

Moving
Blueprint

A week-by-week moving companion from eight weeks before closing through your first week in the home: Michigan utilities, movers, mail, schools, pets, and the safety tasks most buyers forget until they need them.

8 Weeks Out 6 Weeks Out 4 Weeks Out 2 Weeks Out 1 Week Out Closing Day First 48 Hours First Week

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Real Estate One · Plymouth, Michigan
July 2026
Free
Always
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Introduction

Moving Starts Before
Closing Day

Closing day is not the start of your move. It is the midpoint. The decisions you make eight weeks out, which mover to hire, when to transfer utilities, how to sequence your current home sale, determine whether move-in week feels organized or chaotic.

This Blueprint is built for first-time buyers arriving from an apartment, move-up buyers coordinating a sale and purchase, downsizers reducing a household built over decades, and relocation clients arriving from out of state. The timeline chapters walk you week by week from eight weeks before closing through your first week in the home. The reference chapters cover the tasks that cut across every buyer type: movers, utilities, mail, schools, pets, and safety.

Southeast Michigan moves have specific wrinkles. Electric service may be DTE Energy or Consumers Energy depending on your address, not your ZIP code. Water and sewer are typically municipal. Internet lead times in suburban Wayne, Oakland, and Washtenaw counties can stretch two to three weeks in peak summer season. Michigan's 30-day rule for driver's license and vehicle registration catches relocating buyers who assume they have months. This Blueprint covers all of it.

How to Use This Blueprint

Print the consolidated checklist at the end and keep it on your refrigerator. Read the timeline chapters (1 to 8) in sequence as you approach closing. Use the reference chapters (9 to 18) when you reach the specific task, before you call movers, before you schedule utility transfers, before you visit the Secretary of State.

If you are relocating from out of state, pair this Blueprint with the Relocation Blueprint at heartstohomesmi.com/blueprint-library for the pre-arrival research phase.

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Chapter 1

8 Weeks Before *Closing*

Eight weeks out is planning mode. Nothing is urgent yet, which is exactly why this is the right time to make the decisions that become urgent later.

Confirm Your Closing Timeline

Verify your estimated closing date with your agent, lender, and title company. If you are selling a current home, confirm whether your closings are structured as same-day, staggered (sell first, buy second), or bridge-financed. Your moving plan depends entirely on this sequence. A same-day close on both properties requires a mover who can load in the morning and deliver to the new address after keys are released, typically after 2:00 PM on a Michigan closing day.

Decide: Movers or DIY

Read Chapter 9 now and make the hire-versus-DIY decision while you still have time to get quotes. Licensed movers in Southeast Michigan book out four to six weeks in peak season (May through September). Waiting until two weeks before closing to call three companies is how buyers end up with the only truck available on their date, not the best one.

Start Decluttering

Every box you do not pack is money you do not spend on moving. Begin room by room: donate, sell, or discard items you will not need in the new home. Downsizers should start this process earlier, see the Downsizing Blueprint for estate sale and consignment sequencing. First-time buyers moving from apartments have less volume but should still purge before packing.

8 Weeks Before Closing

- Confirm closing date and possession terms with agent
- Decide hire movers vs. DIY; request three in-home quotes
- Begin decluttering; identify utility provider (DTE or Consumers)
- Research school enrollment; create moving budget

Pro Tip: Move-Up Buyers

If you are selling and buying simultaneously, ask your agent about post-closing occupancy agreements early. If your sale closes before your purchase, you may need three to fourteen days of temporary housing. If your purchase closes first, you may need storage for furniture from the home you have not yet sold. Knowing which scenario applies at eight weeks out prevents expensive last-minute storage rentals.

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Chapter 2

6 Weeks Before *Closing*

Six weeks out, book your mover and start the administrative tasks that have lead times, utilities, internet, and school enrollment paperwork.

Book Your Mover

If you are hiring movers, confirm your booking in writing with a signed estimate. Verify the company is licensed with the Michigan Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division (interstate movers need FMCSA DOT numbers; intrastate Michigan movers should carry proper insurance and be established local operators). Never pay a large deposit to a company you found only through a generic online lead form.

Begin Packing Non-Essentials

Start with rooms you use least: guest bedrooms, seasonal decor, books, garage items not needed daily. Label every box with room destination and a one-line contents summary. Color-coded tape by room saves hours on delivery day. Pack a "do not pack" closet in your current home for items you need through closing week.

Notify Key Parties

Inform your employer of your upcoming address change if relocating. Notify your children's current school that you will be transferring records. Contact your auto insurance carrier for a Michigan policy quote if relocating from out of state. Michigan no-fault insurance affects your vehicle registration budget.

6 Weeks Before Closing

- Confirm mover booking in writing with signed estimate
- Begin packing non-essential rooms; label boxes by destination
- Research internet providers; contact school district registrar

- Get Michigan auto insurance quotes if relocating; arrange storage if needed

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Chapter 3

4 Weeks Before Closing

Four weeks out, the move becomes real. Utility transfers, mail forwarding, and packing accelerate.

Schedule Utility Transfers

Contact your electric and gas providers at the new address to schedule service start for your closing date or the day before. Schedule shutoff at your current address for the day after your move-out. See Chapter 12 for DTE Energy, Consumers Energy, and municipal water details. Do not assume the seller will leave utilities on, confirm transfer dates explicitly.

Set Up USPS Mail Forwarding

Submit your USPS change-of-address request online at [USPS.com/move](https://usps.com/move) or at your local post office. Forwarding can begin up to 30 days before your move date and lasts 12 months for permanent moves. See Chapter 13 for the full process and what USPS forwarding does not cover.

Pack the Majority of Your Home

By four weeks out, most rooms should be 70 to 80% packed. Leave out only daily essentials. Photograph TV wiring before disconnecting. Typical lead times: electric and gas transfers 3 to 5 business days; internet 1 to 3 weeks; water/sewer 1 to 2 weeks. Peak summer season extends these windows.

4 Weeks Before Closing

- Schedule electric, gas, and water transfers at new address (Chapter 12)
- Submit USPS mail forwarding; book internet installation
- Submit school enrollment paperwork; pack 70 to 80% of home
- Update address with bank and credit cards; confirm closing date

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Chapter 4

2 Weeks Before Closing

Two weeks out is execution mode. Confirm every booking, finish packing, and prepare your closing-day essentials box.

Confirm All Bookings

Call your mover to reconfirm date, arrival window, and crew size. Confirm utility start dates. Confirm internet installation appointment. Verify your closing time and location with the title company. If you are selling a current home, confirm your buyer's walk-through date and your move-out deadline.

Build Your Essentials Box

Pack one box or suitcase that travels with you, not on the moving truck. It should contain: toilet paper, paper towels, basic cleaning supplies, phone chargers, a change of clothes for each family member, medications, important documents (closing paperwork, insurance policies, IDs), a basic tool kit, box cutter, shower curtain, towels, and coffee maker with coffee. Label it "OPEN FIRST" and keep it accessible through closing day.

Final Walk-Through Prep

Your buyer's final walk-through typically occurs 24 to 48 hours before closing. If you are selling, the home should be broom-clean, all agreed repairs completed, and all personal property removed except what the contract specifies stays. If you are buying, review the Home Inspection Blueprint for what to verify at your own walk-through of the new home.

2 Weeks Before Closing

- Reconfirm mover, utilities, and internet appointments
- Finish packing; build "OPEN FIRST" essentials box
- Defrost freezer; prep appliances; arrange pet/child care for moving day
- Confirm wire transfer instructions with title company by phone

Pro Tip: Closing Day Cash

Have \$200 to \$400 in cash available on closing day for unexpected needs: pizza for the moving crew, a hardware store run for lock rekeying, or an emergency plumber if something is not working when you arrive. Your wire transfer covers the purchase, but move-in day runs on cash and a credit card for quick errands.

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Chapter 5

1 Week Before *Closing*

One week out, every system should be scheduled and every box should be packed. This week is about final confirmations and preparing for the transition.

Defrost the Freezer

If your refrigerator is moving with you, defrost the freezer at least 24 hours before the mover arrives. Empty, clean, and dry it completely. Movers will not transport a refrigerator with food inside, and a wet interior damages flooring in the truck.

Final Utility Confirmation

Call DTE Energy (800-477-4747) or Consumers Energy (800-477-5050) to confirm electric service start at your new address on closing day. Confirm gas service if applicable. Call your municipal water department to confirm water/sewer transfer. Test that you have the correct provider by checking your new address on the utility's website, not by guessing from your neighbor's bill.

Prepare for Closing

Review your Closing Disclosure against your Loan Estimate (see the Michigan Closing Cost Blueprint). Initiate your wire transfer with enough lead time for same-day availability. Pack your government-issued photo ID, any outstanding closing documents, and your cashier's check if required. Confirm whether keys will be available at the title office or through your agent after recording.

1 Week Before Closing

- Defrost and clean refrigerator if moving it
- Final utility confirmation calls; review Closing Disclosure; initiate wire
- Disassemble furniture; confirm key exchange with agent
- Print home safety checklist (Chapter 17) for move-in day

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Chapter 6

Closing *Day*

Closing day in Michigan is a signing appointment, not a celebration, yet. Keys typically release after the deed records, which means your mover may be waiting.

The Signing Appointment

Plan for 60 to 90 minutes at the title company. Review settlement statement figures before signing. Bring government-issued photo ID and confirm wire cleared before you sign.

Key Release and Possession

Keys release once the deed records and funds clear, typically noon to 4:00 PM, sometimes later. Same-day sale-and-purchase moves: have the mover load in the morning, hold the truck, and deliver after your agent confirms keys.

Before the Movers Arrive at the New House

Walk through empty before furniture arrives. Test water, toilets, HVAC, and locks. Photograph concerns and notify your agent same day, not after the movers fill every room.

Closing Day

- Bring photo ID; complete signing; verify wire cleared
- Walk through new home empty before movers deliver
- Test locks, water, HVAC, and appliances; locate shutoffs
- Direct movers; check inventory against bill of lading

Wire Fraud Warning

Never wire closing funds based on an email alone. Call the title company at a phone number you independently verified, from your purchase agreement or the company's official website, to confirm wire instructions the day before closing. Wire fraud targeting real estate transactions is active in Michigan. Your agent and title company will never be offended by a verification call.

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Chapter 7

First 48 *Hours*

The first 48 hours in your new home are about safety, function, and sleep, not unpacking every box.

Safety First

Before you unpack a single box, complete the home safety checklist in Chapter 17: change or rekey locks, test every smoke detector and CO detector, locate the electrical panel and water shutoff, check the furnace filter, and reset any garage door codes or smart lock codes the seller may have used. These tasks take 60 to 90 minutes and are the highest-value work you will do this week.

Make It Livable

Set up one bedroom, basic kitchen, and one bathroom. Confirm hot water and HVAC work. Order takeout for night one.

Document Everything

Photograph the home on arrival; note meter readings. File closing documents in one folder. Submit your PRE form within 30 days, see the Michigan Property Tax Guide at heartstohomesmi.com.

First 48 Hours

- Rekey locks; test smoke and CO detectors; replace HVAC filter
- Reset garage door codes; set up beds, kitchen, and one bathroom
- Record meter readings; file closing documents; submit PRE form
- Confirm internet working; introduce yourself to neighbors

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Chapter 8

First

Week

By the end of week one, your home should be functional, your Michigan residency tasks should be underway, and your unpacking should follow a deliberate room priority.

Unpacking Priority Order

Kitchen first, then primary bathroom, kids' rooms, home office, then remaining spaces. Break down boxes as you empty them.

Michigan Residency Tasks

Schedule SOS appointment (Chapter 14). Confirm school enrollment. Update employer, bank, and insurance addresses.

First Maintenance Actions

Schedule HVAC tune-up if overdue. Test the sump pump. Review Chapter 18 for the ongoing maintenance calendar.

First Week

- Unpack kitchen and primary bathroom; schedule SOS appointment
- Confirm school enrollment; schedule HVAC tune-up if overdue
- Test sump pump; set up trash service; register home warranty
- Update address with employer, bank, and insurance carriers

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Chapter 9

Hiring Movers

vs. *DIY*

The mover decision is a function of distance, volume, physical capability, timeline, and budget, not a moral choice about how hard you are willing to work.

When to Hire Professional Movers

Hire movers if: you are moving a full house (three or more bedrooms), you have heavy items (piano, safe, large sectional), you are moving more than 30 miles, you have physical limitations, you are closing on both a sale and purchase the same day, or your closing timeline does not allow two days for a DIY move. Professional movers carry insurance, provide labor and truck, and complete a full-house load and unload in one day.

When DIY Makes Sense

DIY works for: studio or one-bedroom apartment moves, moves within the same community under 15 miles, buyers with ample help from family and friends, and moves where you have two or more days between possession of the new home and move-out of the old one. Rent a U-Haul, Penske, or Budget truck locally. A 26-foot truck handles most three-bedroom homes in one trip.

Factor	Professional Movers	DIY Truck Rental
Typical cost (3BR, local)	\$1,200 to \$3,500	\$150 to \$400 (truck + gas)
Labor	Included (2 to 4 movers)	You plus helpers
Insurance for belongings	Released value or full value protection	Your homeowner's or renter's policy
Time required	One day (load + drive + unload)	One to two days
Physical demand	Low for you	High
Best for	Full-house, same-day, long-distance	Small volume, local, flexible timeline
Costs are approximate ranges for Southeast Michigan local moves, July 2026. Long-distance and specialty moves cost significantly more.		

Hybrid Approach

Many move-up buyers hire movers for furniture and heavy items while moving boxes in personal vehicles. Downsizers may use professional packers for fragile items only. This splits cost without requiring you to carry a dresser down three flights of stairs.

Pro Tip: Tipping Movers

For a local move in Southeast Michigan, tip \$20 to \$40 per mover for a half-day job and \$40 to \$60 per mover for a full day. Have cash ready on delivery day. If the crew went above expectations, navigating a tight staircase, protecting hardwood floors, finishing ahead of schedule, tip on the higher end. Tips are not included in the estimate.

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Chapter 10

Getting Moving
Quotes

A moving quote is only useful if you know what questions to ask. The lowest estimate is frequently the one that adds charges on delivery day.

Get In-Home Estimates

Never accept a binding quote from a mover who has not seen your belongings. Phone and online estimates are starting points, not contracts. Schedule in-home walkthroughs with at least three licensed companies. Show them every room, the garage, the basement, and the attic. Disclose stairs, long carries from door to truck, and any items requiring special handling.

Questions That Matter

Ask every mover before you sign: Is this binding or non-binding? What is the minimum charge? Are stairs, long carries, or bulky items surcharged? What insurance is included? Do you subcontract crews? What is the cancellation policy? Can you provide three local references?

Red Flags

Avoid movers who: demand a large cash deposit upfront, provide estimates without seeing your home, have no local address or warehouse, cannot provide a Michigan business license or DOT number, quote significantly below every other estimate (bait pricing), or pressure you to sign on the spot during the estimate visit.

Binding vs. Non-Binding Estimates

A binding estimate locks the price unless you add items or services on moving day. A non-binding estimate is a best guess, you pay the actual weight or time, which can exceed the quote by 10 to 20% or more. For budgeting certainty, prefer binding or "not-to-exceed" estimates. Read the fine print on what triggers a price change.

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Chapter 11

Packing Room
by Room

Systematic packing reduces damage, speeds unpacking, and prevents the "mystery box" problem that haunts buyers for months after move-in.

General Packing Rules

Use small boxes for heavy items (books, dishes) and large boxes for light items (linens, pillows). Never exceed 50 pounds per box. Wrap fragile items individually. Fill empty space in boxes with paper or towels to prevent shifting. Label every box on two sides with room name and contents. Number boxes and keep a simple inventory list on your phone.

Room-by-Room Guide

Room	Pack Early	Pack Last	Special Notes
Kitchen	Pantry, seasonal dishes	Pots, daily dishes	Wrap knives; stand plates vertically
Bedrooms	Off-season clothing, decor	Current clothing, bedding	Use wardrobe boxes for hanging clothes

Living room	Books, decor, media	TV, router	Photograph wiring before disconnecting
Garage / basement	Tools, seasonal items	Lawn equipment	Movers will not take propane, paint, or chemicals

Items Movers Will Not Transport

Most Michigan movers will not transport: propane tanks, gasoline, paint and solvents, ammunition, perishable food, plants, and hazardous chemicals. Transport valuables (jewelry, important documents, heirlooms) in your personal vehicle. Transport medications and daily necessities in your essentials box.

Pro Tip: Downsizer Packing

Sort and purge before you pack. Arrive at a smaller home with only what fits, not with boxes destined for indefinite storage. See the Downsizing Blueprint for the full decluttering sequence.

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Chapter 12

Utility Transfers in Michigan

Michigan utility territory does not follow city boundaries. Your electric provider is determined by your specific address, and getting it wrong delays your move-in.

DTE Energy vs. Consumers Energy

DTE Energy serves most of Detroit and the eastern and southern portions of Southeast Michigan, including Detroit, Dearborn, Livonia, Taylor, Southgate, Wyandotte, Ann Arbor (partial), and much of Wayne County east of I-275. **Consumers Energy** serves west Michigan broadly and significant portions of metro Detroit's western suburbs, including parts of Plymouth, Canton, Northville, Novi, Brighton, Howell, and much of Oakland and Livingston counties west of the I-275 corridor.

The two territories interleave in some areas. A home on one side of a street may be DTE while the neighbor across the road is Consumers. Do not guess based on your mailing city. Look up your new address on both utility websites or call with the service address:

Provider	Lookup / Contact	What They Provide
DTE Energy	dteenergy.com · 800-477-4747	Electric and natural gas (most SE Michigan)
Consumers Energy	consumersenergy.com · 800-477-5050	Electric and natural gas (west MI and western suburbs)
SEMCO Energy	semcoenergy.com	Natural gas in some communities (check by address)

How to Transfer Service

Call or go online to schedule service start at your new address for your closing date. You will need your name, Social Security number or account PIN, service address, and start date. Schedule shutoff at your current address for the day after you move out. Budget for a deposit if you are a new customer without established credit with the utility, typically \$100 to \$250, often refundable after 12 months of on-time payments.

Municipal Water and Sewer

Water and sewer are municipal, not DTE or Consumers. Contact your city or township water billing department to transfer service. In Southeast Michigan this may be DWSD (Detroit and some suburbs), or city departments in Plymouth, Livonia, Dearborn, Ann Arbor, Canton, and Novi. Schedule transfer for closing day.

Internet and Cable

Major providers in Southeast Michigan include Xfinity (Comcast), AT&T Fiber, and WOW! Internet. Availability varies by address, check each provider's website with your new service address. Installation lead times range from three days to three weeks depending on season and provider. Schedule installation for the day after closing if possible, so technicians have clear access before furniture fills every room.

Michigan Tip: Seller Utility Shutoff

In Michigan purchase agreements, the seller typically maintains utilities through closing day. Confirm this with your agent. If the seller shuts off electric before closing in winter, pipes can freeze within 24 hours. If you are buying in January or February, confirm utility continuity explicitly and schedule your transfer to start the day before closing as a safety buffer.

Utility Transfer Checklist

- Look up new address on DTE and Consumers websites to confirm provider
- Schedule electric, gas, and water/sewer start for closing date
- Schedule shutoff at current address; book internet (1 to 3 week lead time)
- Set up trash/recycling; record meter readings at both addresses on moving day

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Chapter 13

USPS Mail

Forwarding

Mail forwarding is easy to set up and easy to forget. Do it four weeks before your move, not four days after.

How to Set Up Forwarding

Submit your change of address at [USPS.com/move](https://usps.com/move) or in person at any post office. You will need a credit or debit card for the \$1.10 identity verification fee online. Choose permanent (12-month forwarding) or temporary (15 days to one year). Forwarding begins on the date you specify, up to 30 days in advance. First-class mail, magazines, and most packages from USPS are forwarded. Periodicals may take an extra week to redirect.

What USPS Forwarding Does Not Cover

USPS forwarding does not redirect mail from senders you have a direct account with. You must update your address directly with: banks, credit card companies, insurance carriers, investment accounts, employer payroll, medical providers, subscription services, and any business that mails you bills or statements. Forwarding catches what you forget, it is not a substitute for updating your address with institutions that have your old address on file.

Beyond Forwarding

Forwarding expires after 12 months. Set a reminder at 10 months to verify all accounts have your new address. Update banks, credit cards, insurance, medical providers, and subscriptions directly. USPS forwarding catches what you forget, not what you rely on.

Pro Tip: Relocation Clients

If you are relocating from out of state, set up USPS forwarding from your prior address and update your address with your employer, bank, and insurance before you arrive in Michigan. Forwarding from a California or Texas address to Michigan works the same way, but Michigan institutions (Secretary of State, DTE, Consumers, school district) require a Michigan address, which you will not have until closing. See the Relocation Blueprint at heartstohomesmi.com/blueprint-library for the full out-of-state sequence.

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Chapter 14

Driver's License Update

and Vehicle Registration

Michigan gives new residents 30 days to update their driver's license and vehicle registration. The Secretary of State offices in Wayne, Oakland, and Washtenaw counties are busy, schedule early.

Michigan Driver's License

New Michigan residents must obtain a Michigan driver's license within 30 days of establishing residency (your closing date qualifies). Visit a Secretary of State branch with: your current out-of-state license, proof of Michigan residency (utility bill, closing documents, or lease), proof of Social Security number, and proof of legal presence. A vision test is required. Your out-of-state license will be surrendered. Schedule an appointment at Michigan.gov/SOS, walk-in waits at busy branches can exceed two hours.

Vehicle Registration

Register your vehicle in Michigan within 30 days of establishing residency. You will need: your Michigan driver's license, the vehicle title (or lienholder information if financed), proof of Michigan no-fault auto insurance, and payment of registration fees plus 6% Michigan use tax on the vehicle's value. Michigan no-fault insurance is among the most expensive in the country, obtain quotes before you arrive so registration costs do not surprise you.

Real ID

Request a Real ID-compliant license at your SOS visit if you fly domestically. Bring a certified birth certificate or passport, Social Security documentation, and two proofs of Michigan residency.

Michigan Tip: SOS Appointment Strategy

Secretary of State appointments in Plymouth, Livonia, and Ann Arbor fill quickly. Book your appointment online within your first week in the home, even if the appointment date is two to three weeks out. You can complete license and vehicle registration in a single visit if you bring all required documents. Check Michigan.gov/SOS for the current document checklist before you go.

SOS Visit Checklist

- Schedule appointment at Michigan.gov/SOS
- Bring out-of-state license, residency proof, and Social Security documentation
- Bring vehicle title, Michigan no-fault insurance, and registration payment
- Register to vote at SOS or Michigan.gov/Vote

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Chapter 15

School Transfer

Checklist

School enrollment in Michigan is determined by your home address, not your preference. Verify your district assignment before you close, not after.

Verify District Assignment

Use MISchoolData.org or your county's intermediate school district website to confirm which district and which specific school your new address feeds into. In Southeast Michigan, district boundaries do not follow city limits. A home in Canton may be in Plymouth-Canton Community Schools or Wayne-Westland Community Schools depending on the subdivision. A home in Plymouth may be in Plymouth-Canton or Livonia Public Schools. Verify by address, not by city name.

Enrollment Documents

Most Michigan districts require: child's birth certificate, immunization records, proof of residency (closing documents, utility bill, or lease), previous school records or transcripts, and a parent/guardian photo ID. Contact the district registrar four to six weeks before your move to confirm their specific requirements and whether enrollment can begin before you physically occupy the home.

Timing the Transition

If your move falls mid-school year, request records from the current school before you leave. Ask the new school about shadow days or orientation for new students. If your move aligns with summer, enroll before August so your children are on class lists when teachers return. Some districts have enrollment deadlines in early August for fall placement.

School Transfer Checklist

- Verify district and school by address (MISchoolData.org)
- Contact registrar; gather birth certificate, immunization records, residency proof
- Request transcripts from current school; submit enrollment 4 to 6 weeks before move
- Confirm start date, bus route, and orientation for mid-year transfers

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Chapter 16

Pet Transition

Checklist

Pets experience moving stress differently than people. A little planning prevents escape attempts, digestive issues, and vet emergencies during the transition.

Before the Move

Update your pet's microchip registration with your new address as soon as you have it. Refill any prescriptions before moving week. Obtain copies of vaccination records from your current vet. Research a veterinarian near your new home and note the nearest 24-hour emergency animal hospital. If your pet is anxious, ask your vet about short-term calming options for moving day.

Moving Day

Keep pets in a secure, quiet room during loading, or board them with a friend, family member, or day-care facility. Doors will be open all day. A frightened cat or dog can slip out unnoticed. Transport pets in your personal vehicle, not the moving truck. Bring food, water, leash, carrier, and comfort items. Never leave pets in a parked car, especially in summer.

Settling In

Set up one room with your pet's bed, food, water, and litter box before the movers arrive with furniture. Keep cats confined to one room for the first 24 to 48 hours while they adjust. Walk dogs around the new neighborhood on leash and update their routine gradually. Schedule a vet visit within the first month to establish care at the new practice.

Pet Transition Checklist

- Update microchip registration; refill prescriptions; get vaccination records
- Research new vet and 24-hour emergency clinic near new home
- Secure pets during loading; transport in personal vehicle
- Set up pet area before furniture arrives; schedule new vet within first month

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Chapter 17

Home Safety

Checklist

You do not know who has keys to your new home. You do not know when the smoke detectors were last tested. Handle both before you unpack.

Locks and Access

Rekey or replace all exterior door locks on day one. A locksmith in Southeast Michigan typically charges \$15 to \$25 per lock cylinder for rekeying, or \$80 to \$200 per door for new hardware installed. Reset garage door opener codes and delete all prior remote codes. Change codes on any smart locks. Locate spare keys the seller may have left and determine whether they should be recollected or destroyed.

Smoke and CO Detectors

Test every smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in the home. Press the test button on each unit. Replace batteries in any unit that does not respond or chirps. Michigan law requires smoke detectors on every level and in or near every sleeping area. CO detectors are required near sleeping areas if the home has fuel-burning appliances or an attached garage. Replace any detector older than 10 years.

HVAC and Mechanical

Check the furnace filter and replace it if dirty, a clogged filter strains the system from day one. Locate the electrical panel and label it if circuits are not marked. Locate the main water shutoff (typically in the basement near the front wall). Locate the gas shutoff if applicable. Test the sump pump by pouring water into the pit. In Southeast Michigan, a non-functioning sump pump during a spring storm is an emergency.

Home Safety Checklist: Day One

- Rekey exterior locks; reset garage door and smart lock codes
- Test smoke and CO detectors; replace batteries and units older than 10 years
- Replace HVAC filter; locate electrical panel, water shutoff, and gas shutoff
- Test sump pump; check fire extinguisher dates and stair handrails

Home Inspection Connection

Your home inspection report identified the location of the electrical panel, water shutoff, and HVAC system. Pull that report on move-in day and use it as your guide. If the inspection noted specific safety items, missing GFCI outlets, an aging CO detector, a sump pump without battery backup, address those in your first 48 hours. See the Home Inspection Blueprint at heartstohomesmi.com/blueprint-library for how to prioritize inspection findings.

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Chapter 18

New Homeowner Maintenance
Reminders

The move is not the end of the work. It is the beginning of maintaining a home through Michigan's four distinct seasons.

Monthly Tasks

Check HVAC filter monthly and replace every 60 to 90 days (monthly during heavy heating or cooling seasons). Test smoke and CO detectors monthly. Check sump pump operation during rainy weeks. Inspect basement walls and floors for new moisture or cracks after heavy rain.

Seasonal Tasks

Season	Key Tasks
Spring	Clean gutters; test sump pump; service A/C; inspect roof from ground; grade soil away from foundation
Summer	Replace HVAC filter; check deck and fence for rot; trim vegetation away from siding and A/C unit
Fall	Schedule furnace tune-up; disconnect hoses; blow out sprinkler lines; clean gutters again; check weatherstripping
Winter	Monitor ice dams on roof; keep driveway and walks clear; check for basement moisture during thaws; verify heat is consistent in all rooms

Michigan's freeze-thaw cycles make fall and spring the highest-maintenance seasons. Budget time and money accordingly in your first year.

Annual Tasks

Schedule annual HVAC tune-ups for both furnace (fall) and air conditioner (spring). Inspect the roof annually or after major storms. Clean dryer vent ductwork. Drain and flush the water heater. Test GFCI outlets in kitchen and bathrooms. Review your homeowner's insurance coverage and confirm it reflects current replacement cost. File your Principal Residence Exemption (PRE) annually if required by your assessor.

Budget for the Unexpected

Homeownership in Southeast Michigan comes with predictable maintenance costs. Budget 1 to 2% of your home's value annually for maintenance and repairs. On a \$300,000 home, that is \$3,000 to \$6,000 per year. A furnace replacement (\$4,000 to \$7,000), roof repair (\$500 to \$15,000), or sewer line repair (\$3,000 to \$8,000) are not emergencies in this housing stock, they are eventualities. Your home inspection report is your maintenance roadmap for the first five years.

Pro Tip: Property Taxes

Your property taxes will likely increase in the year after you close due to Michigan's taxable value uncapping rule. Your escrow payment will adjust accordingly. For a full explanation of SEV, taxable value, PRE, and how to appeal your assessment, see the Michigan Property Tax Guide at heartstohomesmi.com. Budget for the uncapped amount, not the seller's current bill.

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Checklist

**Printable Moving
Checklist**

Consolidated timeline checklist. Print this page and check off tasks as you complete them.

Timeline	Key Tasks
8 weeks out	Confirm closing date; get mover quotes; identify DTE vs. Consumers; begin decluttering
6 weeks out	Book mover in writing; start packing; research internet; contact school registrar
4 weeks out	Schedule utility transfers; USPS forwarding; internet install; pack 70 to 80%
2 weeks out	Reconfirm all appointments; build "OPEN FIRST" box; confirm wire by phone
1 week out	Defrost fridge; final utility calls; review Closing Disclosure; print safety checklist
Closing day	Sign documents; walk through empty home; test systems; direct movers
First 48 hours	Rekey locks; test detectors; replace filter; set up beds and kitchen; submit PRE
First week	Unpack kitchen; SOS appointment; HVAC tune-up; sump pump test; update addresses

Detailed task lists for each phase are in Chapters 1 to 8. Print this table for a single-page timeline reference.

Post-Move Michigan Tasks (All Buyers)

- Driver's license and vehicle registration at SOS within 30 days
- Principal Residence Exemption (PRE) filed with local assessor
- School enrollment confirmed; immunization records transferred
- Trash, recycling, and internet service active
- Home warranty registered; inspection report filed for maintenance reference
- Address updated with employer, bank, insurance, and investments

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Real Hearts to Homes Story · Moving Blueprint

The Electric Bill That Wasn't DTE

"They were relocating from Chicago to Canton, a corporate move, tight timeline, two kids, one dog. We closed on a Thursday in August. They called DTE on Friday because the lights would not turn on."

"DTE said they did not serve that address. The home was in Consumers Energy territory, common in western Wayne County, but not obvious if you are coming from out of state and assume one electric company covers all of metro Detroit."

"Consumers could not start service until Monday. It was August. They had no air conditioning for four days with two kids and a dog. They stayed in a hotel. The movers had already delivered everything."

"The fix was simple in hindsight: look up the address on both utility websites before closing, not after. We now include that step in every relocation client's move plan. Fifteen minutes of research would have saved them a hotel bill and four miserable days."

Derica Wade, Associate Broker · Hearts to Homes Team · Real Estate One · Plymouth, Michigan

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Your Next Step

What Happens Next

This is the final Blueprint in the Hearts to Homes Blueprint Library. You now have the complete set, from pre-approval through move-in day and beyond.

If you are eight weeks from closing, start with the checklist at the end of this Blueprint. If you are two weeks out, focus on mover confirmation, utility transfers, your "OPEN FIRST" box, and the home safety checklist for day one.

Pair this with the Relocation Blueprint for out-of-state moves, the First-Time Home Buyer's Blueprint for transaction mechanics, and the Home Inspection Blueprint for move-in safety priorities. The Michigan Closing Cost Blueprint covers your wire and Closing Disclosure review in the final week.

Moving is logistics, not luck. The buyers who move smoothly are not calmer by nature, they started earlier and followed a list. You have the list.

Ready When You Are

Book a Free Consultation

Bring your closing timeline, your mover quotes, or just your questions about coordinating a Michigan move. A 30-minute call with Derica costs nothing and ends with a clear, honest next step.

Derica Wade · Associate Broker, Real Estate One

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heartstohomesmi.com/contact

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Blueprint Library

Continue Your Blueprint Journey

Start Here First-Time Home Buyer's Blueprint The complete guide from pre-approval through closing day, including the inspection period, Michigan property taxes, and what actually happens at the settlement table. heartstohomesmi.com/blueprint-library

Pairs Well With This Blueprint Relocation Blueprint For buyers arriving from out of state, remote research, visit planning, Michigan residency setup, and the timeline that precedes this Moving Blueprint. heartstohomesmi.com/blueprint-library

Community Research Southeast Michigan Community Guides 18 communities covered in depth, schools, commute, lifestyle, utility territories, and what buyers discover about the neighborhood after they arrive. heartstohomesmi.com/community-guides-southeast-michigan

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