Renting vs Buying in the Rogue Valley: How to Actually Decide

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"Rent is throwing money away" and "owning is always better" are both slogans, and slogans make expensive advisors. The honest comparison has three parts: the real monthly math, the time horizon, and the life factors a spreadsheet cannot hold. Here is how to run all three.

THE REAL MONTHLY MATH

Comparing rent to a mortgage payment is the classic mistake. Ownership's real monthly cost is the mortgage **plus** property taxes, insurance, and maintenance (budget 1% to 2% of the home's value per year; more for older homes, wells, and septic). Meanwhile part of each mortgage payment builds equity, so it is not all cost. Renting's real cost is the rent plus annual increases, minus everything you never pay for: the roof, the water heater, the insurance difference.

Rogue Valley context: typical rents for a 3-bedroom run in the low-to-mid $2,000s while entry ownership on a median Grants Pass home, all-in with taxes and insurance, generally runs meaningfully higher at current rates. Ownership here usually costs more per month at the start and wins later through fixed payments, equity, and appreciation. The crossover is the question.

THE TIME HORIZON TEST

Buying costs real money at both ends: closing costs coming in, and selling costs going out. Those transaction costs need years of equity and appreciation to earn back. The old rule of thumb still holds: **planning to stay under 3 years, rent; over 5, buying usually wins; in between, the details decide.** New to the area? Renting the first year while you learn which town and neighborhood actually fit is often the highest-return real estate decision available, and it is one a relocating buyer almost never regrets.

THE FACTORS THE SPREADSHEET MISSES

- **Buy signals:** stable income and location, a down payment that leaves savings intact (see the Down Payments guide for how little that can require), appetite for maintenance, wanting to fix or keep animals or plant orchards without permission.
- **Rent signals:** career or family plans in motion, income still stabilizing, no reserve fund beyond the down payment, or simply not knowing the area yet.

- **The trap to avoid:** buying at the absolute top of qualification with nothing left. House-poor is its own housing crisis.

The Housing Alternatives Contact List (companion guide) maps the valley's rental resources. When you want the buy-side math run on your actual numbers with no agenda attached, the free **Coffee Date** is the door: jamie-the-realtor.com/bespoke-consultations.

Market figures are mid-2026 approximations and change; the right answer depends on your numbers and plans. General information, not financial advice. Jamie gets paid when homes sell and will still tell you when renting is your better move.