

News On The Move

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Market Report

The Tax Credit extension and expansion was certainly good news for our market. Also in the good news category are November activity levels (showing and offers). November written sales volume at Max Broock was up 48% over last November! (The MLS was “only” up 28%), the third month in a row we were able to beat the same month last year. So, will this continue? Some of the increased activity this fall has been borrowed business from next year, but with the expansion of the tax credit, continued low interest rates and great prices, sales should show year over year gain for the first half of 2010 of 5-10%. 2009 had a slow start and a fast finish, 2010 will be the opposite, a fast start with a slower finish. With the expiration of the tax credits in June (there is little support for another extension) we expect unit sales to fall as much as 10-15%

compared to the fall of this year. For Sellers, that means take advantage of the activity in the first half of the year and price even more aggressively. For Buyers, prices should fall throughout the year, possibly even accelerating a bit in the second half. It is likely that interest rates will rise in the second half, so waiting will not create an advantage. The new short sale guidelines being promoted by the Obama administration are encouraging, but they do not go into effect until April, and, at the moment it does not seem most lenders yet have the resources or training to comply. Nonetheless it is nice to have another entity, hopefully with a bit more clout than us, pushing to get the process streamlined and available to the many vs. the current few. [Please click here to view the numbers for the month.](#)

How to Make Good Decisions in the Real Estate Market

Matters of the heart tend to hurt rather than help the negotiation process when it comes to buying and selling real estate. The following tips will help you manage the emotional ties that bind buyers and sellers to bad decisions.

Use an Agent: Agents do more than just show a home. They provide an impartial and objective opinion about the condition of a property, pricing and comparable real estate on the market.

Establish a Priority List - Then Stick to It: Every stakeholder in the buying and selling process should have a priority list that includes needs and wants. Creating such a list helps you stay organized and reduces the risk of becoming emotionally entangled in a bidding war or falling in love with unnecessary yet expensive features that won't add to

the functionality of the home. Ask your agent to focus on finding buyers or homes that meet the main needs on your priority list, and move to the wants later. **Get a Second Opinion:** Ask a friend or family member for his or her opinion, especially if you aren't certain. But be prepared to listen to constructive criticism. Appraisers, inspectors and agents are also vital sources of expert information.

Document: Take plenty of photographs when buying or selling so you can share them with others. Sellers can assist buyers by providing a fact sheet that includes room dimensions, existing warranties, upgrades and other important features of the property. Or buyers can bring along a tape measure and a notebook to jot down important details.

Making Repairs? Essential Equipment for Every Toolbox

A properly stocked toolbox is essential if you're buying your first home or gearing up to take care of a few necessary repairs and renovations. The following are a few items you might need:

Power Drill: There's a reason the humble power drill has become one of the most popular tools among homeowners and craftsmen alike. It makes easy work of hundreds of household projects. From hanging shelves to installing cabinets, a power drill should be at the top of every list. Be sure to pick up drill bits and other accessories.

Tape, Glue and Other “Gunk”: Everyone knows that duct tape is an essential item, but don't forget about WD-40, a tube of wood glue, plumbing tape, electrical tape, J-B Weld and other types of household adhesives.

Protective Gear: A good pair of gloves and safety glasses and hearing protection can go a long way toward keeping you safe when making small repairs.

Sockets and Screwdrivers: A quality set of sockets and screwdrivers can last a lifetime, so buy the best you can afford, since both of these are some of the most used tools. Pliers and C-clamps are excellent additions if you can afford them.

Pull Saw, Putty Knife and Razor Edge: Superficially, these might not appear to be related, but in real-life situations, the flexibility provided by each gives them all a top rating for every toolbox. Pull saws or Japanese saws are super sharp and easy to use, even in tight spaces, while putty knives and razors tackle everything from adhesives to spackle with ease.

Top 8 Ways to Cozy Up Your Home for Winter

1. Decorate with Warm Colors

Think fire-hued tones of gold, orange, terra-cotta, and red to give an instantly cozy feel to a room or home. Not sure you want a color this intense? Even the softer tones of yellow, gold, brick, and rust will have a similar warming effect. Are you stuck with white walls? Go for warm tones in furniture, rugs, and accessories.

2. Add the Glow of Firelight

Whether you light a fire in the fireplace or just set candles on the coffee table, this flickering light reflects intimacy and warmth.

3. Pull Up a Throw

Set cozy warm throws near chairs and sofas. These not only offer lovely color or pattern, but they will be close at hand to snuggle around chilly knees and feet. Throws are also a wonderful addition to bedrooms.

4. Cover the Floors

Bare hardwood or tile floors may be great for summer, but they can be downright uninviting in the winter. Switch to area rugs to give toes a warmer feel underfoot. Though patterned area rugs can be purchased, regular carpeting can also be cut into custom size and the edges bound to make inexpensive area rugs in any size you desire.

5. Insulate Against Chills

Is your favorite reading chair next to a window? You may want to consider adding and insulated window treatment to keep chills at bay. Or, look for a way to move the chair to a warmer spot in the room.

6. Accessorize for Winter

Banish the silk floral arrangement of tulips and daffodils. Instead, put out big baskets of birch logs, pine cones, or cozy fleece pillows. Even these small touches will make a room feel season-appropriate for winter.

7. Choose Warm Activities

Dig out your family photo albums, write letters, or play Monopoly by the fire. Roast marshmallows, pop popcorn, or plan a vacation. These activities are memory makers that the entire family can cozy up to.

8. The Scent of Cinnamon

Fill your home with the warm scents of winter—apple, cinnamon, pine, or bayberry. Candles, food, and scented sprays are a few of the many alternatives for adding soothing scents to your space.

Coral Nafie, About.com guide

Michigan Fun Facts

- Although Michigan is often called the “Wolverine State” there are no longer any wolverines in Michigan.
- The oldest county is Wayne, which was established in 1815.
- Sault Ste. Marie was founded by father Jaques Marquette in 1668. It is the third oldest remaining settlement in the United States.
- Michigan has more than 11,000 inland lakes and more than 36,000 miles of streams.
- Standing anywhere in the state a person is within 85 miles of one of the Great Lakes.
- The city of Novi was named from its designation as Stagecoach stop #6, or No. VI.
- In 1817 the University of Michigan was the first university established in the United States. Originally named Catholepistemiun, and located in Detroit. The name was changed in 1821 and the University moved to Ann Arbor.
- Gerald R. Ford grew up in Grand Rapids and became the 38th president of the U.S. He attended the University of Michigan where he was a football star. He served on a World War II aircraft carrier and afterward represented Michigan in congress for 34 years.

The Birth of a New Ocean?

A giant crack has opened up in the eastern Ethiopia desert - and it could be the beginnings of a new ocean.

The crack, which is 35 miles long and up to 20 feet wide, opened in just days in 2005, according to a report by Live Science.

It's the same kind of process that is believed to create oceans.

The rift opened up when a volcano at one end erupted, pushing magma into the gap and “unzipping” it.

Scientists believe that eventually the Red Sea will pour into the area, creating an ocean.

But that won't happen for a million years or so.

Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?



How has the price of your home changed in today's market? How much are other homes in your neighborhood selling for? If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I'll be able to help.

Just give my office a call for a no-fuss, professional evaluation. I won't try to push you into listing with me or waste your time. I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value. And maybe I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live! Just give my office a call at 248-644-6700 to arrange an appointment. Alternatively, stop by at the office. The address is on the back page of this newsletter.

Sell First or Buy First? Which Is Right for You?

When it comes to buying and selling real estate, timing is of the utmost importance. Unfortunately, it's also a topic few people truly understand. The following are some tips to keep in mind when speaking with your real estate agent.

Sell before buying or buy before selling?

It's an age-old question, but asking a few strategic questions might enable you to narrow your decision down to the right choice for your individual situation.

Is selling or buying a necessity or do you have some flexibility?

Job relocation, change of marital status or other life situations often require a

relocation within a specified period of time. Equally important are the needs of the other party. Work with your agent to understand the opportunities and limitations of both sides in order to create a win-win situation.

Buying before selling typically benefits those who simply must move or relocate within a specified period of time and who are unable or unwilling to lease or rent. It is also a popular option for those seeking an exchange of property under Section 1031 of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code or for those who are attempting to minimize taxation via other deals.

Can you obtain financing or afford to carry both mortgages for any period of time?

If so, you may have a little more flexibility at your disposal. Speak to your agent about a leaseback or other temporary term. It's often possible to use these when negotiating terms. Selling before buying can benefit those who are unable to obtain financing with an existing mortgage in place or who wish to use cash proceeds from the prior sale to fund repairs, renovations or an entire purchase.

In many instances, it is possible to arrange a simultaneous closing for both the home purchased and the home sold with contingencies that reflect this situation on both transactions.

A Guide to Smartphone Systems

Selecting a smartphone can be tricky, but it doesn't require a PhD. The following is a rundown on some of the more popular operating systems and applications:

iPhone: The popularity of the iPhone shows no signs of slowing anytime soon. But one of the frustrations for business users has been trying to ensure that things like contact phone numbers on their iPhones are synced with data on their computers.

Android: This mobile operating system owned by Google has garnered a lot of attention and integrates seamlessly with a host of services offered by the search engine. Research company Canalys estimates that Android had 3.5% of the worldwide smartphone market in the third quarter of 2009.

Microsoft: Microsoft hopes its Windows CE operating system will garner market share from those who use the Symbian system. Microsoft is also adding Linux support in hopes of attracting a previously untapped market.

Nokia: In 2007, Nokia held 47% of the market, but it has been losing ground. Still, Nokia remains an industry standard because of its ease in syncing with both Windows and Mac systems as well as web mail and Exchange.

Winter Bedding—Introducing a “Heavenly Solution”

A feather bed is common in other parts of the world, but a relatively new addition to American beds. As the term suggests, the first “feather beds” were made of feathers. But now polyester, down, feathers, or combinations are used to create a feather bed. A traditional feather bed is about 4” thick and stitched in channels or a baffle box design. With this much cushioning, even a hard mattress feels soft and cuddly. But if you like a firm sleep surface, a feather bed may not be for you! You'll actually feel as though you're being hugged by the pad!

A feather bed protector will keep the cover of the feather bed clean. But you will need to shake out a featherbed every couple of weeks, turn it over, and rotate it on the bed to keep the fill evenly distributed.

Some featherbeds can be washed, but will probably require a commercial sized machine. Or have the featherbed dry cleaned at least once a year to keep it looking and feeling fresh.

About.com

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

How can I be sure I'm pricing my home to sell?

Obtain current comparable estimates. If you live in a neighborhood with similar-sized homes, try to find a recent sales example and then extrapolate the price per square foot to derive a rule of thumb. Increase or decrease the estimate based upon condition, age, upgrades and other amenities.

Include income potential. If the property is capable of generating an income via rental, then use the profit potential of the property to estimate the return on investment or ROI. Most investors expect an ROI at or above the safe, headache-free option of investing in Treasury bonds.

Get a second opinion. Work with a real estate agent who specializes in that location to provide valuable feedback and a second opinion. Remember, if you expect a fast sale then search for all available properties and then plan to price your home near the bottom range of the properties currently listed and sold in the area.

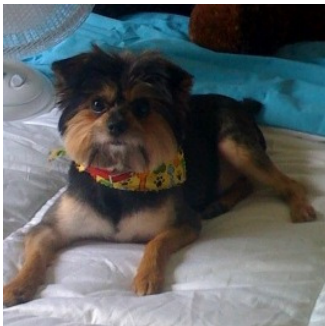
Piper & Tucker's Pawspace



Left: Piper & Tucker celebrating 2010 in style!

Right:

Lily, a six month old black lab. We would have guessed her name was Marley!



Left:

A Chihuahua/Yorkie mix (a "Chorkie") born on Valentine's Day. The owner appropriately named him Romeo!

Shrimp in Coconut and Lime

Serves 4

- 2 pounds raw shrimp, shelled and deveined
- Grated zest and juice of 1 lime
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger
- 1 can coconut milk
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch, dissolved in one tablespoon water
- 4 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 4 spring onions, green and white parts sliced crosswise.

Directions:

Marinate the shrimp in lime juice and zest for up to an hour. Heat olive oil in a large skillet. Remove shrimp from marinade and stir fry for 3-4 minutes. Add the red pepper flakes and ginger and stir until fragrant - about one minute. Add coconut milk, fish sauce and cornstarch mixture. Lower heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until sauce thickens. Add half the cilantro and the onions. Simmer another 1-2 minutes, or until shrimp are cooked through. Serve with remaining cilantro sprinkled on top.

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