

*home seller*

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# Q2 2026

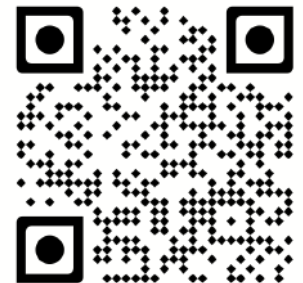
## THE ORANGE COUNTY SELLER ADVANTAGE GUIDE

Current Trends, Insights and What to Expect

“It’s not about how many houses I sell. It’s about how many people I help.”



SCAN FOR A  
LOCAL MARKET  
UPDATE AND  
SELLER TIPS



# Q2 2026 Seller Snapshot

## Orange County Strategic Overview

21% of the active listing inventory has reduced the asking price at least once in March.

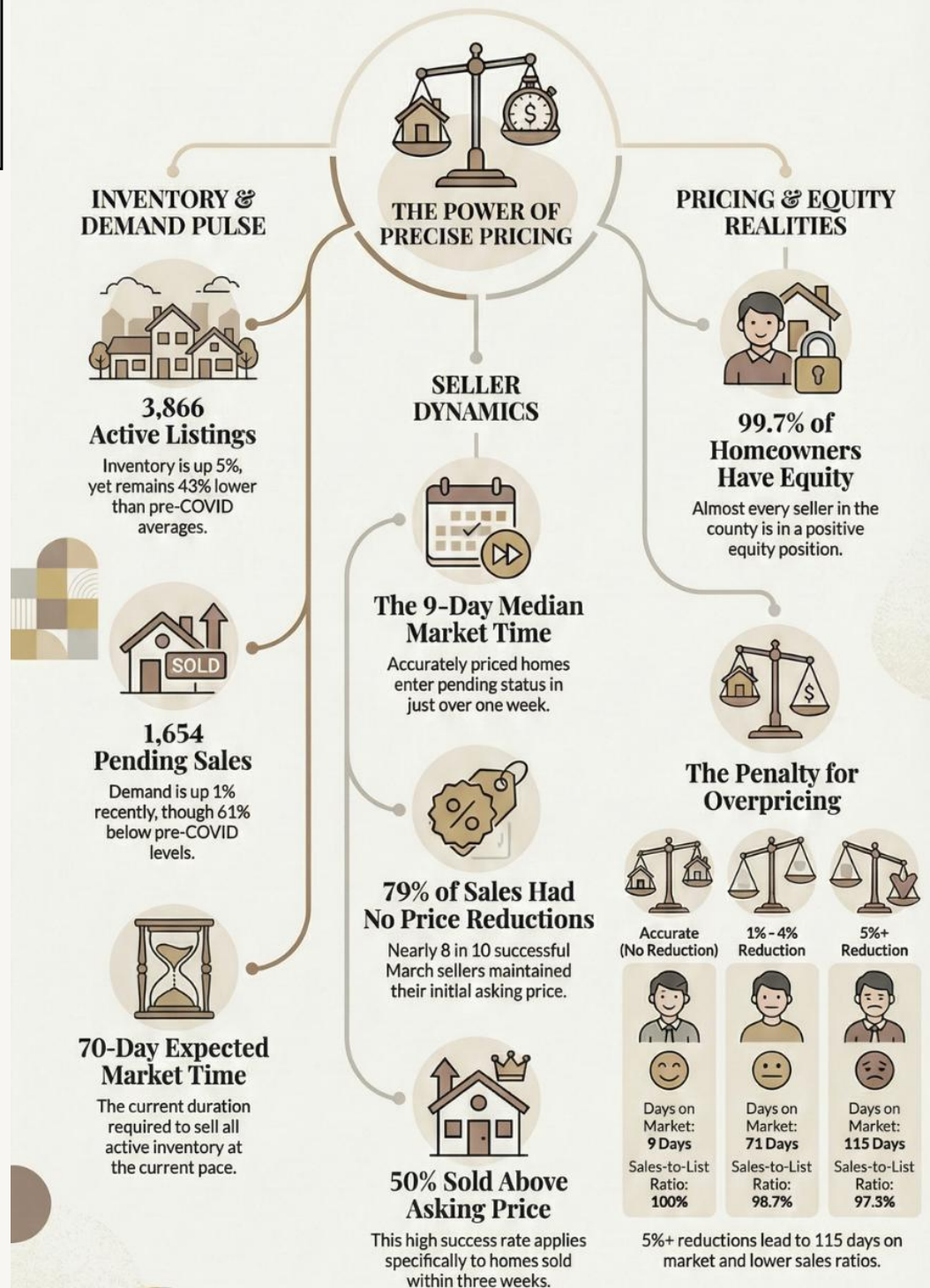
Inventory up  
5%

Demand up  
1%

Average list to sales price ratio in Orange County is 98.8%

### Orange County Q2 2026 Seller Snapshot: The Power of Precise Pricing

Orange County's Q2 2026 market is defined by low inventory, where seller success is dictated by pricing strategy. Data reveals a stark contrast in "days on market" and final sale price between homes priced correctly vs. those requiring reductions.



# The Spring 2026 Seller Reality: Pricing & First Impression

One of the most important decisions a seller makes is where to position their home when it first enters the market. Today's buyers are informed, analytical, and quick to act when something is priced correctly. They are watching the market closely – often daily – and evaluating new listings against recent sales, condition, and overall value. That initial moment – when a home first comes to market – carries the greatest weight. And the data shows exactly why.

## Homes That Did Not Reduce Their Price (79%)

- Sold at 100% of their asking price on average
- Went pending in just 9 days

### Example:

A home priced at \$1,000,000  
→ sells for \$1,000,000

## Homes That Reduced Their Price by 1–4% (12%)

- Sold at 98.7% of their final asking price
- Took approximately 71 days to secure a buyer

### Example:

Price reduced to \$1,000,000  
→ sells for \$987,000

### Difference:

→ Seller walks away with \$13,000 less  
→ plus significantly more time on the market. Which carries cost as well.

## Homes That Reduced Their Price by 5% or More (9%)

- Sold at 97.5% of their final asking price
- Took approximately 115 days to secure a buyer

### Example:

Price reduced to \$1,000,000  
→ sells for \$975,000

### Difference:

→ Seller walks away with \$25,000 less  
→ after nearly 4 months on the market

## What This Actually Means

The difference is not just timing – it is outcome.

Homes that start aligned with the market:

- attract stronger early demand
- maintain negotiating leverage
- and ultimately retain more of their value

Homes that start outside of that range:

- lose momentum
- require adjustments
- and often sell below where they could have initially positioned

At some point, it's not just the number – it's what that number starts to cost you.

# The Spring 2026 Seller Reality: Inventory & Competition

As we move through the spring market, inventory is beginning to rise — which is expected this time of year. Over the past couple of weeks, the number of homes for sale in Orange County has increased by approximately 5%. However, inventory remains roughly **43% below pre-COVID averages**, meaning supply is still historically constrained

This creates a market that can feel contradictory at first glance.

There is still limited inventory overall.

But there is also **increasing competition between sellers**.

More listings entering the market means:

- buyers have more options
- comparisons become easier
- and pricing becomes more visible

The key shift is this:

**Inventory is rising faster than demand.**

That doesn't eliminate opportunity.

But it does narrow the margin for error.

Homes are no longer competing against the market.

They are competing against other available choices in real time.



# The Spring 2026 Seller Reality: Buyer Demand

## **Buyer demand remains present — but it is no longer expanding.**

In recent weeks, demand has increased slightly and is now sitting at or near its seasonal peak. That's early for the season.

From this point forward, demand typically stabilizes and begins to flatten.

This is where many sellers misread the market.

Spring is often thought of as the strongest time to sell.

But strength comes from timing within the season, not just the season itself.

As the market moves forward:

- more homes come online
- buyer demand remains relatively steady
- competition increases

This creates a shift in leverage.

Early in the season:

- buyers compete for limited inventory

Later in the season:

- sellers compete for buyer attention

The homes that perform best are those that:

- enter the market aligned with demand
- capture early momentum
- and stand out before inventory builds



# The Spring 2026 Seller Reality: Market Time & Absorption

## **Market time provides a clear view of how quickly homes are being absorbed.**

Currently, the expected market time in Orange County has increased slightly – from approximately **67 days to 70 days**.

This is not a dramatic change, but it is directional.

It reflects a market that is becoming more selective.

- inventory is increasing
- buyers are taking more time
- and homes are no longer moving as quickly by default
- 

It is also important to understand that this number is an average – not a guarantee.

Well-positioned homes behave very differently than the average:

- correctly priced homes are selling in days, not months
- homes that miss the mark often extend well beyond the average timeline

This creates a wide gap in outcomes.

Market time is not just a statistic.

It is a reflection of how well a home is positioned within its segment.



# The Spring 2026 Seller Reality: Market Segmentation & Luxury Trends

## **Orange County is not a single market.**

It is a collection of segments — each moving at a different pace.

This becomes especially clear at higher price points.

Homes priced above approximately \$2.5 million are currently experiencing an expected market time of around 150 days.

Within that range:

- \$2.5M-\$4M: ~118 days
- \$4M-\$6M: ~146 days
- \$6M+: ~270 days

These longer timelines are not a sign of weak demand.

They reflect how buyers behave in this segment.

Luxury buyers tend to be:

- more deliberate
- more analytical
- less influenced by urgency

At the same time, inventory and demand in this segment are moving at a similar pace, suggesting stability, but not acceleration.

The key takeaway is this:

Not all homes sell on the same timeline, even in the same market.

Strategy must align with:

- price segment
- buyer pool
- and level of competition

Because in a segmented market, performance is not determined by averages, it is determined by alignment.



# The Strategic Advantage: What Sellers Are Doing Differently in 2026

By now, one pattern should be clear:

This is not a market driven by chance.

It is a market driven by precision and positioning.

The difference between homes that perform well and those that struggle is rarely the property itself.

It is the strategy behind it.

## What Top-Performing Listings Are Doing Right

Across Orange County, the homes achieving the strongest outcomes are not necessarily the newest or the most updated.

They are the most intentionally positioned.

They typically follow a consistent approach:

### 1. They Price Within the Active Demand Window

Not based on what they hope to achieve.

But based on where buyers are actively transacting today.

This is where momentum begins.

### 2. They Prioritize First Impressions — Digitally and In Person

With the majority of buyers starting online, presentation is no longer optional.

Photography, video, and positioning determine:

- whether a buyer clicks
- whether they visit
- and whether they engage

The first showing often happens before a buyer ever walks through the door.

### 3. They Launch With Purpose — Not as a Test

Homes that “test the market” often lose their strongest window of opportunity.

In contrast, well-positioned listings:

- generate early activity
- create competition
- and establish leverage from the start

Momentum is not created later.

It is created at launch.

### 4. They Anticipate Negotiation — Not React to It

Every pricing decision, timing decision, and marketing decision impacts the final negotiation.

The strongest outcomes are not accidental.

They are structured:

- before the home goes live
- before the first showing
- and before the first offer is written

#### Strategic Takeaway

Success in this market is not about chasing the highest possible number.

It is about:

- positioning within the strongest buyer pool
- capturing early demand
- and maintaining leverage through the process

# Why Timing in the Spring Market Matters More Than Price Alone

## The Spring Market is Often Misunderstood.

Many sellers assume Spring equals higher prices.

In reality, Spring primarily means increased activity — not automatic appreciation.

Understanding that distinction can change your outcome significantly.

## The Seasonal Window Most Sellers Miss

The housing market follows a predictable rhythm:

- Mid-January to mid-March: Market speeds up rapidly
- March–April: Fastest pace of the year
- Late Spring–Summer: More competition, rising inventory
- Fall: Gradual slowing

According to the February 17 Orange County Housing Report, the Expected Market Time dropped from 75 to 67 days in just two weeks— one of the fastest winter accelerations in recent years.

That tells us something important:

The early Spring window rewards decisiveness.

By the time late April and May arrive, more sellers typically enter the market. Increased inventory naturally creates more competition — even if demand remains steady.



# Why Timing in the Spring Market Matters More Than Price Alone

Inventory does not need to explode to change leverage. It simply needs to grow enough to give buyers options.

In a market where buyers are analytical and patient, optionality reduces urgency.

## What the Price Reductions Really Signal

When 66% of sellers in January close below their original asking price, the takeaway isn't that prices are falling.

It's that the market is intolerant of guesswork.

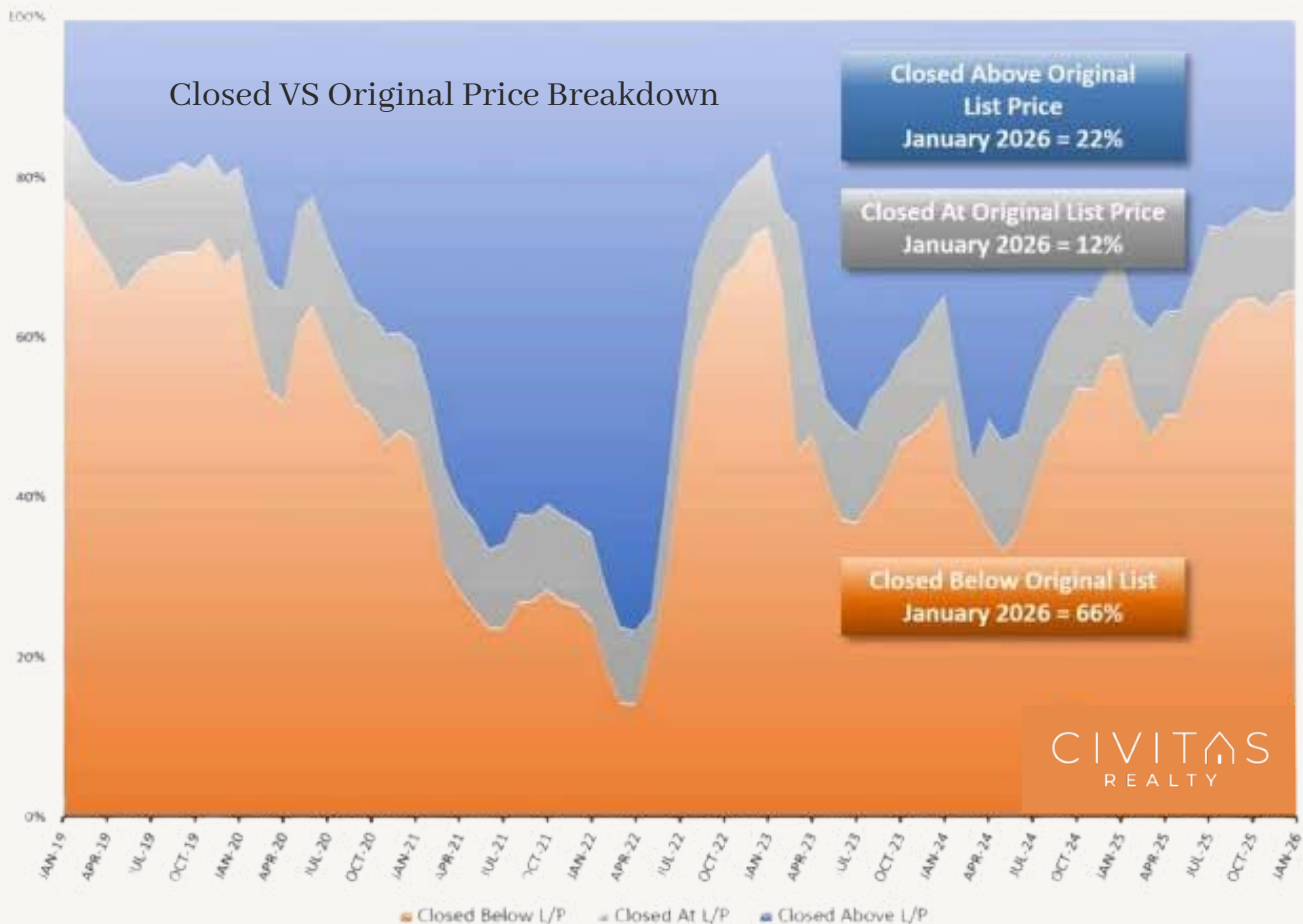
Today's buyers are informed. They analyze comparable sales, watch days on market, and understand absorption rates. When a property is priced outside the active demand window, they simply move on. The result isn't dramatic price crashes.

It's slower momentum and negotiated corrections.

In a tightening early Spring window, strategic pricing isn't about underpricing.

It's about positioning within the most active buyer pool – where urgency exists.

That is where leverage lives.





# Selling and Buying at the Same Time: The Strategy Behind Today's Most Complex Move

## **In Spring 2026, one pattern is consistent:**

Most sellers are also buyers.

Inventory remains constrained because many homeowners are reluctant to give up low mortgage rates.

That dynamic has created a market where movement requires planning – not impulse.

For homeowners considering a transition, the real question isn't whether it can be done.

It's how to structure it intelligently.

## **Why This Move Feels More Complicated Today**

The hesitation usually centers around three concerns:

1. What if we sell quickly and can't find a replacement?
2. What if we buy first and carry two properties?
3. What if timing doesn't align and we feel rushed?

These concerns are valid. But they are manageable when the process is sequenced correctly.

This is no longer a market where you simply "list and see what happens." It is a market that rewards coordinated planning.

# Selling and Buying at the Same Time: The Strategy Behind Today's Most Complex Move

## The Four Primary Transition Strategies

Every sell-and-buy move falls into one of these categories:

Strategy	Best Used When	Risk Profile
Sale Contingent Purchase	Balanced market conditions	Low
Rent Back After Closing	Strong seller leverage	Low
Bridge Financing	High confidence in sale timing	Moderate
Buy First Using Liquidity or Equity	Significant financial flexibility	Moderate

The right approach depends on:

- Your equity position
- Current absorption rate in your price range
- Replacement inventory availability
- Your tolerance for overlap

This is why data matters.

## Equity: The Quiet Advantage

Many homeowners underestimate their position.

Years of appreciation have created meaningful equity for long-term owners — particularly in coastal and luxury segments.

Equity creates flexibility:

- Larger down payments
- Stronger purchase offers
- The ability to negotiate rent-backs
- Rate buydown options
- Strategic timing windows

When sellers recognize their leverage, the conversation shifts from fear of overlap to control of sequencing.

# Selling and Buying at the Same Time: The Strategy Behind Today's Most Complex Move

## Timing the Transition — Not the Market

The objective isn't to perfectly "time" both transactions.

It's to align them within the same demand cycle.

Early Spring often provides the strongest overlap window:

- Rising buyer activity
- Still-manageable inventory
- Predictable seasonal speed

Waiting until late Spring or Summer can introduce more seller competition — which may reduce leverage on the sale side while not meaningfully improving options on the buy side.

## What Makes This Work

The transition succeeds when three things happen:

1. The home is priced precisely from day one.
2. The replacement search begins before the property hits the market.
3. The sale contract is structured with negotiation foresight.

Selling and buying simultaneously is not about rushing.

It is about orchestrating.

## Strategic Takeaway

In 2026, transitions require intention.

But they are absolutely achievable.

When structured correctly, the move becomes less about risk — and more about controlled execution.

The goal isn't simply to sell.

It's to reposition your equity into the next chapter — intelligently.





# Orange County Is Not One Market

Orange County is often discussed as a single housing market.

In reality, it is a collection of distinct segments — each operating on its own timeline, with its own buyer behavior, and its own pricing sensitivities.

Understanding where your home sits within that structure is one of the most important factors in determining your outcome.

## The Limitation of Averages

Countywide metrics — like the current ~70-day average market time — provide useful context.

But they do not tell the full story.

That number is an average across:

- Entry-level and luxury price points
- Coastal and inland communities
- Condos, townhomes, and detached homes

Each of those segments behaves differently.

Relying on a single average can create false expectations — particularly when it comes to pricing and timing.

## What Actually Drives Market Behavior

Three variables consistently shape how a home performs in today's Orange County market:

### 1. Price Segment

Price is the single most influential factor in market speed.

- Entry-level and mid-range homes tend to move more quickly due to broader buyer demand
- Move-up properties require more selective alignment between buyer and property
- Luxury homes operate on longer timelines, driven by smaller, more deliberate buyer pools

As price increases, urgency decreases — and precision becomes more critical.

### 2. Property Type

Not all inventory competes equally.

- Detached homes typically attract the strongest demand
- Condos and townhomes are more sensitive to HOA structure, monthly costs, and financing dynamics
- Unique or highly customized properties may take longer due to narrower buyer appeal

Even within the same price range, property type can shift market time significantly.

### 3. Location & Lifestyle Positioning

Location within Orange County is not just geographic — it is behavioral.

- Coastal and lifestyle-driven markets tend to attract discretionary buyers, who move more selectively
- Inland and commuter-friendly areas often see more urgency due to necessity-based moves
- School districts, walkability, and proximity to employment centers also influence pace

The more lifestyle-driven the purchase, the more intentional — and therefore slower — the decision process.



# The Opportunity in Q2

## How This Impacts Your Strategy

Once you understand your segment, the conversation shifts.

This is no longer about “how the market is doing.”

It becomes about how your home fits within the active demand window.

## The Real Risk: Misalignment

In today’s market, most unsuccessful listings are not the result of weak demand.

They are the result of misalignment.

When a home is priced or positioned outside of its segment’s active range:

- Buyers hesitate
- Showings slow
- Days on market increase
- Negotiating leverage shifts

This is why broad assumptions – like “it’s a seller’s market” or “inventory is low” – can be misleading at the property level.

## What Strong Positioning Looks Like

Homes that outperform in this environment typically share three characteristics:

### 1. They Enter the Market Aligned

Not testing the market – but positioned within the most active buyer range from day one.

### 2. They Compete Within Their Segment

They are evaluated against direct alternatives – not against aspirational expectations.

### 3. They Capture Early Momentum

They take advantage of the initial surge of buyer attention, where urgency – and leverage – are highest.

## The Strategic Takeaway

Sellers should not anchor to countywide averages alone.

They should anchor to:

- Their specific price bracket
- Their direct competition
- Current absorption within their segment
- The condition, presentation, and positioning of their home

In a segmented market, averages provide context.

But alignment determines outcome

# A Checklist for Selling Your House

As you get ready to sell your house, add these items to your to-do list. A real estate professional will also provide other helpful tips based on your specific situation.

## MAKE IT INVITING



- Open blinds or curtains to let the light in



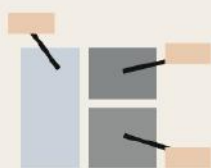
- Check lightbulbs and replace as needed



- Take down personal photos or items



- Fix anything that's broken



- Give every room a clear purpose

## SHOW IT'S CARED FOR



- Clean your vents and baseboards



- Vacuum, mop, or sweep floors



- Declutter throughout



- Organize countertops, cabinets, and closets



- Touch up any scuffs on the walls

## BOOST CURB APPEAL



- Power wash outdoor surfaces



- Wash the windows (inside and out)



- Tidy up the landscaping



- Freshen up your entry



- Sweep patios, decks and walkways

# Protecting Your Property: Understanding Real Estate Fraud

Real estate transactions involve significant assets, which, unfortunately, makes them an attractive target for increasingly sophisticated scams. In recent years, fraud involving email hacking, forged property transfers, and deceptive foreclosure assistance schemes has grown nationwide. While these situations are rare, awareness is the most effective form of prevention. Understanding how these scams work – and knowing the simple safeguards that protect homeowners and buyers – can dramatically reduce risk. The following guide outlines several of the most common real estate fraud schemes reported across California, along with practical steps you can take to protect yourself and your property. An informed homeowner is the strongest defense.

## California Real Estate Fraud: A Map of 5 Major Scams & Prevention Strategies

**REAL ESTATE SCAM PREVENTION:  
5 Major Threats & Solutions**

### 1. Business Email Compromise (BEC)

**Impersonation via Hack**  
Criminals hack into the email accounts of real estate agents or escrow officers to send fraudulent wiring instructions to unsuspecting buyers.

**Prevention: Voice Verification**  
Use multi-factor authentication (MFA) for email and always call your agent to verify payment changes.

### 3. Foreclosure Rescue Scams

**The "Upfront Fee" Trap**  
Fraudsters pose as experts promising to save your home from foreclosure, charging high upfront fees and then disappearing without providing help.

**Prevention: HUD-Approved Counselors**  
Never pay upfront for foreclosure assistance; seek help only from certified housing counselors or legitimate government-affiliated programs.

### 2. Deed and Title Fraud

**Forged Ownership**  
Scammers use fake identities and forged documents to transfer a property's title into their name to sell it or take out loans against it.

**Prevention: Record Monitoring**  
Regularly monitor property records through your county recorder and sign up for deed notification programs where available.

### 4. Property Flipping Fraud

**Manipulated Appraisals**  
Scammers buy distressed properties, perform no real repairs, and resell them at inflated prices by using deceptive or biased appraisals.

**Prevention: Independent Inspection**  
Hire your own independent inspector and ensure the appraiser has no financial stake in the sale.

### 5. Equity Skimming

#### The Title Transfer Scheme

A fraudster convinces a struggling homeowner to transfer their property title under the guise of "saving" the home, then collects the owner's payments while letting the original mortgage default.

Homeowner

Title Transfer

Fraudster

Homeowner

Homeowner Payments

Mortgage Default

**Prevention: Guard Your Title**  
Never sign over your home's title or grant power of attorney to someone claiming they will "rescue" you from financial trouble.

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about buying or selling  
your home, contact us  
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## Leilani Serrao-Baker

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