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**First Mid Bank & Trust Encourages Buyers to Explore Homeownership
Amid Rising Rent Costs**

St. Louis, MO (May 18, 2026) As rising rent prices and housing market uncertainty continue to challenge many first-time homebuyers, mortgage experts say misconceptions about credit scores and interest rates may be preventing buyers from exploring homeownership opportunities.

According to [Zillow](#), median rents for single-family homes have increased approximately 30% to 45% in many markets since early 2020. With monthly rent payments in many areas now rivaling — or even exceeding — the cost of a mortgage, Kristi Amenda, AVP, Mortgage Loan Officer at First Mid Bank & Trust, is encouraging people to view homeownership as a smart long-term investment.

“People are often surprised to learn they may already be paying more in rent than they would for a mortgage,” said Amenda. “Building home equity early can create long-term financial benefits and stability.”

Many potential buyers are discouraged by the misconception that they need perfect credit or a large down payment to qualify for a home loan. In reality, community lenders can often connect buyers with down payment assistance, grant programs, and personalized financial guidance that national online lenders may overlook.

“We see a lot of people assume they’re not ready to buy when they may be closer than they think,” said Amenda. “Even if your credit score needs improvement, we can help create a plan to get you there. And while many buyers are waiting for rates to drop, today’s rates are closer to historical norms than people realize — and refinancing is always an option later. If you love the house, don’t let a credit score or interest rate stop you from pursuing it.”

Amenda says local lenders can also provide an advantage in competitive housing markets because they understand regional programs and community relationships that can help buyers stand out.

“Every community has different grant opportunities and resources available,” Amenda said. “Relationships and community connections matter, especially in competitive markets with multiple offers. Working with a local lender means you have someone who understands your market and can help guide you through the process personally.”

First Mid recommends buyers avoid spending more than 45% of their gross income on housing expenses and encourages first-time buyers to get pre-qualified early to better understand their options.

Buyers can begin the pre-qualification process [online](#) or by speaking directly with their [local First Mid mortgage lender](#).

About First Mid Bancshares, Inc.: First Mid Bancshares, Inc. is the parent company of First Mid Bank & Trust, N.A., First Mid Insurance Group, First Mid Wealth Management Company, and Two Rivers Bank &

Trust. First Mid is a \$9.3 billion community-focused organization that provides financial services including banking, insurance, wealth management, brokerage, and ag services through a network of locations in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin, and a loan production office in Indiana. Together, our First Mid team takes great pride in providing solutions and services to our customers and communities and has done so since 1865. More information about the Company is available on our website at www.firstmid.com. Our stock is traded in The NASDAQ Stock Market LLC under the ticker symbol “FMBH”. Member FDIC | Equal Housing Lender.