



By **KATIE SOMPLE**

Seller pricing comes down/ sales go up.

Either Sellers have internalized the realities of current market values overnight, or they're weary from the long term price stand off with buyers: no matter the reason, the result is a whopping 75% increase in county wide residential sales in the last three months, compared to the sluggish first half of 2009.

From January through June, 581 homes sold throughout the county, averaging 97 per month. Since July 1st, 383 sales have already closed (as of the beginning of October), averaging about 128 per month. Better news still is that there are more than 300 sales waiting to become closed in the next 30 to 60 days.

The cloud in the silver lining is the predicted oncoming wave of new foreclosures anticipated for January 2010. Just as absorption was catching up with the last flood, another storm appears on the horizon. Bottom line is the new onslaught of homes selling between 30% to 50% of their 2006 value will continue to control neighborhood values on all homes - not just the ones that are in 'trouble'.

Something else sellers should be aware of: the average price per sold house in the first six months of 2009 was \$433,000. Here's the rub: as asking prices became more aligned with buyer's opinions, offers came in closer to those asking prices, which

contributed to increasing the average sale to \$466,000. In other words, sellers received a higher ratio sold price to their asking price when prices came down than when they were trying to convince buyers that their opinions of values were too low. This follows the classic Golden Rule - he who has the gold makes the rules.

Sales in the various price ranges were nearly identical in the first six months compared to July through September. Current escrows indicate a trend toward more action in the under \$600,000 category, representing approximately 89% of sales due to close soon.

Price Category	Sales Jan-June 2009	Sales July-Sep 2009	In Escrow
Under \$300K	36%	38%	41%
\$301K-\$600K	48	44	48
\$601K-\$999K	10	10	7
\$1M-\$2M	4	4	2
\$2M-\$3M	-1	-1	-1
\$3M+	-1	0	-1

One quarter of stronger sales does not a recovery trend make-especially considering what's coming on the market in January, i.e., more foreclosures and short sales. As proven in the recent past, these new troubled listings are expected to keep prices at current selling levels until the last of them gets absorbed by the current buyer's market because the guy down the street who is being foreclosed upon affects what an appraiser will appraise, what a lender will lend and what a buyer will pay for your house,

even though you are current on your mortgage and have equity in your home. Until that situation changes, there just isn't much a seller can do except shine the apple and price it to compete. Of course, the advantage of hiring the smartest, best informed Realtor to advocate for every dime for you goes unsaid. ■

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