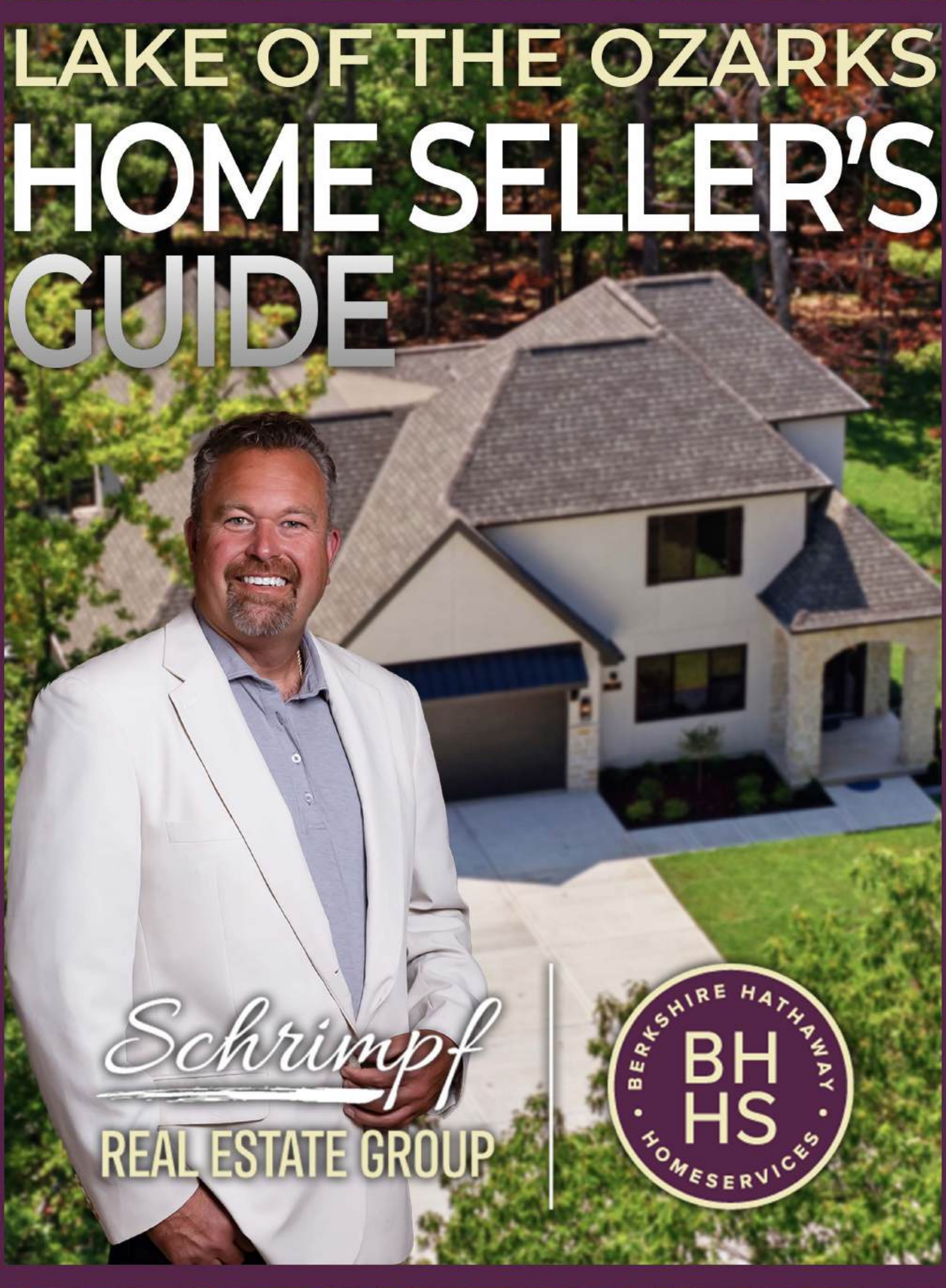
LAKE OF THE OZARKS

HOME SELLER'S GUIDE

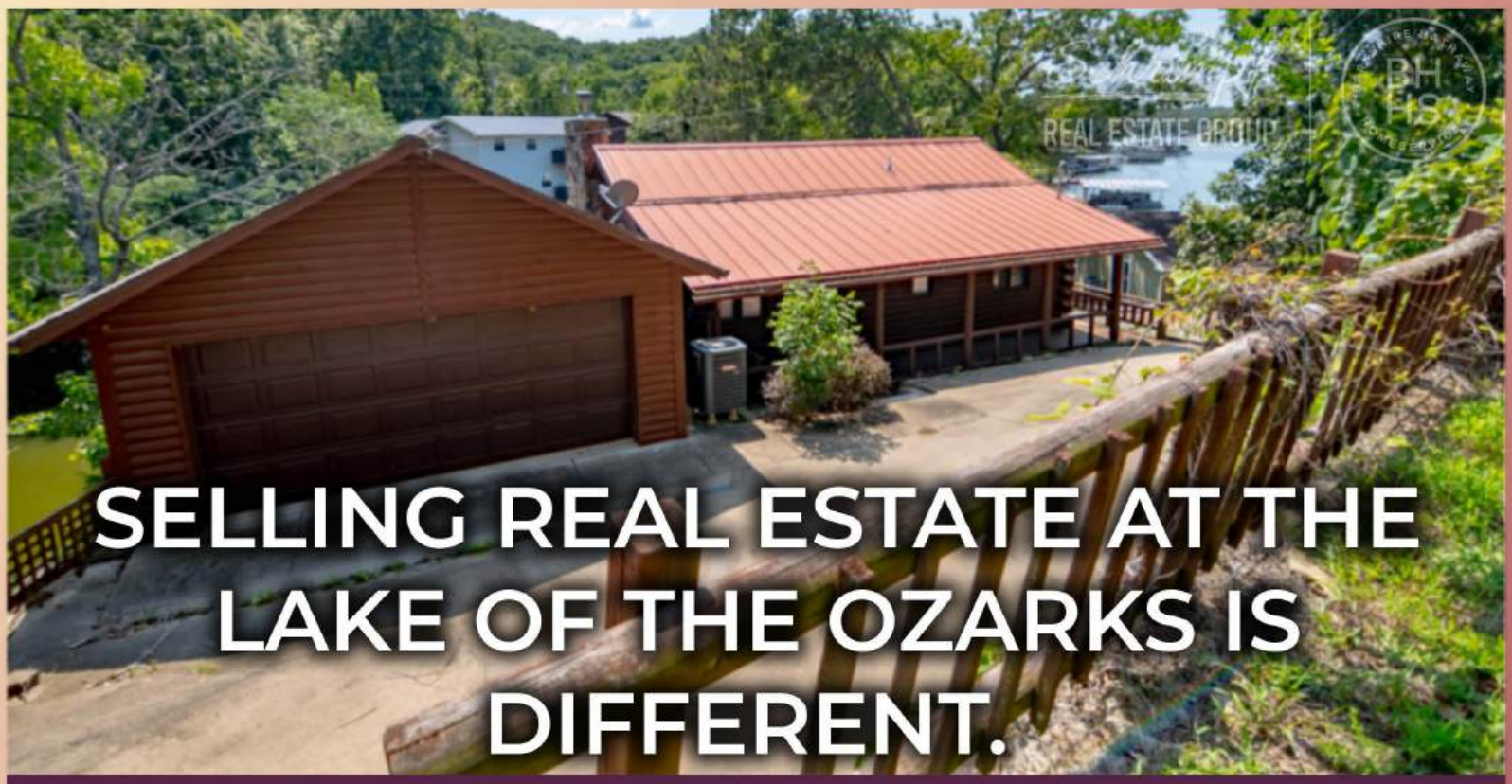


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SELLING REAL ESTATE AT THE LAKE OF THE OZARKS IS DIFFERENT.

A buyer isn't simply comparing bedrooms, bathrooms and square footage. They're comparing water depth, views, mile markers, cove protection, docks, slip sizes, topography, community amenities, rental potential, location by land and location by water.
Two homes that look remarkably similar on paper can have very different values.

The same is true for condos. A 3-bedroom condo with a protected 14x40 slip, garage and elevator access may appeal to an entirely different buyer than a similar-sized unit without those features. That's why successfully selling Lake of the Ozarks real estate requires more than putting a property in the MLS.

You have to understand what you're selling, who is most likely to buy it, what makes it different— and how to communicate that value.
I've spent more than two decades selling real estate at Lake of the Ozarks. This guide is designed to share some of what I've learned and help property owners make better decisions before, during, and after theselling process.

Where Should a Lake of the Ozarks Seller Start?

Don't start by painting the house. Don't start by replacing countertops.

And don't start by asking an online home-value calculator what your property is worth.

Start by answering three questions:

Why are you considering selling?

Are you relocating? Downsizing?
Finished using the vacation home?
Moving from a condo to a house?
Simplifying your life?
Liquidating an investment?
Or would you sell only if someone paid enough?

When would you ideally like to sell?

There's a major difference between:
"I need this sold within 90 days."
and
"I'd sell sometime in the next year if the price makes sense."
Your motivation should influence your pricing and marketing strategy.

What would a successful sale look like?

Highest possible price?
Quickest closing?
Cash?
Selling furnished?
Avoiding major repairs?
Keeping possession through the summer?
Understanding your priorities helps your Realtor build the right strategy.



What Is My Lake of the Ozarks Property Worth?

This is usually the first question sellers ask.
It's also considerably more complicated at Lake of the Ozarks than in a typical subdivision.
Price per square foot is useful—but it doesn't tell the entire story.
A knowledgeable Lake Realtor should evaluate:

- Location
- Neighborhood or condominium complex
- Property type
- Age and condition
- Construction quality
- Square footage
- Bedrooms and bathrooms
- Garage and parking
- Updates
- Furnishings
- Lakefront footage
- View
- Water depth
- Cove protection
- Boat traffic
- Topography
- Dock
- Slip sizes
- Boat lifts
- PWC spaces
- Seawall
- Road access
- Location by water
- Location by land
- Rental potential
- Community amenities
- Current competition

For condos, additional factors include floor level, elevator access, end-unit location, parking, garageavailability, slip location and size, association condition, assessments and amenities.
For land, topography, utilities, zoning, road frontage, shoreline and development potential can dramaticallyinfluence value.

At Lake of the Ozarks, the details matter.

Be Careful With Automated Home Values

Automated valuations can be useful starting points.
But an algorithm may not understand why your neighbor's house sold for $200,000 less even though it has similar square footage.

Maybe yours has deep water.

Maybe theirs had 80 stairs.

Maybe yours has a concrete cruiser dock.

Maybe theirs sits directly in rough main-channel water.

Maybe yours has an unobstructed sunset view.

Maybe theirs has three docks blocking the view.

Those differences can matter enormously.

Use technology as a tool—but don't substitute it for local market knowledge.



When Is the Best Time to Sell at Lake of the Ozarks?



There isn't one answer for every property.
Historically, spring and early summer generate considerable Lake activity because buyers are thinking about boating season and want to purchase in time to enjoy the property.

But that doesn't automatically mean you should wait until spring.

Consider:

Current inventory
Competition in your price range
Mortgage rates
Buyer demand
Your property type
Your personal timeline
Condition of the property
Weather
Whether the property shows better during boating season



A property with little competition may actually stand out more during a traditionally slower period.
A great Lake view can sometimes be even more impressive after leaves fall.
And serious buyers don't necessarily stop looking because it's January.
The best time to sell is when your personal situation and the market opportunity intersect.

How Do Interest Rates and the Economy Affect Lake Sellers?

Lake of the Ozarks contains a significant second-home market. That creates a somewhat different buyer pool than a traditional primary-residence market.

Some buyers finance.

Some pay cash.

Some are selling another property first.

Some are making a discretionary lifestyle purchase.

Higher mortgage rates can reduce purchasing power and shrink the pool of buyers at certain price points.

Economic uncertainty can also make discretionary buyers more cautious.

But don't make the mistake of trying to predict the perfect economic moment.

Instead, evaluate today's:

Inventory
Buyer activity
Comparable sales
Competing properties
Financing environment
Days on market
Price reductions



Then build your strategy around the market that actually exists.



Inventory and Competition May Matter More Than Headlines

National real estate headlines can be misleading. Real estate is local. And at Lake of the Ozarks, it's often hyper-local.
The important question isn't simply:

"How is the real estate market?"

It may be:

"How is the market for $800,000–$1.2 million lakefront homes between the 5 and 15 Mile Markers?"

Or:

"How many updated 3-bedroom condos with 14x40 slips are competing with mine?"

Or:

"How many newer off-water Porto Cima homes are available under $1 million?"

That's the market that matters to you.



Should You Interview Multiple Realtors?



Absolutely, if that makes you comfortable.
But don't turn the interview into a contest over who promises the highest price.

Ask each Realtor to explain:

Who is the likely buyer for my property?
What are my property's strongest selling features?
What are its weaknesses?
Which properties will buyers compare against mine?
How did you arrive at your recommended price?
How will you position my property against the competition?
What will you do beyond putting it in the MLS?
Who creates your photography and video?
How will you market my property online?
What experience do you have selling properties like mine?
How will you communicate with me?
What happens if we aren't getting showings or offers?

A good agent should be able to answer those questions specifically.

Don't Automatically Hire the Realtor Who Gives You the Highest Price



This is one of the biggest mistakes sellers make.
Imagine three Realtors suggest:



$925,000

$950,000

$1,100,000

It can be tempting to choose $1,100,000.

But ask:

Why?

If the market doesn't support it, an inflated list price isn't doing you a favor.

The property may sit.

Buyers may begin wondering what's wrong with it.

You eventually reduce the price.

And the strongest period of exposure—the initial launch—has already passed.

I would rather explain the market candidly and develop a strategy than tell a seller what I think they want to hear.

Does Experience Matter?

Yes—but don't judge experience only by the number of years someone has held a real estate license.

Ask whether the agent has experience with **your type of property.**

Selling a $350,000 condo is different from selling a $3 million lakefront estate.

Selling a lakefront house is different from selling commercial property.

Selling development acreage is different from selling a golf-course home.

Lake properties can involve docks, seawalls, septic systems, shared wells, private roads, Ameren permits, HOAs, rental histories, unusual easements and other issues.

Experience becomes particularly valuable when something doesn't go according to plan.



Should You Read Realtor Reviews?

Yes.
But don't simply count stars.
Read what past clients actually say.
Look for recurring comments about:

Communication
Market knowledge
Negotiating
Responsiveness
Marketing
Problem solving
Professionalism
Follow-through



Also look at the agent's current and previous listings. Does their marketing look like something you'd be proud to have represent your property?



Marketing Matters More Than Ever

Your first showing probably won't happen at your house.
It will happen on someone's phone.
Buyers may decide whether your property deserves an in-person showing after looking at the listing for 30 seconds.
That's why presentation matters.
Depending upon the property, professional marketing may include:

- Professional photography
- Drone photography
- Video
- Floorplans
- Twilight photography
- Virtual tours
- Community photography
- Social media
- Digital advertising
- Direct marketing
- Agent-to-agent marketing
- Luxury marketing channels
- Compelling listing copy

The marketing should fit the property.
A multimillion-dollar luxury estate shouldn't have the same marketing plan as a vacant lot.



Every Property Needs a Story



Good marketing isn't a list of features.

Consider this:

“4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, granite countertops and stainless appliances.”

Now consider:

“Protected cove, deep water, panoramic main-channel views and a gentle walk to a cruiser dock.”

Which one gets a Lake buyer's attention?
The first description tells buyers what the house has.
The second tells them why they should want it.
Every property has a story.

Finding that story is one of the most important parts of marketing.

Preparing a Lake Home for Sale

You don't necessarily need to remodel.
But presentation matters.
Before listing, evaluate:

- Paint
- Flooring
- Lighting
- Landscaping
- Exterior cleaning
- Windows
- Decks
- Railings
- Dock
- Seawall
- Driveway
- Furniture
- Clutter
- Deferred maintenance



Spend money where buyers will notice it.
Sometimes $5,000 strategically spent can have a bigger impact than a $40,000 project buyers didn't want.
Talk to your Realtor before beginning major renovations.



Should You Get a Pre-Listing Inspection?

Sometimes.

A pre-inspection can make sense when:
The home is older.

You suspect deferred maintenance.

You haven't occupied it regularly.

You're concerned about structural or mechanical issues.

You want fewer surprises after accepting an offer.

The advantage is **knowledge.**

If the inspector discovers something, you have time to investigate, repair it or price accordingly rather than dealing with it under the pressure of an inspection contingency. But pre-inspections aren't necessary for every seller. Discuss the pros, cons and disclosure implications with your Realtor before ordering one.



Deal With the Dock Early



Don't wait until you're under contract to start thinking about your dock.

Gather:

Ameren permit information
Dock dimensions
Slip dimensions
Lift information
PWC lift information
Electrical information
Dock age
Improvement records
Seawall information



Confirm that what exists matches the documentation available. Lakefront transactions have additional moving pieces, and discovering a dock issue shortly before closing can create unnecessary stress.

Should You Have Your Dock Electrical Inspected Before Listing?

This deserves special attention at Lake of the Ozarks.

Depending on where the property is located, an electrical inspection may be required as part of transferringthe dock permit.

Rather than discovering deficiencies shortly before closing, it can make sense to investigate requirements early.

Your Realtor can help determine what applies to your property and coordinate with the appropriate professionals.

A dock problem discovered before listing is a project. A dock problem discovered days before closing can become a crisis.



Gather Your Ameren Permit Information



If you own lakefront property, shoreline improvements can be important. Depending upon the property, permits may involve:



- Dock
- Seawall
- Riprap
- Steps
- Piers
- Pumps
- Other shoreline improvements

Gather whatever documentation you have.
Don't assume everything is correct simply because it has been there for 20 years.

Resolving questions early is considerably easier than resolving them while a buyer is waiting to close.

Selling a Condo at Lake of the Ozarks

Condo sales deserve their own strategy.
You're selling more than the interior.
You're selling:

CONDO + VIEW + SLIP + BUILDING + COMPLEX + AMENITIES + ASSOCIATION

Prepare information regarding:

HOA dues
Assessments
Upcoming projects
Rental rules
Pet rules
Parking
Garages
Elevators
Amenities
Slip ownership/use
Slip dimensions
Boat lifts
PWC availability
Furnishings
Rental history

If the complex recently completed a major assessment, don't necessarily hide from it.
If the work improved the property and the assessment is paid, that may actually become part of the story.



Selling a Luxury Lake Home



Luxury real estate requires a different approach.
At higher price points, buyers generally have choices and aren't forced to purchase.
We have to answer:
Why this house?

Maybe it's:

Architecture
Construction quality
Lot
View
Deep water
Dock
Privacy
Community
Furnishings
Outdoor living
Pool
Location





Luxury marketing isn't about using words like “stunning” 15 times.
It's about identifying what is genuinely rare and difficult to reproduce.

Selling in Porto Cima, Four Seasons or Another Amenity Community

The community can be part of what we're selling.

Porto Cima, Four Seasons, The Villages at Shawnee Bend, Osage National and other Lake communities appeal to buyers for different reasons.

Depending upon the property, we may market:

Golf
Pools
Fitness facilities
Pickleball
Tennis
Marinas
Security
Restaurants
Clubhouses
Community activities
Location

Don't simply sell the house.
Sell the lifestyle surrounding it.



Selling an Investment or Vacation Rental



If the property generates income, get organized before listing.

Gather:

Rental history
Gross revenue
Management expenses
Cleaning expenses
Utilities
HOA expenses
Taxes
Insurance
Current reservations
Management agreement
Rental restrictions

An investor doesn't simply want to hear that a property is "a great rental."
They want information that helps them evaluate the investment.

Selling Vacant Land

Land requires a completely different marketing strategy.

A buyer may need to understand:

Acreage
Lakefront footage
Road frontage
Topography
Utilities
Water/sewer availability
Zoning
Restrictions
Dock possibilities
Development potential
Access
Survey information

With land, maps, aerial photography and conceptual possibilities can be extremely important.The goal is to help buyers see what could exist there.



Selling Commercial Property or a Business



Commercial real estate isn't simply residential real estate with a bigger building.
Depending upon the property, buyers may want:

Income statements
Rent rolls
Leases
NOI
Operating expenses
Traffic information
Zoning
Utilities
Surveys
Environmental information
Equipment lists
Business financials
Development possibilities

Commercial buyers frequently make decisions based on numbers. Good information builds credibility.

Should You Complete a Seller's Disclosure Before Listing?

In many residential transactions, yes, getting the appropriate disclosure paperwork organized early isuseful.

Don't guess.

Don't conceal known problems.

And don't try to make the house sound perfect.

Complete disclosures carefully and accurately, and update information when appropriate.

Good disclosure isn't only about protecting the buyer.

It helps reduce surprises that can threaten the transaction later.



What Documents Should Sellers Gather?



Create a property file.
Depending upon the property, gather:

Home:

Survey
Improvement records
Warranties
Repair receipts
Utility information
Septic records
Sewer information
Well information
Shared-well agreements
Road agreements
Easements you have
Rental history

Lakefront:

Ameren permits
Dock information
Dock electrical records
Seawall information
Lift information

Condo:

HOA documents
Rules and regulations
Assessment information
Rental rules
Slip information
Garage information

Commercial:

Leases
Rent roll
Income/expenses
Service contracts
Equipment information
Surveys
Zoning information



The more we know before listing, the fewer surprises we're likely to encounter later.

Should You Get an Appraisal Before Selling?

Usually, a professional market analysis from an experienced Lake Realtor is enough to establish a listing strategy.

But there are situations where an independent appraisal may be useful:

Estate situations

Divorce

Partnership disputes

Unusual properties

Very limited comparable sales

Sellers who need an independent valuation

An appraisal is another opinion of value—not a guarantee of what a buyer will pay. For most ordinary sales, I'd start with a strong comparative market analysis.



Should Sellers Offer a Home Warranty?



Sometimes.
A home warranty may be attractive when:

The home has older mechanical systems

Buyers are concerned about unexpected expenses

The property is being sold furnished

The seller wants to provide additional reassurance

But it isn't automatically necessary.
Think of it as a marketing and risk-management tool rather than something every property needs.

Pricing: The Most Important MarketingDecision

Price determines who sees your property, how it compares and whether buyers feel urgency.

There are generally three positions:

Price Ahead of the Market

Aggressive pricing can maximize attention and potentially create competition.

Price With the Market

Position the property around the strongest comparable evidence.

Test the Market

A seller with little urgency may choose to start higher and see whether a unique buyer emerges.

There is nothing inherently wrong with testing the market—as long as the seller understands the tradeoff.

Price should reflect your goals as well as market conditions.

The Danger of Chasing the Market Down



An overpriced property may eventually sell. The problem is the journey.



$1,200,000.

Then $1,150,000.

Then $1,095,000.

Then $1,049,000.

Eventually buyers start asking:

“What's wrong with it?”

Sometimes a seller ends up accepting less than they might have received with better positioning from the beginning.

What Happens After Your Property Is Listed?

A professional listing strategy shouldn't become:
Put it in the MLS → Wait → Hope.
We monitor:

Showing activity
Online engagement
Buyer feedback
Agent feedback
New competing listings
Pending sales
Closed sales
Price reductions
Market changes



Then we adapt.
If the market tells us something, we listen.



How Should Sellers Evaluate an Offer?



Price matters.

But so does:

Financing
Cash
Earnest money
Inspection contingency
Appraisal contingency
Closing date
Seller concessions
Furniture
Boat lifts
Personal property
Sale-of-home contingency
Probability of closing





A $1,000,000 offer isn't necessarily better than a $985,000 offer. The details matter.

Inspections and Negotiations

Once under contract, the buyer may investigate a variety of items depending upon the property:

Structure
Roof
HVAC
Electrical
Plumbing
Foundation
Decks
Dock
Seawall
Septic
Well
Sewer
Other property-specific systems



This is another reason preparation matters.
Our objective isn't merely to obtain a contract.
It's to get you successfully from contract to closing.



The Appraisal



If financing is involved, the buyer's lender may order an appraisal.

Lake properties can be challenging to compare.

A good listing agent should understand the characteristics that distinguish the property and be prepared toprovide factual information about improvements and relevant comparable sales when appropriate.

The appraiser makes an independent determination. Our responsibility is to make sure useful, accurate information is available.

From Contract to Closing

Once you have an accepted offer, the work isn't over.
The transaction may involve:

Inspections
Repairs
Title
Financing
Appraisal
HOA documentation
Surveys
Dock permits
Electrical inspections
Septic/sewer issues
Well agreements
Personal-property inventories
Walkthrough
Closing documents

This is where organization, communication and experience become especially important.



What Makes Lake of the Ozarks Real Estate Different?



You aren't simply selling a house.

You may be selling:

100 feet of deep-water shoreline.

A sunset view.

A protected cove.

A 14x40 cruiser slip.

A flat driveway.

A no-step walk to the dock.

A top-floor condo with nobody above it.

A garage in a complex where garages rarely become available.

A home inside one of the Lake's premier communities.

Those details are precisely why local knowledge matters.

What Should You Expect From Your Listing Agent?

At minimum, I believe sellers should expect:

An informed pricing strategy
Honest advice
Strong communication
Professional presentation
Excellent photography
Compelling copy
Appropriate digital marketing
Local market knowledge
Showing coordination
Feedback
Offer analysis
Skilled negotiation
Transaction management
Problem solving
Accountability



But above all:

Your Realtor should understand what makes your property valuable and know how to communicatethat value to buyers.



My Philosophy on Selling Lake of the Ozarks Real Estate

After more than two decades in Lake of the Ozarks real estate, one thing has become very clear:

There is no universal marketing plan.

A $400,000 condo shouldn't be marketed like a $4 million estate.

A Porto Cima golf-course home shouldn't be positioned like a lakefront cabin.

A 100-acre development property requires a completely different strategy than a 3-bedroom vacationrental.

My approach begins with three questions:

What are we really selling?

Who is the most likely buyer?

Why should that buyer choose this property over everything else available?

Answer those correctly, and the marketing strategy becomes much clearer.

Matt's Lake of the Ozarks Pre-Listing Checklist

60–90 Days Before Selling

Talk with an experienced Lake Realtor
Establish an approximate value
Review current competition
Discuss timing
Identify worthwhile improvements
Locate property documents
Investigate dock/permit questions
Address deferred maintenance

30 Days Before Selling

Complete repairs
Declutter
Deep clean
Improve landscaping
Organize furnishings
Prepare disclosure paperwork
Gather HOA/rental information
Clean dock and outdoor living spaces

7–14 Days Before Selling

Final staging
Window cleaning
Exterior cleaning
Photography
Drone photography
Video/floorplan when appropriate
Final pricing review
Complete listing information
Prepare launch marketing

Launch Day

Everything should be ready.
The goal isn't to put your property on the market and then get ready.
The goal is to get ready—and then attack the market.



Frequently Asked Questions About Selling at Lake of the Ozarks

How long will my Lake property take to sell?

It depends on property type, price range, condition, inventory and pricing. Rather than relying on a Lake-wide average, evaluate the market segment in which your property actually competes.

Do I need to remodel before selling?

Usually not. Strategic improvements often make more sense than a complete remodel.

Should I sell furnished?

For many second homes and condos, furnishings can make the purchase considerably easier for buyers.Evaluate quality and condition before deciding.

Is a dock inspection necessary?

Dock and electrical requirements vary. Determine the applicable requirements before listing rather than waiting until closing.

Should I wait for spring?

Not automatically. Competition, inventory and your circumstances matter as much as the calendar.

Can I sell while renters are occupying the property?

Often yes, but showing access, reservations and management agreements require planning.

Should I price high and negotiate?

Sometimes, but excessive overpricing can reduce activity rather than generate lower offers.

Do I need a local Lake Realtor?

You aren't required to use one, but Lake properties involve issues uncommon in ordinary residentialtransactions. Relevant Lake experience can be extremely valuable.

WHAT COULD YOUR LAKE OF THE OZARKS PROPERTY SELL FOR?



If you're considering selling a home, condo, lakefront property, lot, investment property, commercial property or business at Lake of the Ozarks, I'd be happy to start with a conversation.
Not an automated estimate.
Not a generic price-per-square-foot calculation.

A real evaluation of your property and its place in today's Lake of the Ozarks market.

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