

The Home Edition

Volume 14 Issue 6 January/February 2006

Historically High Home Sales Expected in 2006

The housing market for 2005 is headed for a fifth consecutive annual record, and sales activity in 2006 is expected to be the second best year in history, according to the National Association of Realtors®.

David Lereah, NAR's chief economist, said that market conditions are still favorable for housing. "The slowdown amounts to a tapping of the brakes on a hot market," said Lereah. "Home sales are coming down from the mountain peak, but they will level-out at a high plateau - a plateau that is higher than previous peaks in the housing cycle. This transition to a more normal and balanced market is a good thing."

The 30-year fixed-rate mortgage should trend up modestly and reach 6.6 percent during the second half of 2006.

Existing-home sales, expected to rise 4.7 percent to 7.10 million this year, are likely to decline 3.7 percent in 2006 to 6.84 million. New-home sales, projected to increase 7.0 percent to 1.29 million this year, are forecast to drop 4.8 percent to 1.23 million in 2006 - also the second best on record. Total housing starts for 2005 should grow 5.8 percent to 2.06 million units, the highest since 1972, and then decline 4.8 percent to 1.92 million next year.

NAR President Thomas M. Stevens from Vienna, Va., said that housing has always been the soundest investment for most families. "As the old saying goes, homeownership beats the heck out of a drawer full of rent receipts," said Stevens, senior vice president of NRT Inc. According to the Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Finances, the median net wealth of a homeowner household is 36 times higher than a renter household.

Stevens said that the national median home price has never declined since good recordkeeping began in 1968. "Although there can always be a temporary decline in a given area if jobs are weak and there is an oversupply of homes on the market, people who stay in their homes for a normal period of homeownership generally see healthy returns over time. There are no guarantees, but there are very good odds."

The national median existing-home price for all housing types, which is experiencing a surge estimated at 12.7 percent to \$208,800 for 2005, is expected to rise another 6.1 percent in 2006 to \$221,400. The median new-home price is likely to rise 5.5 percent to \$233,100 in 2005, and then grow by 7.3 percent next year to \$250,100 as higher construction costs impact the market.

The U.S. gross domestic product should grow 3.7 percent for 2005 and 4.1 percent next year. The unemployment rate is expected to decline to 4.9 percent by second quarter of 2006, and then stabilize.

The Consumer Price Index is projected to rise 3.4 percent for 2005, and 2.9 percent next year. Inflation-adjusted disposable personal income is forecast to increase 1.4 percent in 2005 and 4.5 percent in 2006.

Source: The National Association of Realtors®



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Take Me Home Country Roads: Rural Living

By Elaine VonCannon

In a world where the news flashes daily images of war, terrorism and crime more Americans are dreaming of a safe, quiet place to call home. They imagine moving to a small town community where safety and simplicity are easy to find. Potential homebuyers between the ages of forty and sixty are the most likely to be fed up with the fast pace of city dwelling. They are in search of a renewed sense of community and family. Relocation or purchase of a second home in a rural area can also be the perfect idea for homebuyers looking for long-term retirement solutions.



I Was Born In A Small Town

Small town living is especially attractive to buyers who were raised in a rural setting. Many want to recapture the security of their childhood and preserve it for their children. According to the National Association of REALTORS' 2003 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers fifty-six percent of the homebuyers purchasing in a rural location bought because of the neighborhood, while thirty-eight percent purchased in order to live closer to family and friends. The possibility of owning more land is also appealing. The 2003 Profile also shows ten percent of repeat buyers purchased property in rural settings and most were hunting for more space.

In Virginia, rural counties like New Kent, Middlesex, Gloucester, King and Queen, Mathews and King William are all seeing this relocation trend. In my real estate business about eighty percent of my sales in these areas are buyers moving from metropolitan areas. These are places where you can sleep with the windows open and everyone in town knows you. Many locations are only forty-five minutes or an hour from the city, so buyers still have access to health care, higher paying jobs, shopping centers and other activities.

Telecommuting: The Wave Of The Future

Technology is one of the driving forces behind the rural relocation trend. According to the Main Street Economist (a publication of the Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank's Center For The Study of Rural America) one fifth of the US workforce in rural and small towns was self-employed in 2004. CNN.com writer Jakob Nielsen, a web usability expert, also believes technology will change the way Americans live and work over the next fifteen years. On July 4, 2005 Nielsen wrote an article predicting real estate sales in cities like Manhattan, London and Tokyo will decrease by twenty percent by 2020. Technological advances in the Internet, e-mail and collaboration software makes telecommuting more feasible and companies will begin to hire the best people regardless of location. Other advances in home theaters, entertainment systems, e-commerce, express shipping, and healthcare remote sensing will facilitate rural living without isolation from the mainstream culture.

The Aftermath of September 11th

The National Association of REALTORS' 2003 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers reports that twenty percent of homebuyers in the Northeast purchased in a rural area and thirty one percent in small towns. This is higher than the Midwestern, Southern or Western regions of the country. Many people attribute a portion of this trend to the September 11th attacks. It is a sad reality that we have been forced to trade community security for homeland security.

The Rural Relocation Checklist

Purchasing a home in a rural area can be a big adjustment for those unaccustomed to it. Remember to make a list of all the things that are important to you and your family. Map out the location of hospitals, grocery stores, banks, schools and other activities of interest. Be realistic about the time investment and remember—peace and quiet can turn to boredom if you allow it. Also, many rural areas do not have city road maintenance or water and sewer pipes. Be sure you are ready to be responsible for those aspects of your country home. If you live in the city this may be new territory. Once you are certain relocation is the right choice you will be on your way down your own country road!



Quick and Easy Ways to Organize Your Home

Tips From www.Essortment.com



Bookstore shelves are full of excellent books on organizing the home. They offer ideas for maintaining incoming and outgoing paper, filing systems, recipes, clothing, books, CDs, toys, kitchen gadgets, jewelry, collections and canned goods, among other things. Virtually any home can become more orderly with the implementation of these concepts.

Implementation is the key, however, and in thoroughly disorganized homes, getting started is the hardest part. Especially if the home has been disorganized for a long period of time and the same tactics for keeping the disorder out of sight have been employed for awhile, it is difficult for the homemaker to know where to begin. So following are some tips for taking that first step toward a more orderly life.

1. Start anywhere, with just one problem area. Choose a single area to work on. Incoming paper is a big problem for some families, for example, and by getting that under control, a lot of clutter will be eliminated. Decide where to start based on the answer to this question: "The thing that bothers me most is...".
2. Choose an organizational system that you think you will be able to work with. Simple is generally best; anything too elaborate might become overwhelming after awhile. Remember that if paper management (or whatever area you're trying to improve) was easy for you, your current state of disorder wouldn't exist in the first place. Purchase a copy of the book that describes the system you have chosen.
3. Gather or purchase the items needed in order to implement the system. Organizing paper might require file folders, an in-box, etc. Label folders, establish a family mail center, install in-boxes, and carefully follow all other directions as specified in the book.
4. Decide on a suitable holding station for items you have accumulated over the years which are waiting to be sorted, filed or acted on. Don't try to do all your organizing first, before implementing the system. Simply gather your collection of papers, deposit them in the holding station, and work on them as you can -- even 10 or 15 minutes per day will whittle down the pile in no time.
5. Begin using your system immediately. This will prevent the disorganization from spreading.
6. If you find that the system you're using doesn't address a particular need, such as what to do with graded school assignments, for example, make a decision about this immediately. If you can't decide, then simply allocate a single place for school papers and make sure they all end up there. You can change your mind at any point and reorganize things, so don't wait for the perfect idea before you try something.
7. Use the system religiously. No excuses. That is the only way any system will work.

A disorderly home can be terribly overwhelming to the homemaker who means well but doesn't know where to begin. The good news is that you can begin right now, from wherever you are. All you have to do is take that first step.

Best Place To Shop:

IKEA
www.ikea.com

IKEA has a lot of great, inexpensive storage units and small containers. You can shop online for most of their products





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GARLIC RICE PILAF

This tasty side dish goes with just about anything

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
- 6 medium to large cloves garlic, peeled and finely minced
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup long-grain rice
- 1 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION:

With food chopper or processor, chop together the lemon peel, garlic and parsley. Heat butter in heavy 2-quart saucepan or deep skillet. Cook the garlic mixture very slowly for 10 minutes. Cook rice, stirring, over medium heat for 2 minutes. Combine the broth and wine in another saucepan. Heat until it just begins to boil, then add to the rice mixture; add salt and freshly ground pepper. Cover tightly and simmer over very low heat for 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed and rice is tender. Fluff with a fork before serving. Serves 4.



CAJUN PORK ROAST

For ideal results with this roast, test doneness with a meat thermometer. This will help take the guess work out of your cooking and ensure that the roast is tender and juicy. Serve with roasted new potatoes and orange and onion salad.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 pounds boneless single loin pork roast
- 3 tablespoons paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper (cayenne)
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground white pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

PREPARATION:

Combine all seasonings and rub well over all surfaces of roast. Place roast in shallow pan and roast in 350°F. oven for about an hour, until internal temperature is 155 to 160 degrees F. Remove from oven, let rest 5 to 10 minutes before slicing. Serves 6.