

Small Trends.

Big Impacts.

Local Expertise.

Micro trends decoded. Market shifts explained. Decisions made simple.



NEGOTIATING IN THE NEW KING COUNTY MARKET

What Sellers Should Expect in 2026

THE MARKET HAS SHIFTED

The King County real estate market has transitioned from the frenzy years to a more balanced environment. With **inventory up 25% year-over-year** and **days on market averaging 30 days** (up from the low-20s), sellers must recalibrate their expectations and strategies for 2026.

CONTINGENCIES ARE BACK

What's Changed:

- Buyers are no longer skipping inspections or waiving contingencies to win deals
- Standard inspection, financing, and appraisal contingencies are now included in 90%+ of offers
- Expect detailed inspection reports and repair requests

Your Strategy:

- **Conduct pre-inspections** before listing to identify and address major issues
 - Get ahead of potential problems instead of reacting during negotiation
 - Use inspection results as a marketing tool to show transparency
 - Price repairs into your listing strategy or handle them upfront
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PRICE ISN'T THE ONLY NEGOTIATION

New Negotiation Points:

- **Closing costs:** Buyers are successfully negotiating 1-2% contributions, especially in softer segments like Seattle condos (5+ months of inventory)
- **Repair credits:** Expect requests for credits instead of completed repairs
- **Extended timelines:** Buyers may ask for more time for inspections, financing, or moving
- **Appliances and fixtures:** Items once assumed to stay are now negotiable

Set Your Bottom Line Early:

- Know which concessions you're willing to make before receiving offers
 - Factor potential negotiation costs into your net proceeds calculation
 - Don't get emotionally attached to initial asking price
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APPRAISAL GAPS MATTER AGAIN

With modest price growth and some areas testing value limits, appraisals are creating negotiation flashpoints:

- **Buyers are less willing** to cover appraisal gaps out of pocket
 - **Over-pricing creates risk** of renegotiation after the appraisal comes in low
 - **Accurate pricing** based on recent (last 60-90 day) comparable sales is your best defense
 - Work with your agent to review comparable sales and price competitively from day one
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RESPONSE TIME STRATEGY

While you may have 24-48 hours to respond to offers in this market, don't let negotiations drag:

- ✓ **Buyers have more options** now—prolonged back-and-forth can lose you serious buyers
- ✓ **Set clear parameters** with your agent before listing
- ✓ **Respond decisively** to keep momentum
- ✓ **Counter strategically** rather than rejecting outright

Slow response times signal desperation or indecision—neither helps your negotiating position.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. PREPARATION WINS

Pre-inspections, accurate pricing, and clear expectations give you control over the process.

2. NEGOTIATION IS NORMAL

The days of "as-is, no contingencies, way over list" are largely behind us. Budget for some give-and-take.

3. PRICING MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

Well-priced homes in good condition still sell quickly. Overpriced homes sit, then reduce.

4. LOCAL MATTERS

King County is diverse—conditions in Seattle condos differ from Eastside single-family homes. Get hyper-local data from your agent.

5. STRATEGY BEATS LUCK

In 2021-2023, timing was everything. In 2026, preparation and strategy determine success.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The King County market hasn't crashed—it's normalized. Sellers who accept this reality, price strategically, and prepare for negotiation will close faster and at better terms than those still expecting bidding wars and waived contingencies.

Your competitive advantage comes from understanding the market, not fighting against it.

For more insights on the King County real estate market:

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Market data as of January 2026. Conditions vary by neighborhood, price point, and property type. Consult with a local real estate professional for personalized guidance.