



BEFORE YOU LIST

*A Westside Home Seller's Guide to
Pricing, Preparation & Selling Strategically*

**THE DECISIONS TO MAKE BEFORE
YOUR HOME GOES ON THE MARKET**

BY VALERIE FITZGERALD

Luxury Real Estate Advisor | Beverly Hills & Los Angeles Westside

Selling well starts before the listing agreement.

The most expensive seller mistakes are often made before a home reaches the market: choosing a price for the wrong reasons, improving the wrong things, overlooking presentation, or deciding between public and private exposure without understanding the tradeoffs.

This guide is designed to help you make those decisions with clarity. It is not a generic list of chores. It is a framework for protecting your time, privacy, negotiating position and final result.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What combination of price, preparation, exposure and timing gives this particular property the strongest position?

Your seller strategy snapshot

Complete this before your first strategy conversation.

My ideal timing to sell is:

My next move depends on:

My three non-negotiables are:

My preferred level of privacy is:

The result that would make this sale successful is:

BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO SELL

Five decisions to make first

1

Timing - Is your preferred timing driven by the market, a life event, another purchase, taxes, carrying costs or convenience?

2

Financial objective - Define the outcome you need after commissions, preparation costs, credits, taxes, debt payoff and moving expenses.

3

Next move - A sale strategy changes when you must buy first, sell first, lease temporarily or coordinate two closings.

4

Property readiness - Separate work that protects value from work that merely reflects your personal taste.

Privacy and exposure - Decide who should know, how showings will work and whether full-market exposure is worth the visibility.

VALERIE'S PERSPECTIVE

There is no single 'right' way to sell. The right strategy is the one built around the property, the seller and the market at the same moment.

Questions to bring to your consultation

- What would make now a strong or weak time to list?
- Which preparation items are likely to improve the result?
- What are the costs and risks of waiting?
- What should remain confidential before and during the sale?

VALUATION

What is your home actually worth?

An online estimate can be a starting point, but it cannot fully interpret the details that shape buyer behavior in a Westside luxury market. Two homes with similar square footage can command very different prices because the experience of living in them is different.

The value factors that require judgment

FACTOR	WHAT BUYERS NOTICE
Micro-location	Street, block, traffic, school boundary and immediate surroundings
Site	Lot shape, usability, privacy, orientation, landscaping and outdoor flow
Architecture	Design integrity, ceiling height, scale, light and floor plan
Condition	Quality of renovation, deferred maintenance and buyer-perceived work
Views & setting	View quality, permanence, noise, access and sense of arrival
Competition	What buyers can choose today, not only what sold months ago

A USEFUL VALUATION

A credible valuation should show a range, explain the variables and connect price to the strategy, not simply produce one impressive number.

POSITIONING

The price vs. value problem

Four numbers often enter the conversation. Only one is determined by the market.

1

The seller's number - The amount connected to your plans, investment, memories or expectations.

2

The agent's recommendation - A strategic list-price opinion designed to create the best market response.

3

Comparable evidence - Recent sales, pending activity, competing listings and relevant adjustments.

4

The buyer's number - What a qualified buyer is willing to pay after comparing every alternative available.

Why overpricing can cost more than time

- The strongest buyers may never schedule a showing because the home appears outside its competitive set.
- Longer market time can create questions about condition, motivation or desirability.
- Later reductions may attract less urgency than a well-positioned launch.
- Carrying costs continue while leverage can weaken.

THE GOAL

Choose a price that supports the desired result. Price is not merely a label; it determines which buyers compare the home, how urgently they respond and how much leverage you preserve.

PREPARATION

Should you renovate before selling?

The best pre-sale work removes buyer objections, improves first impressions and makes the property easier to understand. It does not automatically mean a major renovation.

OFTEN WORTH CONSIDERING

- ✓ Fresh, neutral paint where condition distracts
- ✓ Landscape cleanup and a stronger arrival
- ✓ Deep cleaning, decluttering and window

PAUSE BEFORE SPENDING

- A full kitchen chosen for your personal taste
- Expensive work without a defined buyer benefit
- Cosmetic upgrades that expose larger system

cleaning

- ✓ Lighting, hardware and small visible repairs
- ✓ Selective staging to clarify scale and purpose
- ✓ Targeted pre-inspection when it reduces uncertainty

issues

- Projects that delay the best market window
- Over-improving beyond neighborhood expectations
- Starting work before bids, permits and timing are clear

Use this three-part test

- ☐ Will buyers notice the improvement immediately?
- ☐ Will it remove a likely objection or uncertainty?
- ☐ Can it be completed well, on time and within a sensible budget?

RULE OF THUMB

Prepare for the buyer you are most likely to attract, not for every possible buyer.

LAUNCH READINESS

10 things I would do before going to market

1

Define the target buyer - Know whose priorities should shape the presentation.

2

Establish the story - Identify the emotional and practical reasons this home stands apart.

3

Review competition - Tour or study what buyers will compare against your home.

4

Choose the pricing strategy - Connect price, timing, exposure and negotiation goals.

5

Create a preparation plan - Approve work by impact, deadline, owner and budget.

6

Gather property records - Organize permits, plans, warranties, invoices and improvements.

7

Resolve visible distractions - Address the details buyers may interpret as neglect.

- 8 Plan the visual launch** - Coordinate staging, photography, film, floor plans and copy.
- 9 Set showing protocols** - Decide notice, access, pets, security and privacy requirements.
- 10 Agree on reporting** - Know which activity, feedback and market changes you will review.

EXPOSURE AND DISCRETION

On-market vs. off-market

Privacy can be valuable. Exposure can also be valuable. The strongest decision comes from understanding what each route can and cannot deliver.

CONSIDER	ON-MARKET	OFF-MARKET / PRIVATE
Exposure	Broad visibility and easier buyer discovery	Controlled outreach to a narrower audience
Price discovery	More market feedback and competitive potential	Fewer data points; price may be harder to test
Privacy	More public information and activity	Greater control over information and access
Convenience	Structured launch and showing cadence	Potentially fewer showings, but less predictable response
Best fit	Sellers prioritizing reach and market validation	Sellers with a compelling privacy or testing reason

Questions to ask before choosing private exposure

- How will qualified buyers be identified and contacted?
- How will value be tested with limited exposure?
- What information will remain confidential?
- What would trigger a move to the open market?

MODERN LUXURY MARKETING

How a home should be marketed today

Marketing is not a collection of assets. It is a coordinated system designed to make the right buyer notice, understand and act.

- 1 Positioning** - Define the buyer, the property story and the reasons to choose this home now.

2

Presentation - Use design, staging, photography, film, floor plans and copy to create clarity and desire.

3

Distribution - Place the story where local, national and international buyers and their advisors will encounter it.

4

Direct outreach - Activate agent relationships, buyer networks, database communication and personal follow-up.

5

Digital reinforcement - Use social media, retargeting and repeated exposure to keep the property visible.

6

Conversion - Make inquiry, qualification and showing requests easy while protecting the seller's privacy.

WHAT GOOD MARKETING DOES

It elevates perceived value, reduces confusion and creates enough qualified attention to support negotiation.

Ask to see the plan before launch

- ☐ Who is the primary buyer?
- ☐ What is the central story?
- ☐ Which channels will be used, and why?
- ☐ How will inquiries and engagement be measured?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Is the marketing working?

A seller should not have to guess. Reporting should connect activity to decisions and show what has changed since the prior conversation.

REPORTING AREA	WHAT TO REVIEW	WHAT IT MAY SIGNAL
Visibility	Listing views, video engagement, ad reach, saves and repeat interest	Whether the property is being discovered
Inquiry	Buyer and agent questions, source, quality and response time	Whether positioning is creating intent
Showings	Volume, buyer profile, objections and second visits	Whether interest is converting

Feedback	Repeated comments on price, condition, layout or location	What the market is resisting
Competition	New listings, reductions, pending sales, withdrawals and closings	How the competitive set is moving
Strategy	Recommended next step and rationale	What should continue or change
THE WEEKLY QUESTION <i>What did the market tell us this week, and does the strategy need to change?</i>		

PROTECTING YOUR RESULT

Seven seller mistakes that can cost money

- 1** **Choosing the highest suggested list price** - An optimistic promise is not the same as an evidence-based strategy.
- 2** **Over-improving** - Large projects can consume time and capital without returning dollar for dollar.
- 3** **Launching before presentation is ready** - The first wave of attention is difficult to recreate.
- 4** **Limiting access too severely** - Qualified buyers may move to an easier alternative.
- 5** **Reacting emotionally to an early offer** - An early offer may be evidence of strong positioning, not underpricing.
- 6** **Ignoring repeated feedback** - One comment is an opinion; a consistent pattern is market information.
- 7** **Changing strategy without a clear reason** - Every adjustment should respond to evidence, timing or a changed goal.

REMEMBER

Your home can be deeply personal to you and still require an objective market strategy. The two truths can coexist.

Before accepting or rejecting an offer

- What is the net, not merely the headline price?
- How strong are financing, verification of funds and contingencies?
- What are the timing, possession and repair implications?
- What credible alternatives exist if this buyer walks away?

ROADMAP

Your seller timeline: 30 days before market to closing

30-21 DAYS

STRATEGY

Goals, valuation, route to market, pricing, preparation scope, budget and calendar.

21-10 DAYS

PREPARATION

Repairs, cleaning, landscaping, staging, documents, disclosures and access plan.

10-3 DAYS

STORY & ASSETS

Photography, film, floor plan, copy, launch plan, agent outreach and showing protocol.

LAUNCH WEEK

MARKET ENTRY

Go live, announce, qualify inquiries, manage showings and capture immediate feedback.

WEEKLY

REVIEW & ADJUST

Analyze visibility, inquiries, showings, feedback, competition and next-step recommendations.

OFFER TO CLOSE

NEGOTIATION & EXECUTION

Evaluate terms, manage contingencies, inspections, appraisal, repairs, escrow and handoff.

TIMING NOTE

Every property is different. A thoughtful launch date should reflect the home's readiness, buyer patterns, competing inventory and your personal schedule.

Strategy first. Execution with accountability.

Selling a Westside home requires more than exposure. It requires knowing how to position the property, interpret the market, protect the seller and negotiate from evidence.

- 1 Property positioning** - Shape presentation and storytelling around the home's most valuable differentiators.
- 2 Strategic pricing** - Combine comparable evidence, current competition, market psychology and the seller's objective.
- 3 Curated preparation** - Coordinate trusted staging, design, repair and concierge resources around likely return and timing.
- 4 Marketing reach** - Create high-impact exposure across luxury media, digital channels, social platforms, database and agent networks.
- 5 Privacy and discretion** - Use controlled communication, qualified access and private-market options when appropriate.
- 6 Property-specific reporting** - Review relevant local activity, visibility performance, buyer feedback and recommended actions.

EXPERIENCE IN PRACTICE

The objective is not simply to put a home on the market. It is to create the strongest possible market position and manage it deliberately through closing.

About Valerie

Valerie Fitzgerald is a Beverly Hills luxury real estate advisor, founder of The Valerie Fitzgerald Group, author of Heart and Sold, TEDx speaker and former star of HGTV's Selling LA. She has advised sellers, buyers and leading residential developments across Los Angeles.

BONUS TOOL

The Before You List checklist

Use this as your practical pre-listing worksheet.

- ☐ Clarify your timing, motivation and definition of a successful sale.
- ☐ Identify what you value most about the home: architecture, setting, lifestyle and location.
- ☐ List upgrades, renovations, smart-home features and major maintenance completed.

- ☐ Gather title information, permits, plans, warranties, receipts and vendor records.
- ☐ Review recent sales, current competition and meaningful micro-market trends.
- ☐ Establish a realistic value range and choose a pricing strategy.
- ☐ Decide between full-market exposure and a private/off-market approach.
- ☐ Approve a preparation plan with priorities, budget, responsibilities and deadlines.
- ☐ Schedule cleaning, landscaping, staging, photography, film and floor-plan work.
- ☐ Set showing rules for notice, access, pets, valuables, security and privacy.
- ☐ Agree on launch timing, marketing channels, buyer outreach and inquiry handling.
- ☐ Choose a weekly reporting cadence and the metrics you expect to review.

Notes

YOUR NEXT STEP

Know your number and the strategy behind it.

Your home deserves more than an automated estimate. A confidential Westside Home Value & Strategy Review is designed to help you understand:

- A realistic value range based on the home and today's competitive market
- The preparation items most likely to improve presentation or reduce objections
- The advantages and tradeoffs of public versus private exposure
- A recommended pricing, launch and reporting strategy

CONFIDENTIAL INVITATION

Request your personalized Westside Home Value & Strategy Review.

VALERIE FITZGERALD

Luxury Real Estate Advisor

Valerie@ValerieFitzgerald.com

310-850-9242 | ValerieFitzgerald.com

DRE 00974075

This guide is for general informational purposes and is not legal, tax, construction or financial advice. Property conditions, market conditions and seller objectives vary. Consult the appropriate licensed professionals regarding your circumstances.