



Welcome to the autumn edition of the real estate newsletter.

Quick hits from the blog.

Issue No 8 - Autumn 2006

The following are snippets from a few select stories on the blog from the past few weeks. Even frequent newsletters cannot keep track of the rapidly-changing real estate market. Stay tuned.

Buyers' Agent Fees
Buyers Should Know that Mortgages Can Include Fees Paid Directly to Buyer Brokers
[Link](#)



Housing prices to drop?
In short, properties in our market will most likely continue to appreciate, but at a more reasonable rate
[Link](#)

Recycling Poll



Recycling is something that people would be willing to pay for as long as the cost is hidden from plain sight.
[Link](#)

TDRs
Supervisor David Slutzy is thinking outside the box. And he wants to expand the growth-area box by 1%
[Link](#)

Why Blog?
She asked me about mine and said, "what have you gained from it? Have you gotten any business?" [Link](#)



Market changes

The real estate market is changing every day, and is influenced by a myriad of factors.

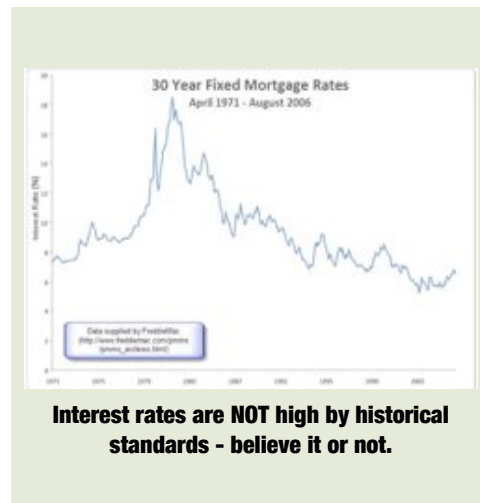
Interest rates. Technology. Search engines. The federal Government (DOJ & the FTC). Wall Street. Local Governments. Public Sentiment and Opinion.

A short list

The above is but a short list of some of the influencing organizations and factors that touch the real estate market. Every day brings new competition, whether in the form of a new real estate company or a new house on the market down the street.

Followers

More people seem to follow the real estate market than almost any other segment of the American economy. Whether these followers are checking out new listings down the street, looking to see if [Zillow](#) or [Trulia](#) have arrived, reading the real estate section of the newspaper or their favorite real estate blog, the intensity of the microscope never seems to fade. Why? Curiosity. Voyeurism. Greed. Concern about ones' investment.



Interest rates are NOT high by historical standards - believe it or not.

Our market

The Charlottesville/ Central Virginia real estate market has experienced (you may have noticed) some changes in the past several months. Inventory (the number of houses on the market) is up - in some segments of the market, dramatically so. Days on Market area up - houses are staying for sale longer than they have in years.

What should Sellers do?

Be patient. Seek professional advice. Be prepared to work harder than you thought you would to maintain the cleanliness of your house, the necessary clutterification and above all, your sanity. In time, and priced correctly, your house will sell. Unfortunately, asking and selling prices are moving targets.

Buyers have many more options than they have had in the past five or six years. Look at your house from a buyer's point of view. What should you fix/paint/change?

For the Buyers

My advice for Buyers is similar to that which I give to Sellers - be patient. Don't rush. Get pre-approved from a *reputable* lender. Try to use a local lender, if at all possible. I will be writing a horror story about using a non-local lender this week or next. Do your research. Become an educated buyer. You now have time to analyze whether you want to spend the next couple of years in a particular house/location.

Above all, seek the right advice. Buying a house or a piece of land is a huge decision, one that should not be taken lightly. Consider all of the requisite factors - can you comfortably afford this house? what happens if "life happens"? Will you be able to make the payments for the next several months if you get laid off? Is the neighborhood a good "fit"?

In perspective

Keep everything in perspective. The changing market is not the end of the world. Our region remains a great place to live - despite all of the growth and changes. As I write this, the stock market is at an all-time high. Mortgage rates are low. Job growth is up. Unemployment is down. And it's Fall - perhaps the best time of the year to live in this area.

FROM JIM

Welcome to the Autumn 2006 Newsletter.

It's been a few months since my last newsletter; for that I apologize.

While I have been writing almost every day on my blog, [realcentralva](#) as well as growing [realcrozetoa](#), I feel I have squandered an opportunity to keep in touch with my clients, past, present and (hopefully) future by not doing the newsletter.

I feel that the newsletter is a unique opportunity to communicate on a regular basis with many of you, some of whom I have no other means of communication.

The real estate market is, as defined by the Oxford American Dictionary, dynamic - "characterized by constant change, activity, or progress" - perhaps more so than many of us have seen in quite some time.

Our region is growing - and shrinking - in some respects. As more people commute into the CharlAlbemarle region, local governments are trying to guide/target/encourage growth and development in a more urbanized manner.

Where do we go from here? I do not know, other than it is absolutely vital to be involved in the decision-making process. My nightmare is to wake up one day and read the news online that something has happened locally that will affect my family and my business. The argument that politicians never listen rings hollow if you don't take the chance to speak to them and vote.

Thank you for reading, and please, if you or anybody you know is thinking about buying or selling, I would truly appreciate the opportunity to earn their business.

Jim Duncan

Our Market is growing

Have you heard of Waynesboro? It's that little hamlet just to the West of Crozet. With the brand-new Home Depot, Lowe's Starbucks, Martin's Grocery Store, über-cheap gas and so much more.

More and more, as the search for the elusive "affordable house" continues, I am finding that Waynesboro is becoming part of the equation. If it comes into the discussion only to be eliminated, Waynesboro is a factor. Reviewing the Census data, more people are commuting to CharlAlbemarle from Waynesboro every year. Heck, more people are commuting to Northern Virginia/D.C. every year, too!

How will these changes affect our market? Too many ways to squeeze into a paragraph or two. With the recent drop in gas prices, Waynesboro (25-30 minutes to Charlottesville on Interstate 64!) is a better option every day. Houses are significantly less expensive than those in CharlAlbemarle, schools are good, and it's generally less crowded (for now). Keep your eyes open. For those who live to the West or South West, visits to 29 North may become a thing of the past.

Regionally Speaking

Charlottesville. Albemarle. Fluvanna. Nelson. Greene. Waynesboro. Augusta. Madison.

From a regional point of view, our market remains strong. There are plenty of buyers out there. The difference is that there are also plenty of houses as well. That's what has changed. New construction is starting to see a pull-back in pace. Some builders are more responsive than others, but all are starting to feel the market changes. When was the last time you saw two of the largest local builders advertising on prime-time television? Will more advertising bring more buyers out of the woodwork? Doubtful.

Should you choose to visit one of these builders, be aware of your rights and their obligations to disclose exactly whom they are representing. Hint: it's probably not you. If they offer "Dual Agency," ask yourself - would you want the same person Prosecuting you as well as Defending you in a court of law?

Property Rights

David Slutsky, Supervisor from the Rio District in Albemarle County, has announced a proposal that calls for an expansion of the Designated Growth

Area as well as what amounts to a shutting down of development in the rural area.

The Commonwealth of Virginia recently passed legislation requiring that Clustering be a component of all localities' comprehensive plans. How will this affect you? Untold as of right now, but make no mistake, it will affect you, whether your next house is in a clustered community, that field across the street becomes a clustered development, or if you have to drive by (or through!) clustered communities on your way home and to work.



Mr. Slutsky's proposal is specific to Albemarle County and it has an awful lot of merit. It also has several components with which the property rights advocate in me wants to grab a picket and stand outside his office. (I would never do that, but you get the point). If enacted, this proposal would require some changes by the General Assembly, thus opening up the possibility that other localities may learn about and try to implement it. I have not yet decided whether I am personally for or against this proposal, but I do encourage you to educate yourselves.

One of the best places to start that education (aside from my blog, of course) is [Charlottesville Tomorrow](#). They have the luxury of dedicating themselves to following, studying and reporting on growth issues specific to CharlAlbemarle. Their coverage is unmatched, unparalleled and surprisingly, unbiased.

In Closing

The real estate market and our world as a whole are impacted by technological developments every day.

Be they the furtherance of broadband internet's reach, GPS units for cars and bicycles, always-on cellphones, blogs that are complementing newspapers and big media, instant messaging that some say is going to replace email ... real estate is about people. Always has been, always will be.

Technology can help facilitate the finding of, and closing on, the house, but it will (not soon, anyway) never be able to smell the air inside and around a particular house. When technology is not impeding progress, it is usually helping that progress happen. Buying a house will always be an emotional process, one filled with questions, concerns and hesitation and the occasional spate of fear. A good agent will help alleviate those heightened emotions and advise and guide you through the process. Until next time ...