

home seller

CIVITASREALTYCA.COM

Summer 2025

SELLER'S ADVANTAGE GUIDE

Current Trends, Insights
& 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



Are You Asking Yourself These Questions About Selling Your House?

Should I Even Be Thinking About Moving Right Now?

If you already own a home, you might be wondering if it's smart to make a move—especially if it means taking on a higher mortgage rate. I get it. That hesitation is totally normal. But here's something to think about: your current home has probably gained a lot of value, and that equity could make your next move more possible than you realize. Take a second to think—do you know anyone in your neighborhood who sold recently? Did you hear what they got for their house? With the way home prices have jumped over the past few years, you might be surprised at what buyers are paying right now. In fact, Lawrence Yun, Chief Economist at the National Association of Realtors (NAR), says the average homeowner has gained around \$147,000 in equity over just the last five years. That's a big deal. And here in South OC it's quite a bit more. When you sell, that built-up equity can help power your next purchase—even with today's rates.

Can I Even Find a Home I Actually Like?

If you're thinking about moving, you might be worried about whether there are even homes out there worth considering. That concern probably comes from how tough it was to find a house during the last few years. But here's the good news—things have changed.

According to data from Realtor.com, the number of homes for sale has jumped by nearly 28% compared to this time last year. That's a big improvement.

Sure, inventory isn't back to normal levels just yet, but it's definitely moving in the right direction. And experts predict it'll grow another 10-15% in 2025. What does that mean for you? You've got more choices now than you've had in a long time—and a real shot at finding a home that checks all your boxes.



Are You Asking Yourself These Questions About Selling Your House?

Are People Even Buying Right Now

You might be wondering, “With rates and prices where they are, is anyone even buying homes?” It’s a fair question, but let’s look at what’s really happening.

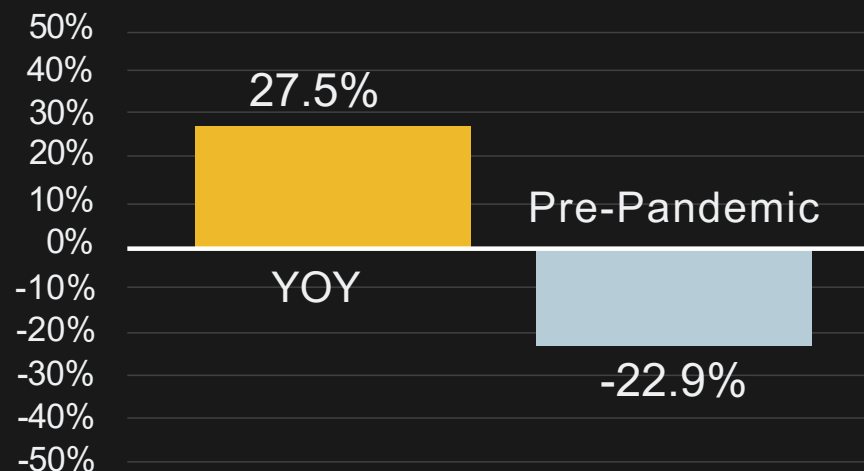
Even though last year wasn’t what we’d call a “normal” market, there were still 4.06 million homes sold—not including new builds. That’s according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR). And projections show that number could grow in 2025. But even if we stay at last year’s pace, check this out:

- $4.06 \text{ million homes} \div 365 \text{ days} = \text{about } 11,123 \text{ homes sold every day}$
- $11,123 \text{ homes} \div 24 \text{ hours} = \text{roughly } 463 \text{ homes sold per hour}$
- $463 \text{ homes} \div 60 \text{ minutes} = \text{about } 8 \text{ homes sold every minute}$

Let that sink in. While you’ve been reading this, around 8 homes just sold. The market is definitely moving—and buyers are out there actively searching for homes like yours.

The Supply of Homes for Sale is Growing, But Still Below The Numbers Seen in More Normal Years

Percent Change in Inventory Year-Over-Year vs. Pre-Pandemic (2017-2019)



Source: Realtor.com

How the Equity in Your Home Could Help You Buy Your Next With Cash

What Is Home Equity?

Home equity is simply the difference between what your home is worth and what you still owe on it. For example, if your home is valued at \$1,600,000 and your remaining mortgage balance is \$500,000, that means you have \$1,100,000 in equity.

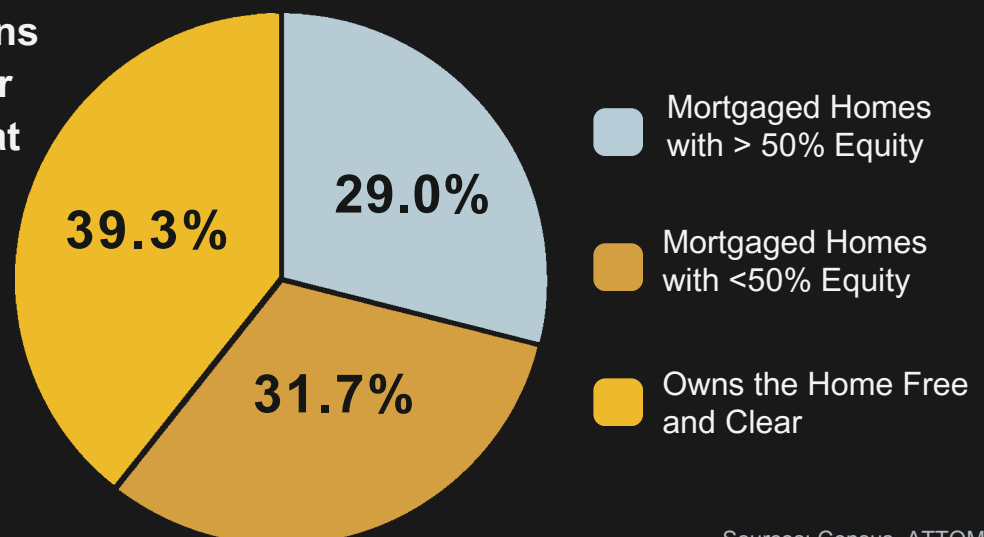
Why Home Equity Matters If You're Thinking About Selling

Here's why this is important: recent data from the U.S. Census and ATTOM shows that a large number of homeowners have built up a significant amount of equity. In fact, over two-thirds of homeowners have either completely paid off their mortgage or have at least 50% equity in their homes.

Let that sink in—2 out of every 3 homeowners have at least half of their home's value in equity. That's huge. To put some real numbers to it, the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) reports that the average homeowner with a mortgage has over \$319,000 in equity.

That's a lot of financial power—and if you're thinking about moving, that equity could give you the flexibility to make a big move, maybe even buy your next home without needing a loan.

**Over 2/3 of Americans
Have Paid Off Their
Mortgage or Have at
Least 50% Equity**



Sources: Census, ATTOM Data

Imagine Buying Your Next Home with Cash

No mortgage. No monthly payments. No interest rates to worry about. Just you, owning your next home outright.

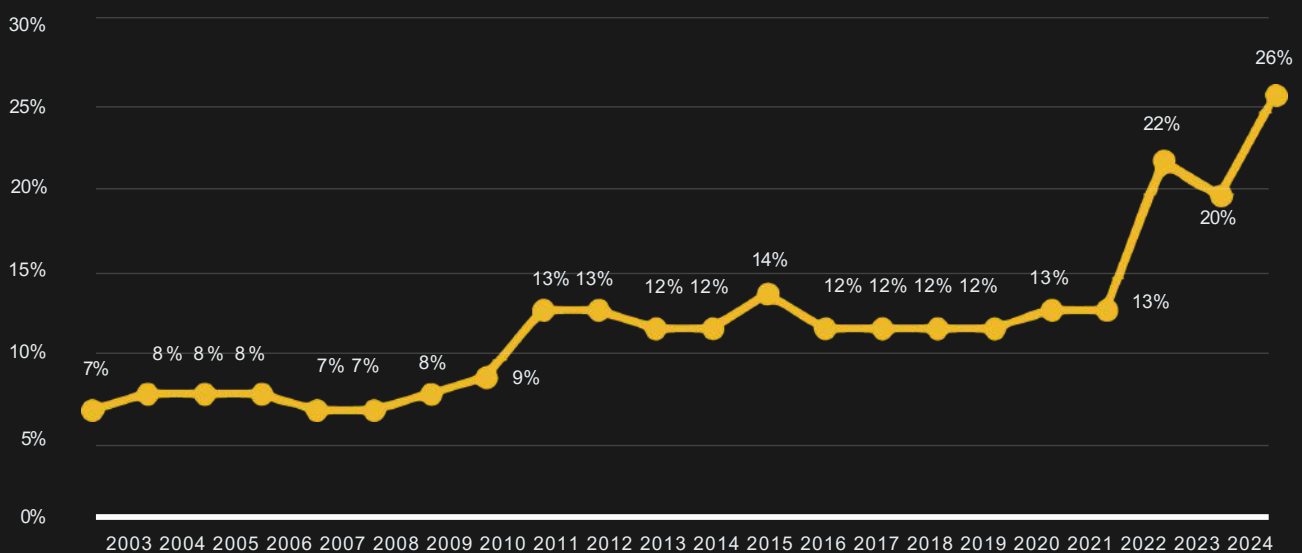
It might sound like a dream—but depending on how much equity you’ve built up, it could be more realistic than you think.

If you’re curious about how much equity you actually have, reach out to a real estate agent and ask for a Professional Equity Assessment Report (PEAR). It’s a simple way to get the facts—and it could open up options you didn’t even realize you had.

You might discover you’ve got enough equity to buy your next home with cash—and in today’s rate environment, that’s a game changer. Even if you’re not quite there, you could still have enough for a larger down payment, which means smaller monthly payments and less interest over time. Either way, your equity puts you in a powerful position.

The Share of All-Cash Buyers Reaches New High

Percent Distribution, 2003–2024



Source: NAR

What Experts Are Predicting for the 2025 Housing Market

Are Mortgage Rates Going to Drop?

A lot of people are watching mortgage rates closely and hoping they'll come down. The real question is—how much and how quickly?

The good news? Experts say rates should ease a bit in 2025—but not by a lot. So if you're waiting for those 3-4% rates to come back, it's time to adjust expectations.

Most forecasts suggest rates will likely settle somewhere in the mid-6% range by the end of the year. That's still better than where they've been recently, but not the dramatic drop some people are hoping for.

But keep in mind—these projections can change as new information comes out. Expert forecasts are based on what we know today, and things like inflation and other economic factors can shift the direction of mortgage rates quickly. So, expect some ups and downs ahead.

Instead of trying to predict the perfect moment or obsess over exact numbers, focus on the bigger picture. Even a small drop in rates can make a noticeable difference in your future mortgage payment. Timing the market perfectly is tough—watching the overall trend is a smarter move.

Mortgage Rate Projections

30-Year Fixed Rate, As of 2/20/2025

Quarter	Fannie Mae	MBA	Wells Fargo	All Three
2025 Q1	6.90%	6.90%	7.10%	6.96%
2025 Q2	6.80%	6.90%	6.90%	6.86%
2025 Q3	6.70%	6.70%	6.65%	6.68%
2025 Q4	6.60%	6.50%	6.50%	6.53%

What Experts Are Predicting for the 2025 Housing Market

Will Home Prices Drop?

Short answer: probably not.

Even though mortgage rates may dip a bit, home prices are expected to keep rising in most areas—just at a more normal, steady pace compared to the rapid jumps we’ve seen in the past.

If you look at what the experts are saying, most are forecasting prices to increase by around 3% in 2025, with many landing in the 3 to 4% range. So while prices aren’t skyrocketing, they’re still moving up—not down.

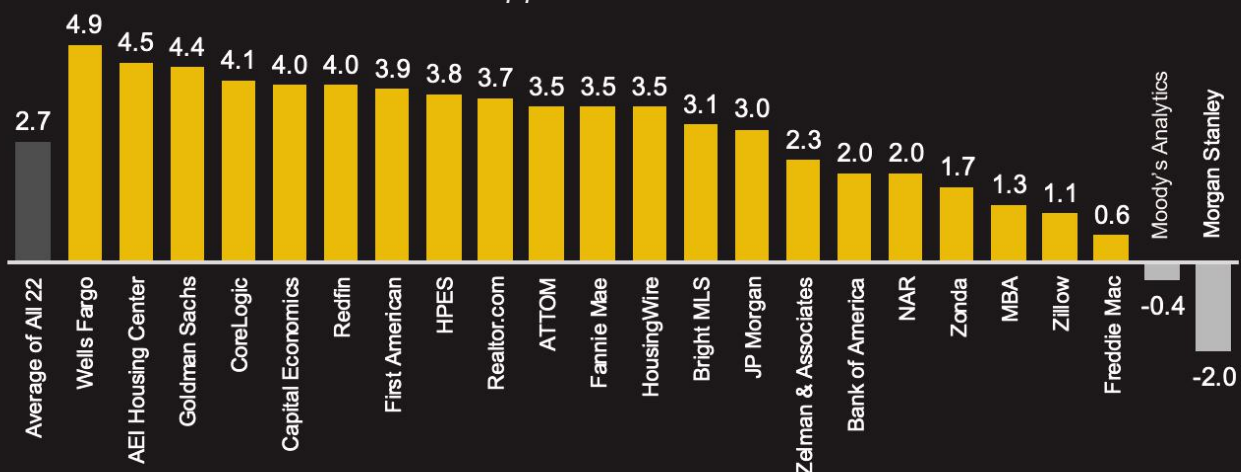
So, if you’re hoping for a major price drop to snag a deal this year, it’s probably not going to happen. But here’s the flip side—you also won’t have to deal with the sharp price spikes we’ve seen in the past few years.

That’s actually good news. It means more stability, and if you buy a home now, there’s a strong chance it will continue to grow in value over time. That kind of steady appreciation helps build your long-term wealth.

Just remember—the housing market is very local. Price trends can vary from one area to another. Some markets may see prices rise faster, while others might level off or even dip slightly if there’s more inventory. But in most places, home values are expected to keep climbing, as they typically do.

2025 Home Price Forecasts

Percent Appreciation as of 2/26/2025





Top 3 Mistakes Home Sellers Are Making Right Now

If you're thinking about selling your home, having the right strategy and mindset is everything. The market has shifted, and sellers who haven't adapted are making some expensive mistakes.

Here's a quick look at the top 3 missteps sellers are making right now—and how working with a knowledgeable real estate agent can help you avoid them all and sell with confidence.

1. Overpricing the Home

One of the biggest challenges sellers face right now is pricing their home correctly. A recent survey by John Burns Real Estate Consulting (JBREC) and Keeping Current Matters (KCM) found that real estate agents overwhelmingly agree—the top issue for sellers today is setting the right price (see graph below).

Pricing too high can scare off buyers and cause your home to sit on the market, which often leads to price drops and lost momentum. Getting the price right from the start is key to attracting serious buyers and getting top dollar.

Top 3 Mistakes Home Sellers Are Making Right Now

Too often, homeowners overprice their listings. If you're not fully tuned in to your local market trends, it's easy to fall into the trap of pricing high to leave "room to negotiate." But that strategy can backfire—big time.

Today's buyers are more cautious than ever. With higher interest rates and tight budgets, a home that's priced too high will turn them away. If buyers aren't viewing your home, it's not going to sell. That's why many sellers end up having to lower their price later, which can hurt your bottom line.

Want to avoid that hassle? Lean on your agent's expertise from day one. A skilled agent knows exactly what homes in your neighborhood have recently sold for—and how that impacts your home's value. Pricing it right upfront gives you the best shot at attracting serious buyers and getting the most for your home.

2. Skipping Repairs

Another big mistake sellers make is avoiding repairs. That leaky faucet or squeaky door might seem minor to you, but to a buyer, small issues can raise major red flags. They may wonder if those little flaws are just the tip of the iceberg—and that can lead to lower offers or requests for costly concessions.

As Investopedia puts it:

"Sellers who do not clean and stage their homes throw money down the drain. . . . Failing to do these things can reduce your sales price and may also prevent you from getting a sale at all. If you haven't attended to minor issues, such as a broken doorknob or dripping faucet, a potential buyer may wonder whether the house has larger, costlier issues that haven't been addressed either."

The fix? Work with your agent to identify which repairs or touch-ups matter most. Tackle those before listing photos are taken. A few small upgrades can make a big difference in how buyers perceive your home—and what they're willing to offer.

Top 3 Mistakes Home Sellers Are Making Right Now

3. Refusing to Negotiate

Today's buyers are dealing with high home prices and mortgage rates, so it's common for offers to come in below asking. Don't take it personally. Focus on your end goal—selling your house.

Your agent is there to help you negotiate smartly, without letting emotions get in the way. And with more inventory on the market, buyers have more leverage. That means they may ask for things like repairs, help with closing costs, or other concessions.

Be ready for these conversations, and trust your agent to guide you through them. Sometimes, a small compromise can get the deal done—without sacrificing your bottom line.

As U.S. News Real Estate explains:

“If you've received an offer for your house that isn't quite what you'd hoped it would be, expect to negotiate . . . the only way to come to a successful deal is to make sure the buyer also feels like he or she benefits . . . consider offering to cover some of the buyer's closing costs or agree to a credit for a minor repair the inspector found.”

The Biggest Mistake of All? Not Hiring an Agent

Notice a pattern? Each of these mistakes is easily avoided when you have the right agent by your side. That's why trying to sell your home on your own—without expert help—is the biggest mistake of all. A great agent brings strategy, experience, and negotiation skills to the table so you can sell faster and for more.

Staging Can Make ALL The Difference!

What Is Home Staging?

Home staging is the process of arranging and decorating your home to show it in the best possible light. The goal is to highlight your home's top features and help buyers imagine themselves living there. Staging can be as simple as adding a few finishing touches or as detailed as fully furnishing empty rooms—it all depends on your goals and budget.

How Does Staging Help Sell My Home?

Research shows that well-staged homes sell faster—and often for more money—than homes that aren't staged at all. Why? Because staging helps your home stand out, creates a stronger first impression, and makes it easier for buyers to see its full potential.

What Are My Staging Options?

You've got a few choices when it comes to staging your home.

The most common (and often most effective) is to lean on your real estate agent for expert advice. They know what today's buyers are looking for because they're in showings every day and hear real-time feedback. That insight is invaluable when getting your home market-ready.

If your home needs more attention, you can also consider full-service staging. This involves hiring a professional stager or staging company to assess your space, make recommendations, and handle all the details for you. This option is more hands-on—and more expensive—but it can make a big impact, especially in vacant or outdated homes. And we offer partial staging (ask when we meet).



How Staging Your House Affects Your Sale

Staged homes sell 73% faster



Offer prices can go up between 1-5%



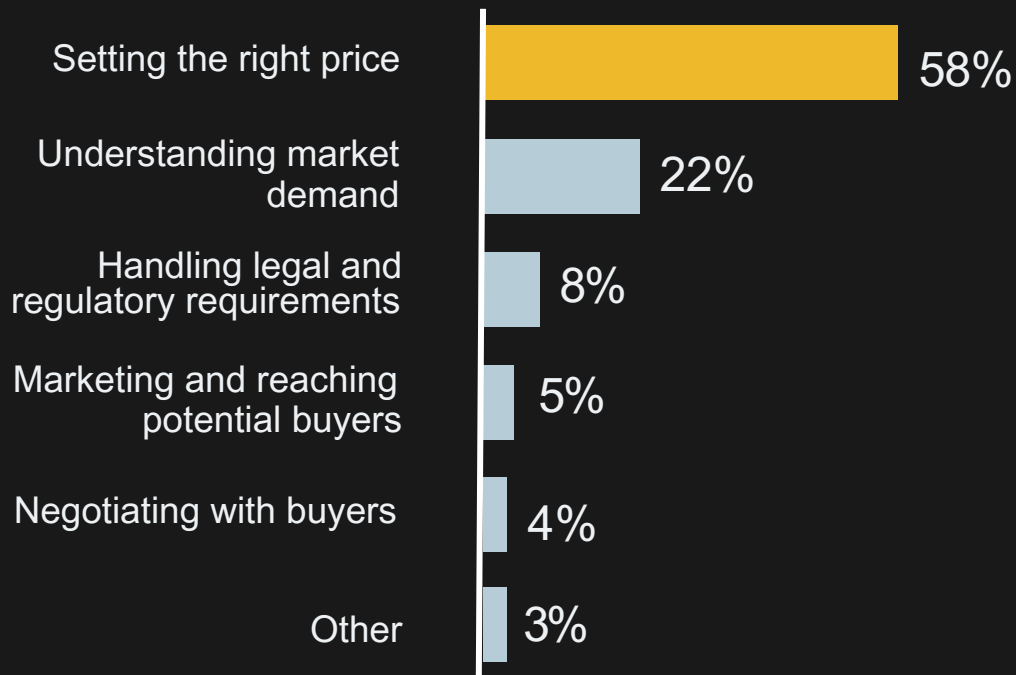
How Do I Know Which Staging Option Is Right for Me?

Your real estate agent will guide you on the best staging approach based on a few key factors:

- **Market Conditions:** In a slower market, full staging can help your home stand out and attract more attention. In a hot market where homes are selling quickly, you may only need minimal touch-ups.
- **Your Home's Condition:** If your home is vacant, has a unique layout, or could use help with flow and function, bringing in a professional stager with the right furniture and décor can make a big difference.
- **Your Budget:** If you're working with a limited budget or your home just needs minor updates, your agent can provide simple, cost-effective DIY tips to help your home shine without breaking the bank.

58% of Agents Say Sellers Have the Most Trouble Setting the Right Price in Today's Market

Top Issues Sellers Find Most Challenging in Today's Market



Source: JB REC and Keeping Current Matters Real Estate Agent Survey



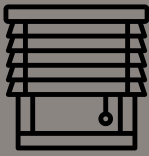
Watch my Video on How to Price a Home



Home Seller's Checklist

As you prepare to sell your home, make sure these items are on your to-do list. A trusted real estate professional can also offer custom advice and tips tailored to your unique situation to help you get the best results.

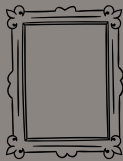
Make It Inviting



☐ Open blinds or curtains to let the light in



☐ Check lightbulbs and replace as needed



☐ Take down personal photos or items



☐ Declutter throughout

Show It Is Well Taken Care Of



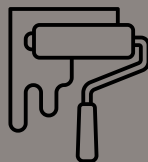
☐ Clean your vents and baseboards



☐ Vacuum, mop, or sweep floors



☐ Fix anything that's broken



☐ Touch up any scuffs on the walls

Boost The Curb Appeal



☐ Power wash outdoor surfaces



☐ Wash the windows (inside and out)



☐ Tidy up the landscaping



☐ Sweep patios, decks, & walkways

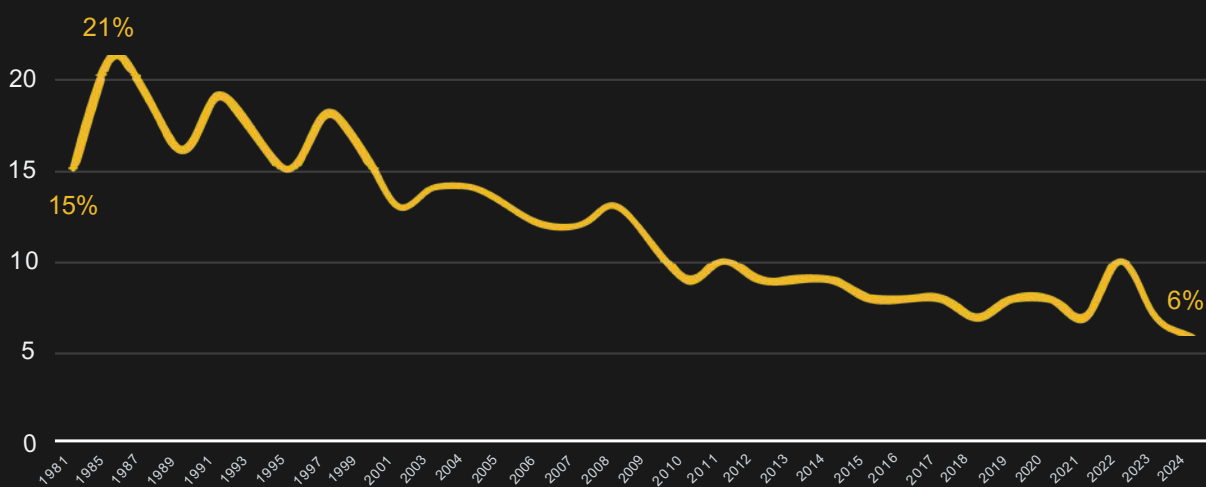
Why More Homeowners Are Turning to Real Estate Agents To Sell

The Risk of Not Staying Informed: Costly Mistakes Sellers Can Make

Thinking about selling your home on your own—what's often called For Sale by Owner (FSBO)? It might seem like a good idea at first, but the process can get complicated fast, especially in today's market.

That's why more homeowners are turning to real estate agents for help. The market is constantly shifting, and having an expert by your side can make all the difference. Here's why partnering with a trusted agent is the smart move for sellers right now.

The Percent of Homeowners Selling Without an Agent Has Hit an All-Time Low



Source: NAR



1. Pricing Your Home Accurately

One of the biggest challenges when selling on your own is nailing the right price. It's not about picking a number that feels right—it's about hitting the sweet spot in today's market. Price too high? Buyers might skip right over your listing.

Price too low? You risk leaving money on the table or raising concerns about your home's condition.

This is where a real estate agent's expertise matters. As Zillow puts it:

"Agents are pros when it comes to pricing properties and have their finger on the pulse of your local market. They understand current buying trends and can provide insight into how your home compares to others for sale nearby."

With deep knowledge of local trends, buyer behavior, and recent sales, your agent will help you price your home strategically—so it attracts attention and gives you the best shot at top dollar.

2. Navigating the Legal Paperwork

Selling a home comes with a stack of legal documents—from disclosure forms to purchase contracts—and every one of them needs to be filled out correctly and in line with local laws. If you're not familiar with these forms, the process can quickly feel overwhelming. Any mistakes can lead to delays, legal issues, or worse.

An experienced agent knows exactly what's required and will walk you through every step. They've handled this paperwork many times before and will make sure everything is done accurately and on time, so you can avoid costly errors and move forward with confidence.

Top Reasons To Hire a Real Estate Agent When Selling Your Home

Industry Experience



We're well-versed in the housing market and know the ins and outs of the entire process.

Expert Insights



We simply and effectively explain today's market conditions and what they mean for you.

Pricing and Market Value



We help you understand today's real estate values when setting the price of a listing or making an offer to purchase your next home.

Contracts and Fine Print



We help with all the disclosures and documents necessary in today's heavily regulated environment.

Marketing and Exposure



We have effective marketing tools and networks to attract more buyers.

Negotiation Experience



We act as a buffer in negotiations with all parties throughout the entire transaction.

For more information
about buying or selling
your home, contact us
today!

"It's not about how many houses I sell. It's about how many people I help."



Leilani Serrao-Baker

YOUR LOCAL REALTOR® | FOUNDER
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Serving Dana Point and Surrounding
Areas for the last 14 years

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