LIVING IN COASTAL OC

SUSAN CHASE GROUP AT COMPASS

Selling a Luxury Home in Coastal South OC

The 2026 Seller's Guide

THE NINE STAGE PROCESS · STRATEGY TO CLOSING DAY

A NOTE FROM SUSAN

It is not about the property. It is about *strategy.*

Most sellers I meet have done some version of the same preparation. They have reviewed recent sales in the neighborhood, they have a number in mind, and they have a rough sense of what needs to happen before listing. That foundation is valuable. But the gap between a well prepared seller and a strategically positioned one is where the real outcome differences live, and in this market those differences are meaningful.

STRATEGY, TIMING, AND A CLEAR PLAN

This is the complete 2026 guide to the coastal South Orange County selling process. From the first conversation about whether the timing is right, through pricing, preparation, marketing, showings, negotiation, escrow, and the final close. I walk each stage the way I actually run it with my clients, including where the most value is created and where it most often gets quietly lost.

I represent sellers across five coastal communities. Dana Point, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Beach, San Clemente, and San Juan Capistrano. The framework is consistent. The nuances vary by market, and I name them where they matter.

Selling a luxury home here is not about the property. It is about strategy, timing, and the discipline to stay aligned with what drives a top dollar outcome. Let me show you how the whole thing fits together.

Susan Chase

SUSAN CHASE GROUP AT COMPASS · DANA POINT

NINE STAGES, START TO CLOSE

THE PROCESS

Nine Stages, Start to Close

The website shows the shape of this process. Here is the full nine stage version, each step named, so you can see exactly where we are headed and where my work matters most before we ever list.

1 Strategy and Goals

The first conversation is about you, not the house. Constraints, timing, and what success actually means shape everything that follows.

2 Pricing

Where the most seller value is created or lost. A rigorous analysis weighs condition, view, water proximity, and live competition, not just closed sales.

3 Pre Listing Preparation

We remove every objection a buyer might use to justify a lower offer, and present the home at its best within a reasonable budget.

4 Staging and Media

Photography and video carry the first impression. The vast majority of buyers meet your home on a screen before they ever meet it in person.

5 Marketing and Launch Week

The first seven days are the highest leverage window of the entire sale. A launch is a coordinated sequence, not a published button.

6 Showings and Feedback

We read the room in real time, track qualified interest, and adjust before small signals become a stale listing.

7 Offers and Negotiation

We evaluate every offer for qualification, contingency risk, and probability of a clean close, not just the headline number.

8 Escrow Management

Lender progress, title review, inspection response, and the appraisal package all run in the background so nothing slips.

9 Closing Day

For a seller well prepared at every prior stage, the decisions are behind you. What remains is paperwork, funding, and keys.

STRATEGY AND GOALS

01 The Conversation That Shapes Everything

THE FIRST CONVERSATION IS ABOUT YOU

The first conversation is not about the property. It is about the seller. Your constraints, your timing, and what success actually means for you shape every decision that follows.

A seller closing on a deadline has different priorities than one holding out for the right offer. Neither is wrong. But the strategy that serves each is different, and getting that clear at the start prevents the drift that costs sellers money in the middle.

WARM UP QUESTIONS

What is driving the move and by when. What does a great outcome look like beyond the number. What would make you feel the sale went sideways even at a good price. Your answers set the frame for pricing, prep, and how aggressively we launch.

From there we build a plan that fits your specific home and your specific timeline, rather than a generic listing template. The rest of this guide is that plan, stage by stage.

PRICING TO THE MARKET, NOT TO HOPE

PRICING

02 Where the Outcome Is Decided

Pricing is where the most seller value is created or lost. Get it right and everything downstream becomes easier. Get it wrong and no amount of marketing or negotiation skill fully recovers the ground lost in the first two weeks.

THE REAL COST OF AIMING HIGH

The price of we can always come down is the days on market those reductions create. A stale listing negotiates from weakness. A well priced one negotiates from demand.

What a rigorous analysis actually weighs

A serious coastal South OC valuation is a current conversation, not a historical one. It weighs condition, the view premium, water proximity, the lot, the HOA and Mello Roos profile, and the active competition a buyer will be comparing you against right now. Closed sales are a starting point, not the whole picture.

- Condition relative to the freshest comparable listings, not last year's sales
- The measurable premium a real ocean or water view commands in your specific pocket
- What is actively on the market competing for the same buyer this month
- Carrying cost signals like HOA and Mello Roos that shape a buyer's true budget

The goal is a number that invites competition in the first week, because that is the window that sets the tone for the entire sale.

03

PRE LISTING PREPARATION

What I Want Done Before the Camera Turns On

Prep is where sellers most commonly over invest or under invest. The goal is not to renovate. It is to remove every objection a buyer might use to justify a lower offer, while presenting the home at its best within a sensible budget. Cosmetic refresh and decluttering reliably outperform structural renovation per dollar spent.

PREPARING THE HOME BEFORE THE CAMERA

Condition cleared, top to bottom

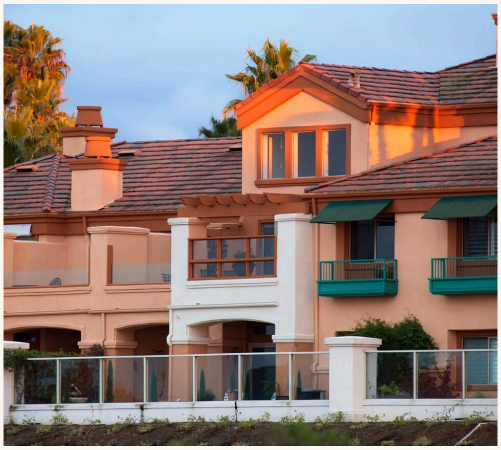
- **Pre listing inspection completed**, with visible items either addressed or strategically disclosed
- **Hardware, lighting, and dated finishes updated** where they read as wear
- **Neutral coastal paint refreshed** in any room showing age

Depersonalized and styled

- **Personal items and family photos removed** so buyers can see themselves in the space
- **Professional staging in the primary living areas**, which is what turns openness into an emotional response

CURB APPEAL AND FINAL POLISH

Landscaping cleaned up, the entry refreshed, and exterior surfaces pressure washed where needed. A deep clean is completed within 48 hours of the photography shoot so the home is captured at its absolute best the moment the camera turns on. Full kitchen or bathroom renovations rarely pencil out. A buyer at this level expects to customize those spaces themselves.



THE FIRST IMPRESSION BUYERS MEET

05

MARKETING AND LAUNCH WEEK

Making the Right First Impression

Marketing is not primarily about getting onto the MLS. That is table stakes. The real work is creating the right first impression on the right buyer, often before they have started an active search.

Reaching buyers far beyond the local market

Coastal South OC draws from a far wider pool than most markets. The buyer for a home in Dana Point or Laguna Niguel is as likely to be in Los Angeles as two streets over, or relocating from the Bay Area, Phoenix, Seattle, or Texas. My listings are introduced through a coordinated social presence built around an established coastal OC audience, paired with paid campaigns that target LA feeder buyers and the primary out of state relocation markets.

Photography that earns the showing

The vast majority of buyers first meet a property through photography, and that encounter either generates a showing or it does not. There is no neutral outcome. I bring in photographers who specialize in architectural work in coastal settings, with aerial footage standard where ocean views and outdoor living do not read in standard frames.

A COORDINATED LAUNCH WEEK

The first seven days on market are the highest leverage window of the entire sale. A launch is a sequence. Coming Soon exposure in the days prior, MLS activation timed for the peak weekend showing window, broker preview, public open house, social distribution, and direct email outreach. Where multiple offers are likely, an offer review date three to five days after going live creates a competitive environment that serves you.

07

OFFERS AND NEGOTIATION

Reading Offers, Protecting Value

READING OFFERS BEYOND THE HEADLINE

When offers arrive the instinct is to focus on price. Understandable, and incomplete. A high offer from a buyer with uncertain financing is worth less than a clean offer from a well qualified buyer at a lower number.

Reading offers beyond the headline

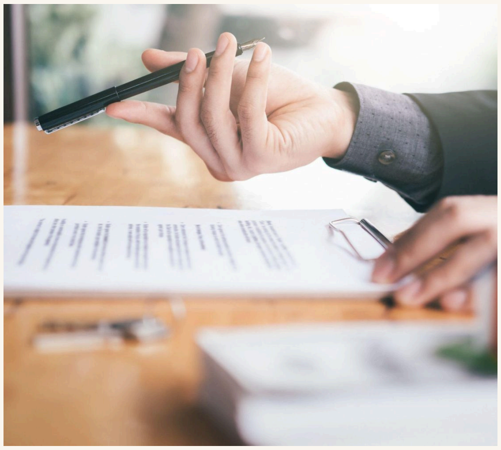
Transactions fall out of escrow at these price points when underwriting was not tight, and the property relists into a softened market with a story to explain. I analyze every offer for buyer qualification, contingency risk, and probability of a clean close, then weigh price against the certainty of actually getting to the table.

Using competition without losing the strongest buyer

For properties likely to draw multiple offers, a defined review date creates a competitive window. Countering selectively among the strongest candidates, and using that competition to improve price and terms at the same time, typically outperforms simply accepting the highest headline number.

ONCE UNDER CONTRACT

The work shifts from generating interest to protecting value. In the inspection negotiation that follows, material findings around livability, safety, and disclosed condition get addressed thoughtfully. Cosmetic or leverage seeking requests get a respectful but firm response. Holding that line calmly is where an experienced listing agent quietly earns their keep.



MANAGING THE FILE THROUGH ESCROW

08

ESCROW MANAGEMENT

What I Manage in the Background

The administrative phase is more intensive than sellers often expect. Every track has its own timeline, and a delay on any one can move the closing date. My job is to keep all of them coordinated and to surface problems before they become crises.

Documents and deadlines

Confirming seller side documents are delivered on time and correctly, and that every contingency removal deadline is honored on schedule.

Financing and title

Monitoring buyer loan progress and underwriting throughout escrow, while reviewing the preliminary title report for anything that needs seller side resolution before close.

Inspection and appraisal

Managing the inspection response and any agreed repairs or credits, and tracking the appraisal closely so that if it comes in below contract I have a response prepared rather than scrambling to react.

THE APPRAISAL PACKAGE

Luxury coastal homes are hard to appraise accurately, because comparable sales at the relevant price points are less frequent and appraiser familiarity with specific sub markets varies. I prepare an appraisal package for every listing that documents the relevant comparables, the attributes justifying the contract price, and any off market data a standard search would miss. It gives the appraiser the best possible foundation for an accurate number.

STAGE NINE AND YOUR NET

Closing Day, and What It Costs to Sell

Closing day should be calm. For a seller well prepared at every prior stage the decisions are behind them, and what remains is paperwork, funding, and keys. Before you sign, I review the closing disclosure with you line by line, because errors occasionally appear in commission math or proration figures.

A CALM, WELL PREPARED CLOSING DAY

7–8%
TYPICAL TOTAL SELLER SIDE CLOSING COSTS, OF SALE PRICE

30–35
DAYS IN ESCROW FOR A WELL PREPARED SALE

8–12
WEEKS TOTAL, FIRST CONVERSATION TO CLOSE

Where that figure goes

- Real estate commission, the largest single line
- Escrow fees and title insurance
- County and any local transfer taxes
- Any buyer credits negotiated during the transaction

PLAN YOUR NET FROM THE START

At coastal South OC price points, seven to eight percent is a material figure that belongs in your net proceeds planning from the beginning, not as a surprise at the signing table. A thirty minute consultation gives you a current pricing read, a launch timeline, and a realistic net so you can make the decision with clear eyes.

QUESTIONS SELLERS ASK

Answered, Plainly

SELLING ON THE COAST, DONE RIGHT

How long does it take to sell a luxury home here?

From the first conversation to the close of escrow, most well prepared sellers should plan for eight to twelve weeks. That includes two to four weeks of pre listing preparation, one to three weeks on market for a well priced property, and 30 to 35 days in escrow. Properties needing significant prep add weeks at the front. Properties priced incorrectly add time at the market stage.

Should I renovate before listing, or sell as is?

It depends on the property, the price point, and current buyer appetite in that segment. Cosmetic updates like fresh paint, refreshed landscaping, updated hardware, and thorough decluttering generate reliable returns. Full kitchen or bathroom renovations rarely recover their cost and may remove finishes a luxury buyer would prefer to select themselves.

What is the best time of year to sell?

Spring, roughly February through May, historically produces the most active demand and the most competitive offers. That said, the coast has a more compressed seasonal swing than inland markets, and well prepared homes sell in every month here. A seller genuinely ready in October often outperforms one who waits for spring but is not truly prepared.

Do I have to disclose everything an inspection finds?

In California sellers must disclose all known material defects, conditions that would affect a reasonable buyer's decision or the price they would pay. Beyond the legal requirement, full proactive disclosure is strategically sound. Issues discovered after closing are far more expensive to resolve, and undisclosed defects create liability that extends well beyond the sale proceeds.

LET US TALK

Start the conversation.

A thirty minute seller consultation is the fastest way to get a current pricing read, a launch timeline, and a clear sense of what your specific property requires to sell for its full value.

- Book a seller consultation
  calendly.com/susan-chase-1/real-estate-consultation
- Request a home valuation
  livingincoastaloc.com/evaluation
- See recently sold coastal homes
  livingincoastaloc.com/sold-listing

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Connect and start the conversation at livingincoastaloc.com

Cost of sale and timeline figures are typical ranges for coastal South Orange County and vary by property, price point, and current market conditions. This guide is general information and not legal, tax, or accounting advice.