for how much, how fast, and how many homes are on the market in each town. Those are in MARKET, which I refresh every quarter from the MLS.

When you're ready, tell me your must-haves and your comfortable monthly number, not just a price. I'll show you what that actually buys in each town, what's sold recently that's similar, and what it'll cost to own. It saves a lot of weekends looking at the wrong houses.

If you're still deciding where to buy, BUY covers the six towns and what life is like in each, and CHECKLIST walks through wells, septic, roads and insurance on a mountain property. Message me any of those words and I'll send it.

Text or call (509) 652-2023, or email hello@justinhorvath.com.

Sources: NWMLS sold data, areas 963 and 972, October 2024 through September 2026, for the town comparisons.

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General information, not legal or tax advice. Rules and counts change; confirm the details for a specific property before you rely on them.