

Business

Shop around for the best rates on title insurance

By Sheryl Nance-Nash Special to Newsday



Choose your own title agent and insurer; compare prices to save, experts advise. Photo Credit: Getty Images

Few people think about title insurance until they're in the middle of a real estate transaction. Give it a bit more consideration.

According to a report from OneTitle National Guaranty Company, a title insurance underwriter, which analyzed more than 180,000 real estate transactions in New York State, buyers of Long Island real estate — including homebuyers, investors, and others — could have saved more than \$15.6 million in premiums and fees last year by shopping around.

- What you need to know: If you're borrowing to buy property, title insurance is required to cover the lender's interests. You can also buy a title owner's policy. "Find out if the benefits make sense for you," says Birny Birnbaum, an insurance expert and executive director at the Center for Economic Justice, a nonprofit in Austin, Texas.
- What's protected: Most title problems are discovered during the closing process. Insurance protects you from any missed title issues, including problems with the deed, such as a previously unknown heir to the property, explains Linda Sherry, director of national priorities for Consumer Action in Washington, D.C. But "consumers often overpay title service fees, which include the title search fee, and the premium for the lender's title insurance policy, among others."

- Question your bill: “Title bills can be bloated with ‘junk fees’. Demand they be taken off the bill,” says Daniel Price, co-founder of OneTitle National Guaranty in Manhattan.
- Take control: Choose your title agent and insurer. Compare prices, says Birnbaum. “Some real estate agents, lenders, attorneys and home builders have a financial interest in which title agent or insurer you use. They may get paid for referrals.”

The New York State Land Title Association recently launched an online guide to licensed title insurance providers; find it at nytitleinsuranceguide.com.

<http://www.newsday.com/business/shop-around-for-the-best-rates-on-title-insurance-1.12134295>