FREE GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

The Ultimate *Seller's Handbook*

The exact approach Yasmine uses to consistently sell Arizona homes at or above asking price.

📖 Complete Guide ⏱️ 18 min read ✒️ By Yasmine Varanai

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 Welcome

02 Is Now the Right Time?

03 Pricing Strategy (CMA)

04 Preparing Your Home

05 Pre-Listing Repairs

06 Staging That Sells

07 Professional Photography

08 Marketing Your Home

09 Showings & Open Houses

10 Evaluating Offers

11 Negotiation Strategy

12 Surviving the Inspection

13 The Appraisal

14 Closing as a Seller

15 Tax Implications

16 Working with Yasmine

Welcome

Selling a home is emotional. It's also a business transaction with tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars on the line. This handbook gives you both sides — the practical strategy and the honest expectations.

I've used this exact approach with sellers across Arizona, and the numbers speak for themselves: my listings typically sell at 98-103% of list price, often within 14 days. That's not luck. It's strategy.

Is Now the Right Time?

Sellers often ask "when's the best time to sell?" The honest answer: **when selling aligns with your life plan, not when the market is perfect**. That said, here's what to consider:

Mar-May
Peak AZ selling season (snowbird returns, tax refunds)

Oct-Nov
Secondary peak (cooler weather, new inventory)

Jul-Aug
Slowest months — still sells, just fewer viewers

Dec-Jan
Quiet, but serious buyers (fewer tire-kickers)

MYTH BUSTER

You can sell in summer

Summer listings in AZ are often dismissed, but data shows serious buyers shop year-round. If you're relocating, downsizing, or upgrading — don't wait 6 months for "spring." Price correctly, market well, and you'll find your buyer.

Pricing Strategy (CMA)

The #1 mistake sellers make is overpricing. Every week you sit overpriced, your listing gets stale. Stale listings sell below market value. This is how a seller ends up with less than they would have gotten from correct pricing upfront.

How a proper CMA works:

01 **Comparable sold homes** — within ½ mile, sold in last 90 days, similar size/beds/baths/condition

02 **Active competition** — what are similar homes currently listed at

03 **Pending sales** — what's under contract (the leading indicator of current market)

04 **Adjustments** — for pool, view, upgrades, lot size, age

05 **Pricing strategy** — list at market? Slightly below for multiple offers? Above for room to negotiate?

> *"Pricing isn't just math. It's psychology. $899K feels dramatically different than $900K to a buyer browsing Zillow. Strategic pricing wins."*

Yasmine provides free CMAs for any Arizona homeowner — even if you're just curious.

Preparing Your Home

Buyers decide whether they like a home in the first 30 seconds. The goal isn't perfection — it's **removing distractions**.

4 weeks before listing

- ✓ Deep clean (or hire a deep-clean service — ~$200-400)
- ✓ Declutter aggressively — 50% less stuff is better
- ✓ Pack and store personal photos, religious items, trophies
- ✓ Rent storage unit for excess furniture if needed
- ✓ Touch-up paint on walls/trim
- ✓ Replace any burned-out bulbs
- ✓ Have windows professionally cleaned

1 week before listing

- ✓ Get professional photos done
- ✓ Final walkthrough with your agent
- ✓ Pre-book kennel/pet sitter for showings
- ✓ Create a plan for pets during showings
- ✓ Arrange flowers or simple staging touches

Pre-Listing Repairs

Not every repair is worth doing. Focus on **what a buyer's inspector will call out** — those become negotiation leverage against you.

High-ROI repairs:

- **Fresh paint** (neutral colors) — $1,500-4,000, returns 200-300%
- **Landscape cleanup** — $500-2,000, huge first impression impact
- **HVAC service** — $100-300, provide receipt at inspection
- **Roof tune-up** — $200-500 for a certificate, reassures buyers
- **Pool service catch-up** — $200-600, essential in AZ
- **Fix minor plumbing drips** — $100-300, prevents inspection hits
- **Replace old disposal, broken outlets, slow-draining sinks**

Skip these:

- Full kitchen/bathroom remodels (rarely ROI-positive right before selling)
- Carpet replacement if only one room is bad (paint credit instead)
- Major upgrades buyers may not appreciate (they'll redo it)

Staging That Sells

Arizona homes typically stage well when you play up what buyers love here:

- **Outdoor living** — patio furniture arranged, pool pristine, citrus on trees
- **Bright open feel** — open curtains during shoots, add mirrors to amplify light
- **Desert-modern warmth** — clean lines, earth tones, a few succulents
- **Main bedroom as retreat** — hotel-style made bed, no personal items on nightstands
- **Kitchen decluttered** — max 3 items on counters (coffee maker, fruit bowl, cutting board)

If you don't have furniture that photographs well, virtual staging ($25-50 per image) or renting staging furniture ($500-1,500/month) are both solid options.

Professional Photography

85% of buyers start their search online. Your listing photos are your first showing. **Never skimp here**.

What professional real estate photography includes:

- HDR (high dynamic range) exposure blending — both interior and bright windows visible
- Twilight shots for homes with pools or mountain views
- Drone aerials for larger lots or scenic locations
- Lifestyle shots showing rooms "in use"
- 24-48 hour turnaround of edited images

Good packages run $250-500 in Arizona. Yasmine includes professional photography with every listing — no extra charge to you.

Marketing Your Home

Listing your home isn't enough. **Active marketing** is what separates fast, full-price sales from languishing listings.

Full marketing plan components

- ✓ MLS listing (syndicates to Zillow, Realtor.com, Redfin, Homes.com, 100+ sites)
- ✓ Professional photography + virtual tour
- ✓ Compelling property description (emotional, not just spec-list)
- ✓ Social media campaigns (Instagram, Facebook targeting buyers in feeder markets)
- ✓ Email blast to buyer-agent network
- ✓ Just-listed postcards to surrounding neighborhood
- ✓ Broker tour (other agents preview)
- ✓ Open house weekend 1-2 after listing
- ✓ Targeted ads to relocating buyers from CA, WA, IL

Showings & Open Houses

In AZ, most showings happen between 10am-2pm on weekdays and 11am-5pm on weekends. Expect showings to come in bursts — **3-5 showings in the first weekend is normal for a well-priced home**.

During showings:

- **Leave the home** — buyers feel uncomfortable with sellers present
- **Take pets with you** or crate safely
- **AC set to 74°F in summer** (78+ feels oppressive)
- **Lights all on, curtains open**
- **Pleasant, neutral scent** — no strong candles or cooking odors
- **Soft music** optional but often helps

Evaluating Offers

When offers come in, price is just the start. **Terms often matter more than the number**.

What to look at:

01 **Price** — obvious, but consider *net* (after concessions) vs gross

02 **Financing type** — cash > conventional > FHA/VA (which may require repairs)

03 **Earnest money** — 1%+ of price shows commitment

04 **Inspection period** — shorter is better for you

05 **Contingencies** — home-sale contingencies are risky

06 **Close date** — does it work for your move timeline?

07 **Seller concessions requested** — how much are they asking?

08 **Lender strength** — local AZ lenders are typically more reliable than online-only

Negotiation Strategy

Almost every offer comes in below asking — that's just how negotiation works. Here's how to counter strategically:

- **Counter at or near list** if the market supports it
- **Counter on terms, not just price** — e.g., accept lower price but require 10-day inspection instead of 10
- **Respond within 24 hours** — momentum matters
- **Don't ignore weaker offers** — counter them back into the game
- **Create competition** when you have multiple offers — "highest and best" by X deadline

Surviving the Inspection

Every Arizona buyer gets an inspection. Expect them to find **15-30 items** — most minor. This is normal. Not every item needs fixing.

Common AZ inspection items:

- GFCI outlets missing near sinks (easy fix, $15-30 each)
- Loose toilet or sink faucet

- Dirty AC coils or filter
- Window screens missing or torn
- Roof tile cracks from heat
- Pool equipment age/condition notes
- Smoke/CO detector missing or old
- Minor drywall cracks (cosmetic)

> NEGOTIATION FRAMEWORK
>
> ### The "3 buckets" approach
>
> **Safety items** (electrical, gas, structural): fix these.
> **Functional items** (leaks, broken fixtures): fix or credit.
> **Cosmetic items** (paint chips, tile grout): decline — buyers will handle or live with.

The Appraisal

If the buyer is financing, their lender orders an appraisal. If the home appraises at or above your accepted price, you're fine. If it appraises low, you have options:

- Renegotiate to the appraised value
- Meet in the middle (you drop, they cover gap)
- Buyer covers the gap in cash (if allowed by their loan)
- Appeal the appraisal with additional comps (rare success)
- Cancel and relist (last resort)

Closing as a Seller

Closing day for sellers is easy:

- Sign your documents at the title company (30-45 minutes)

- Provide any keys, garage remotes, warranty information, HOA documents

- Cancel homeowners insurance effective on closing date
- Final meter readings for utilities
- Wire instructions set up for proceeds (will arrive 24-48 hrs after closing)

Tax Implications

IMPORTANT

Consult a CPA

This section is general guidance only. Consult an Arizona tax professional before selling.

Primary residence exclusion (federal):

If you've lived in the home for 2 of the last 5 years, you can exclude up to **$250K of capital gains** ($500K married filing jointly) from federal taxes. This is huge.

Arizona state tax:

Arizona has a flat 2.5% income tax (2024+). Capital gains are taxed as regular income, but the federal exclusion still applies.

Investment property:

If it's not a primary residence, consider a **1031 exchange** to defer capital gains by reinvesting in another investment property. Rules are strict — work with a qualified intermediary.

Working with Yasmine

Yasmine Varanai

Licensed Arizona Real Estate Agent · Independent

Yasmine's sellers typically net more and sell faster than market averages. Her approach combines strategic pricing, professional marketing, and sharp negotiation honed over 15+ years of business experience. Free CMAs, honest advice, zero pressure.