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Multiple Offers: Picking the Best One (Not Just Highest)

A luxury seller's framework to protect your price, timeline, and certainty in the Coachella Valley.

By Tracy Scott, REALTOR® · DRE# 00957686 · November 2026

When your home attracts multiple offers, the natural instinct is to grab the highest number and move on. In luxury real estate, that can be the most expensive mistake a seller makes. The best offer is the one that survives inspections, appraisal, and escrow logistics while delivering the strongest net outcome—with the fewest ways to fall apart.

Think in "certainty-adjusted net," not just price

A clean offer is the one that closes on time, at the agreed price, with minimal renegotiation. A higher offer that collapses (or grinds you through repeated concessions) can cost you:

- Time: missed showings, re-marketing stigma, and buyer fatigue.
- Money: additional holding costs (HOA, utilities, insurance), and potential price reductions.
- Leverage: your next buyer now knows the deal already fell apart.
- Momentum: the emotional and logistical toll of returning to the market.

Your goal is to choose the offer with the best blend of price, terms, and probability of closing— then negotiate from a position of strength.

Use a simple scoring sheet (10 minutes, big clarity)

Before emotions kick in, score each offer across the same categories. This keeps the decision consistent, especially when offers look similar at first glance.

Category	What to look for	Why it matters	Score (1–5)
Price & net	Price, seller credits, closing costs requests	Price can evaporate through concessions	
Financing strength	Cash / conventional / jumbo; down payment; lender reputation	Financing delays are common failure points	
Appraisal exposure	Appraisal contingency, gap coverage, waived appraisal	Luxury appraisals can be opinion-driven	
Inspection posture	Shorter inspection window, fewer contingencies, clear limits	Renegotiation usually starts here	
Earnest money	Deposit size, timing, and release terms	Serious buyers put meaningful skin in the game	

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Category	What to look for	Why it matters	Score (1–5)
Timeline	Close date, occupancy needs, rent-back terms	Your move-out plan matters as much as theirs	
Buyer flexibility	Willingness to adjust dates, repairs, access	Flexibility reduces stress and friction	
Agent execution	Responsiveness, professionalism, escrow track record	A strong agent improves certainty	

Tip: If you want one number, multiply each category by how important it is to you. For example, if certainty is the priority, weight appraisal and financing higher than timeline.

The most common “looks great” traps

The high price with heavy credits: A buyer can offer $50,000 more but ask for credits that quietly erase the advantage—or create room to negotiate later.

The underwritten-in-name-only loan: Not all pre-approvals are equal. A reputable lender, verified assets, and a strong down payment reduce surprises.

The appraisal cliff: Luxury comps can be thin. If the offer does not address appraisal risk, you may be negotiating under pressure later.

The open-ended repair request: Vague repair language invites a second negotiation after inspections. Tight language keeps expectations realistic.

The “perfect” timeline that is fragile: If the buyer needs a complex sale contingency or has tight deadlines, any delay can unwind the deal.

What to ask the buyer’s agent (and what the answers mean)

These questions are fast, and they reveal how real the offer is:

- Has the lender run AUS/DU (automated underwriting) and reviewed income/asset documentation?
- What is the buyer’s plan if the appraisal comes in low?
- How quickly can the buyer complete inspections—and are they expecting credits or repairs?
- Is the buyer flexible on possession (close date, rent-back, early access)?
- Any non-obvious risks: out-of-country signers, complex trusts, funds transfer timing, HOA/condo approvals?

Negotiation moves that protect you (without killing momentum)

With multiple offers, you can often improve terms while staying professional.

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Counter for certainty, not just money: Shorten contingency periods, strengthen earnest money timing, and request appraisal-gap language if needed.

Use a "best and final" request strategically: It works best when you set a firm deadline and specify what you want improved (price, appraisal plan, timeline).

Keep a strong backup offer in writing: A signed backup offer preserves leverage if the first escrow starts slipping.

Protect your showing routine: Even after accepting an offer, keep the home show ready until contingencies are removed—especially in luxury price points.

The decision rule I use for luxury listings

If two offers are close on price, I typically recommend choosing the one that wins on at least two of these three:

- Financing strength (or true cash).
- Appraisal protection (reduced risk of renegotiation).
- Clean contingency structure and reasonable timelines.

That combination tends to produce the smoothest escrow—and the strongest final net— without surprises.

Bottom line

The best offer is rarely the one with the biggest headline price. It is the one with the best path to closing at the agreed terms. When you evaluate offers through certainty-adjusted net, you protect your time, your leverage, and your final proceeds.

Note: This article is educational and not legal or tax advice. Offer terms vary by property and situation.

Have multiple offers on your home? Call Tracy at (760) 840-7441.

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