

Foothill Communities Home Seller's Guide

2026 EDITION

Everything you need to know before you list.

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INTRODUCTION

A Note from Kris & Kim

You're reading this because you're thinking about selling your home — and you want to do it right. That instinct alone puts you ahead of most sellers who list before they are truly prepared.

We have been helping Southern California homeowners sell their homes for over 20 years. In that time, we have seen every market — the frenzy, the slowdowns, the surprises — and the sellers who consistently come out ahead are the ones who go in informed. That is exactly what this guide is designed to do.

What follows is not a sales pitch. It is the honest, practical knowledge we share with every client before we ever talk about listing. Kris brings 20+ years of pricing and negotiation expertise. Kim brings an interior design background and staging expertise that has consistently elevated sale prices above asking.

Together, we also serve as California Association of REALTORS® legislative lobbyists — one of very few husband-and-wife teams in the state with that distinction. We fight for California homeowners not just at the negotiating table, but in Sacramento.

Read this at your own pace. Call us whenever you are ready.

— *Kris & Kim Darney*

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SECTION 01

How to Price Your Home Correctly from Day One

Pricing is the single most important decision you will make as a seller — and it is also the one most sellers get wrong. Here is the truth most agents will not tell you: an overpriced home does not just sit on the market. It actively works against you.

Why the First 10 Days Are Everything

Buyers and their agents monitor new listings obsessively. When your home hits the MLS, it gets the highest level of attention it will ever receive — in the first 7 to 10 days. If the price is wrong, buyers move on and the listing starts to accumulate days on market. Once that number climbs, buyers assume something is wrong with the property — and they start offering less, not more.

What a Real CMA Looks Like

A Comparative Market Analysis is not a Zestimate. It is a detailed, agent-prepared analysis that looks at homes similar to yours that have actually sold in your specific neighborhood within the last 90 days. It accounts for square footage, condition, lot size, upgrades, and the micro-dynamics of your street — things no algorithm can measure.

What the data tells us:

- Overpriced homes typically sell for less than correctly priced homes — not more.
- A price reduction signals weakness. Buyers read it as an invitation to negotiate harder.
- Correctly priced homes in good condition still generate multiple offers in most Foothill markets.
- Online estimators can be off by 5–15% in either direction. A local CMA is always more accurate.

Pricing to Attract vs. Pricing to Sit

The goal is not to get the highest number on paper on day one. The goal is to attract the most qualified buyers, generate the most competitive offers, and create the conditions for the best possible final sale price. Sometimes that means pricing at market. Sometimes it means pricing slightly below to ignite competition. The right strategy depends on your specific home, your street, and what is happening right now.

SECTION 02

What Today's Buyers Are Actually Looking For

Foothill Communities buyers in 2026 are more informed, more selective, and more sensitive to value than at any point in recent memory. They know what they can afford, they know what comparable homes look like, and they are not going to pay a premium for a home that does not justify it.

Move-In Condition Is Not Optional

The single most common phrase buyers use with their agents right now is 'move-in ready.' They are not looking for projects. If your home needs work, buyers will either pass or they will price the repairs into their offer — and they will always overestimate what repairs cost.

Top buyer priorities right now:

- Updated kitchens and bathrooms — these are the rooms that sell homes.
- Clean, neutral paint throughout — buyers want a blank canvas they can personalize.
- Curb appeal — the online listing photo is the first showing. Front yard matters.
- Functional outdoor space — patios, yards, and usable outdoor areas are highly valued.
- Good school district proximity — families will pay a meaningful premium for this.
- Garage and storage — underrated but consistently mentioned in buyer feedback.
- Natural light — remove heavy curtains, clean windows, trim overgrown landscaping.

What Buyers Will Not Overlook

Deferred roof maintenance, aging HVAC systems, and visible water damage are the three fastest ways to derail a sale. Even if buyers do not walk away, they will use these items to negotiate a price reduction or request repairs that can slow or kill escrow. Address these before you list.

SECTION 03

Prep & Staging Moves That Deliver the Highest Return

Staging is not decorating. It is a strategic marketing tool designed to help buyers emotionally connect with your home as quickly as possible. Kim has an extensive background in interior design and has staged homes across the Foothill Communities for over 20 years — here is what she knows works.

Do these before photography:

- Fresh interior paint — Sherwin-Williams Accessible Beige or Agreeable Gray are proven performers.
- Deep clean — not just tidy. Baseboards, grout, windows, appliances, garage.
- Refinish or replace dated hardware on cabinets, doors, and fixtures.
- Professional carpet cleaning or replacement if worn.
- Power wash the driveway, walkway, and exterior surfaces.
- Fresh mulch and seasonal color in the front yard.
- Fix anything that is broken, squeaky, dripping, or visibly worn.

Staging Principles That Work in Every Home

Remove at least one-third of your furniture. Buyers need to feel the space, not navigate around it. Depersonalize — take down family photos, clear countertops completely, and remove anything that makes the home feel like someone else's.

In the kitchen, clear everything off the counters except one or two curated items. In the master bedroom, invest in new bedding — white or neutral. In bathrooms, replace worn towels with fresh white ones folded neatly. These are small investments that photograph extremely well.

What Not to Spend Money On

Do not replace a functional kitchen or bathroom before listing unless it is genuinely unusable. Full remodels rarely return their full cost at sale. Focus on cosmetic updates — paint, fixtures, hardware, and cleaning — not structural overhauls.

SECTION 04

How to Read and Negotiate Offers

Receiving an offer is exciting. Receiving the wrong offer and responding to it incorrectly is expensive. Here is how to read what an offer is actually saying — and how to respond strategically.

An Offer Is More Than a Number

The purchase price is just one element. These terms matter just as much — and sometimes more:

Key offer terms to evaluate:

- Down payment and loan type — a larger down payment means less risk of financing falling through.
- Contingencies — inspection, appraisal, and loan contingencies are each potential exits for the buyer.
- Close of escrow timeline — does it work with your move-out plan?
- Requests for repairs or credits — these reduce your net proceeds.
- Earnest money deposit — a larger deposit signals a more committed buyer.
- Rent-back provisions — can you stay in the home after close if you need time to move?

How to Respond to a Below-Asking Offer

A below-asking offer is not a rejection. It is the opening of a negotiation. Do not take it personally — respond strategically. In most cases, a counteroffer at or near your asking price with improved terms is the right move.

If you receive multiple offers, do not automatically accept the highest number. Run the net sheet on each — after commissions, closing costs, repairs, and concessions, which offer actually puts the most money in your pocket?

The Inspection Negotiation

After inspections, buyers often return with a list of repair requests. In most cases, a credit in lieu of repairs is cleaner than doing the work yourself — it closes faster and avoids disputes over quality of work.

SECTION 05

The Real Timeline from Listing Day to Closing Day

Most sellers underestimate how long the process takes. Here is the realistic timeline for a well-prepared Southern California home sale.

2–4 weeks before listing	Prep and staging. Photography. Final pricing strategy. All disclosures prepared in advance.
Day 1 — Active on MLS	Your home goes live. Syndication to Zillow, Redfin, Realtor.com within 24 hours.
Days 1–10	Peak buyer traffic. Open houses. Showings. Most offers come in this window.
Days 7–14	Offer received, reviewed, negotiated, and accepted. Earnest money deposit received.
Days 1–17 of escrow	Buyer inspections completed. Inspection response negotiated and resolved.
Days 1–21 of escrow	Buyer's appraisal completed. If appraisal comes in low, renegotiation may occur.
Days 1–25 of escrow	Buyer's loan fully approved. Lender issues clear to close.
Day 30 — Close	Buyer signs loan docs. Deed records. Funds wire to you. Keys transfer.

SECTION 05 (continued)

Timeline factors to know:

- Cash sales can close in as few as 7–14 days.
- FHA and VA loans may add 5–10 days to the escrow timeline.
- Missing paperwork or slow responses are the most common causes of delays.
- Your agent should be following up daily during the final week before close.

SECTION 06

Common Seller Mistakes That Kill Deals

After 20+ years and hundreds of transactions, we have seen the same mistakes cost sellers time, money, and peace of mind. Here are the ones that come up most often — and exactly how to avoid them.

Overpricing at Launch

The most common and most costly mistake. Buyers are sophisticated. An overpriced home sits, accumulates days on market, and eventually sells for less than a correctly priced home would have on day one. Price it right from the start.

Being Present During Showings

Buyers need to imagine themselves in your home. When the seller is there, buyers rush through, say nothing, and leave without connecting. Leave during every showing. Every single one.

Not Disclosing Known Issues

California requires disclosure of all known material defects. Sellers who try to hide problems face bigger problems later — after escrow, after close, sometimes in court. Disclose everything.

Refusing Reasonable Repair Requests

Losing a solid buyer over a small repair is a very common and very avoidable outcome. Pick your battles carefully. The goal is to close, not to win the argument.

Choosing the Wrong Agent

The agent who tells you the highest price is not always the right agent. The right agent tells you the truth, has a documented track record in your specific neighborhood, and has the marketing infrastructure to reach real buyers.

Letting Emotion Drive Decisions

Your home has enormous personal meaning to you. To a buyer, it is a financial transaction. The sellers who do best make decisions based on data and strategy — not on how long they lived there or how much they paid for the renovation.

WHEN YOU'RE READY

Ready to Find Out What Your Home Is Worth?

*This guide gives you the foundation.
A conversation with Kris and Kim gives you the specific answers
for your specific home — your street, your market, right now.*

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No obligation. No pressure. Just honest answers.