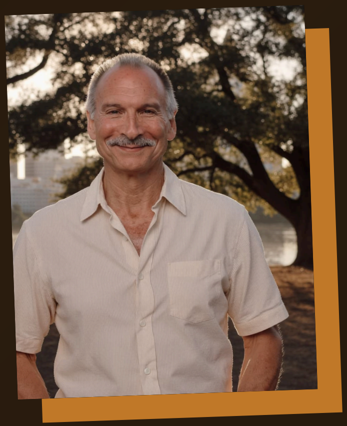
KEN BRAND
AUSTIN, TX

VOLUME TWO / FOR SELLERS

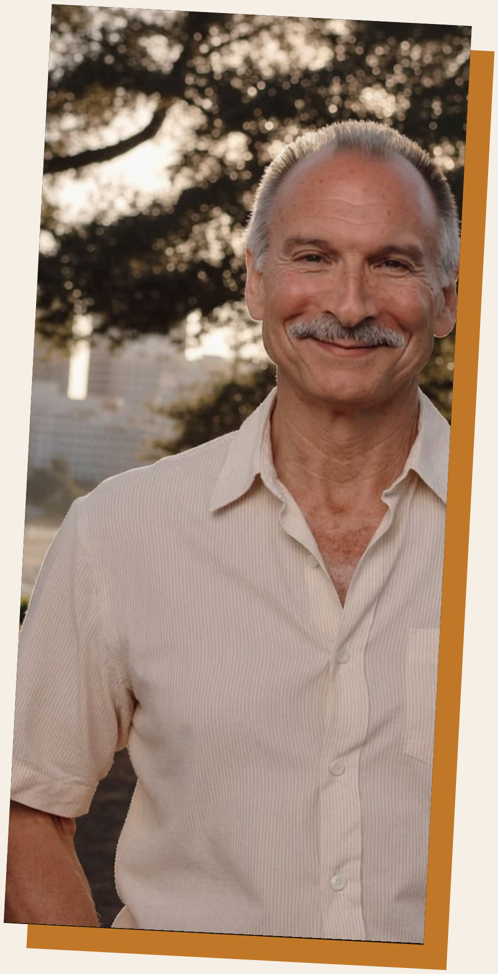
THE AUSTIN Seller's PLAYBOOK

How to price, prepare, and present your Austin home for the market we are actually in.



A LISTING STRATEGY GUIDE / 2026

Selling well in Austin is a strategy problem, not a luck problem.



If you are thinking about selling, the first thing I want you to know is that the market still works. Good homes still sell. Buyers still move for jobs, schools, lifestyle, taxes, family, and the daily math of a better life. Austin remains one of the most serious real estate destinations in the country.

What has changed is the margin for error. Buyers have more to compare, more time to think, and more information than sellers sometimes realize. They notice stale photos, vague descriptions, optimistic pricing, deferred maintenance, and listings that seem assembled in a hurry.

My job is to remove those doubts before they become objections. We price with evidence, prepare only where it matters, present the home clearly, and negotiate with a full view of price, timing, certainty, and risk.

This playbook is the conversation I would have with you at the kitchen table before we ever sign a listing agreement. It is direct because selling is expensive, emotional, and worth doing carefully.

- Ken

The market rewards sellers who make the value obvious.

Austin still rewards strong listings, but it no longer rewards lazy ones. The homes that sell cleanly are priced from current comps, prepared before photography, and launched with a clear first-week plan. The homes that sit usually share one problem: the seller is asking the market to believe in a version of 2021 that is no longer here.

For Austin sellers, this matters especially at luxury price points. Your buyer may be moving from California, New York, Chicago, or Washington. They are comparing your home against taxes, moving costs, school timelines, and an unfamiliar market. The listing has to reduce uncertainty before they ever book a flight.

The goal is not to make the home look generic. The goal is to make the value obvious. Buyers should understand the neighborhood, the commute, the condition, the carrying costs, and the life the home supports within the first few minutes of seeing it.

The listing has one job:

Give the right buyer enough confidence to act quickly and enough information to stay confident through inspection, appraisal, and closing.

The first number does the heaviest work.

Pricing is not a motivational exercise. It is a positioning decision. The right price creates urgency without leaving money on the table.

01 Closed comps are the floor of the conversation.

List prices are opinions. Closed sales are evidence. For Austin sellers, I want the closest recent sales by neighborhood, condition, school district, lot utility, and renovation level. A renovated Tarrytown home and a Barton Creek estate may share a price range, but they do not share a buyer pool.

02 The first 21 days carry the most leverage.

The buyers who are ready will see your home quickly. If the price and presentation are aligned, showings cluster early and offers follow. If the listing misses the mark, the market starts discounting it before you do.

03 Optimistic pricing has a visible cost.

Aspirational pricing usually does not create a higher offer. It creates fewer showings, slower feedback, and a future price reduction that buyers read as weakness. The cleaner strategy is to launch where the strongest buyer can say yes now.

What to fix, what to skip, and what to make feel easy.

Most sellers do not need a renovation. They need a precise punch list that protects buyer confidence.

01

Edit before you improve.

Remove visual noise first: extra furniture, crowded counters, family photos, storage overflow, and anything that makes rooms feel smaller than they are. Most homes need less renovation and more subtraction.

02

Clean like the buyer is a skeptic.

Windows, vents, baseboards, grout, appliances, closets, garage, attic access. Clean signals care. It also keeps buyers from turning a small issue into a larger story about maintenance.

03

Neutralize only what distracts.

Austin buyers do not need every house to be beige. They do need paint, lighting, and hardware to stop interrupting the architecture. Keep character. Remove friction.

04

Fix the small things that create doubt.

Loose handles, tired caulk, burned-out bulbs, sticking doors, missing switch plates, worn threshold strips. These are inexpensive, but buyers read them as clues.

05

Treat curb appeal as the first showing.

Trimmed landscaping, a clean walkway, fresh mulch, a confident front door, and outdoor lighting do more than decorate. They tell the buyer the home has been cared for before they step inside.

06

Skip the vanity renovation.

A rushed kitchen or bath remodel rarely returns what it costs. If a room is truly blocking the sale, use light cosmetic work: paint, hardware, fixtures, cleaning, and staging.

Buyers decide online before they decide in the doorway.

01 Photography has to answer the buyer's first question.

A relocating buyer is asking, 'Is this worth flying in to see?' The first photo must make the home legible, not merely pretty. The sequence should move like a tour: exterior, main living, kitchen, primary suite, outdoor space, then the details that make the house memorable.

02 Staging should clarify scale and use.

Empty rooms feel smaller online. Over-furnished rooms feel chaotic. The right staging makes buyers understand where dinner happens, where guests stay, where work happens, and how the home lives during a normal week.

03 The description should be specific enough to be useful.

Not 'great location.' Say the home is minutes from the Barton Creek Greenbelt, walkable to South Congress, five minutes to downtown Austin, or positioned for a simpler Eanes ISD commute. Specificity sells because it reduces guesswork.

The best marketing does not exaggerate. It tells the truth so clearly that the right buyer recognizes it.

The market gives feedback. Read it without defensiveness.

The first two to three weeks are diagnostic. A listing is either gaining traction, revealing a fixable objection, or telling us the price and presentation are not aligned.

01 Showing volume

A well-positioned Austin listing should create meaningful showing activity in the first two weeks. Low volume is usually a price signal, a presentation signal, or both.

02 Repeated feedback

One buyer's comment is noise. Three buyers naming the same issue is data. If they keep mentioning price, layout, condition, traffic, or taxes, the market is giving you usable information.

03 Offer timing

Strong listings still generate urgency. If you are past the first 21 days with no serious offer, waiting rarely creates leverage. A precise adjustment often works better than patience.

Reading offers when you may have one serious buyer.

Multiple offers still happen. They are not the strategy. The strategy is making sure any offer you receive is evaluated for the full deal, not just the top-line number.

01 Net matters more than headline price.

Compare price after seller concessions, repairs, closing costs, leaseback terms, and requested inclusions. The highest number is not always the best offer.

02 Certainty has value.

A fully underwritten buyer, strong earnest money, clean financing, and a realistic close can be worth more than a slightly higher offer with fragile terms.

03 Inspection terms tell you how the buyer thinks.

A buyer can be fair and still inspect carefully. What matters is whether their request is specific, documented, and proportional to the issue.

04 Timing is a negotiation lever.

Leasebacks, delayed possession, furniture inclusions, and flexible closing windows can solve real seller problems. Terms are not secondary. They are part of the value.

A clean closing is built before closing week.

Once you accept an offer, the work changes. We are managing inspection, appraisal, title, lender deadlines, possession, and communication so the deal stays boring in the best way.

Inspection renegotiation.

The Texas option period gives buyers time to inspect and renegotiate. Expect a report. Every home has findings. The work is deciding what deserves a repair, a credit, or a calm no.

Appraisal pressure.

If the buyer is financing, the appraisal can affect the deal. Before accepting, understand whether the offer is supported by comps and whether the buyer can cover a gap if one appears.

Loan underwriting.

The buyer's loan is not final until clear-to-close. A good listing process keeps lender communication active, watches deadlines, and solves small issues before they become closing-day problems.

The best closing day feels uneventful because the hard conversations happened early.

Let's start with a walkthrough.

I will see the home, hear your timing, study the likely buyer pool, and tell you directly what I think the market will do with it. No pressure, no listing agreement, no inflated number to win the appointment. Just a clear read on the path from preparation to close.

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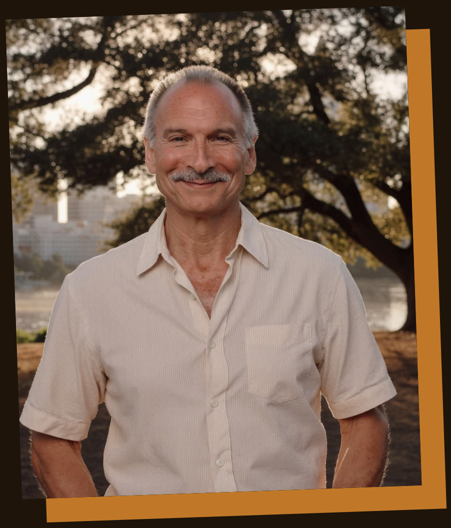

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