Newsletter/4th Quarter 2010

LIVING Quarters

Is this the best of times? The worst of times? Maybe even the RIGHT TIME?

A few days ago, I found a flyer on my windshield proclaiming, "It's not a good time to sell it, but it's a great time to redecorate it!"

Maybe they're onto something. The New York Times recently reported, "…buyers who scooped up homes at lower prices thanks to the economy are now plowing what they saved into renovations and decorating." USA Today's headline declared, "As sales rise in August, analyst says 'worst is over' for housing."

So what does it all mean? Should you jump in now to buy or sell? Or wait a while longer to see what happens?

The bottom line is, the best time to buy or sell is when the time is right for YOU. Market trends can help guide your expectations but they don't dictate the terms of individual transactions. After all, there are lots of good reasons to buy or sell a home – job changes, marriage or divorce, having children or facing an empty nest – and life's important events don't wait for market corrections. Time marches on.

At the same time, buying or selling a home can always seem a little scary, no matter what the market says. That's why we work hard to make the entire process as pleasant and professional as possible.

When your time is right, we hope you'll allow us to represent you.

In the meantime, we want to fill this newsletter with items that will be of interest to you. If you have comments or suggestions on content, please take time to let us know. We value your feedback.

Regards,

Susan Harding

Katie Schanck

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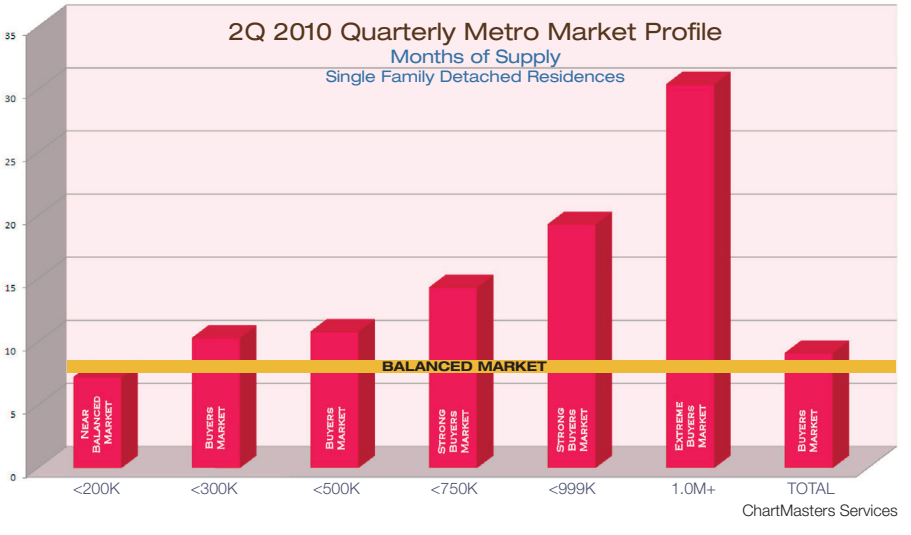
THE MARKET

Months of Supply (the number of properties for sale divided by the number of sales in a month) is one good indicator of how balanced the market is.

When Months of Supply levels fall below six months, we have a seller's market, and prices tend to climb. Above six months creates a buyer's market, which often leads to falling prices. When current Months of Supply levels are in the six-to-seven month range, the market is considered balanced, meaning supply roughly equals demand. In a balanced market, prices appreciate at about the rate of inflation.

Please call us to discuss how current market conditions might affect your real estate sale or purchase decisions.



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INSIDE scoop

HIGHS & lows

Home mortgage financing activity rose to the year's highest levels in early October, mainly because mortgage **interest rates are at all-time lows.** Interest rates for 30-year fixed mortgages are hovering around four percent, the lowest rates since the early 1950s.

What's more, these low interest rates are making shorter-term mortgages more popular, especially 15-year mortgages instead of the usual 30. Interest rates on 15-year loans are typically around half a percentage point lower on those on 30-year loans. Typically, closing costs are comparable.

Lower interest rates allow you to reduce your mortgage debt faster and build up equity faster. Every case is different, of course, but for those who qualify, these historic lows can mean significant short- and long-term savings.

OUTSIDE the box

Who knew growing your own could be so easy and so much fun?

Why not plant a fall/winter garden?

After a summer filled with fresh fruits, veggies and herbs, it's always a little sad to realize the outdoor farmer's markets will soon be closing for the season and we'll be forced to get most of our fresh produce from the grocery store, which gets it from who-knows-where.

But with Georgia's temperate climate and long growing season, you probably have many more home-grown options than you think, and for much longer than you think.

Cool weather vegetables and year-round herbs are a tasty, healthy way to perk up fall and winter meals, and growing them yourself doesn't require farm skills or equipment. Most will grow easily (and attractively) in your existing beds, in simple raised planters, or even in containers.

Think broccoli, kale, cauliflower, cabbage, mustard, chard, spinach, and leaf lettuces like romaine, buttercrunch and butterhead. Or root vegetables like beets, carrots, radishes and onions (since they're underground nestled in the warm earth, they're pretty much immune to frost). Beans, squash, cucumbers and some varieties of peas are very happy in the fall garden, and many herbs continue to produce well into the winter, if not year-round.

Atlanta's in-town- nurseries stock healthy seedlings that are specifically suited to our area and are usually pretty generous with planting and growing advice, too. A few to check out are:

- Habersham Gardens (off Cheshire Bridge Road at 2067 Manchester Street, 404.873.2484, habershamgardens.com)
- Garden Hood (in Grant Park at 353 Boulevard SE, 404.880.9848, gardenhoodatlanta.com)
- Hastings Nature & Garden Center (in Buckhead at 3920 Peachtree Road NE, 404.869.7447, hastingsgardencenter.com)
- and any of the locations of Pike Family Nurseries (pikenursery.com).

Eaten raw in salads, stirred into hearty soups and stews, roasted in the oven, baked or grilled, cool-season vegetables can add a touch of farm-to-table hipness to all your autumn meals.

AROUND town

Bruschetta with Goat Cheese

INGREDIENTS

* 1 8-oz. loaf baguette-style French bread
* 2 Tbsp. olive oil
* 3 oz. soft chevre (goat cheese), crumbled
* 2 oz. light cream cheese (Neufchatel)
* 2 tsp. lemon juice
* 1 tsp. snipped fresh sage
* 1 7-oz. jar roasted red sweet peppers, drained and cut into strips
* 1-1/4 cups coarsely chopped pitted Italian or ripe olives
* 1/2 tsp. olive oil
* Finely shredded fresh sage

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425° F. Cut bread into 1/2-inch-thick slices. Lightly brush both sides of each slice with the 2 tablespoons olive oil. Arrange on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake about 10 minutes or until crisp and light brown, turning once. If desired, transfer the cooled toasts to a storage container. Cover and store the toasts at room temperature for up to 24 hours.

2. Meanwhile, in a medium mixing bowl stir together goat cheese, light cream cheese, lemon juice, and snipped sage or oregano. Cut red pepper into strips. Toss chopped olives in the 1/2 teaspoon olive oil.

3. To assemble, spread each slice of toast with cheese mixture. Top with red pepper strips, chopped olives, and sage leaves, if desired. Serve warm or at room temperature. To heat, return slices to the ungreased baking sheet. Bake in a 425° F oven about 3 minutes or until the toppings are heated through. Makes about 24 servings.

Source, Better Homes & Gardens

Artisanal cheesemakers in GA!

The farm-to-table movement is not limited to high-end restaurants in metro Atlanta. As more of us focus on the origin, quality and flavor of our food, Georgia's farmers have responded, not just with fresh, organic produce but also with locally handcrafted dairy cheeses. Here are a few of our favorites:

Decimal Place Farm, an 18-acre dairy goat farm just 10 miles from downtown Atlanta in Conley, produces three types of goat cheese, available at the East Atlanta Village Farmer's Market on Thursday afternoons, at both Alon's locations, and at Rainbow Natural Foods. They also offer classes on the basics of cheesemaking and goat husbandry. Decimalplacefarm.blogspot.com for more info.

Flat Creek Lodge in Swainsboro (about three hours southeast of Atlanta) is a 2,000-acre resort and spa dedicated to "the traditions of fine hunting and fishing in an eco-friendly environment." Flat Creek Lodge Dairy cheeses are available at the Flat Creek property or online at flatcreeklodge.com. A Behind the Scenes Dairy Tour is held monthly on the 3rd Saturday. Call for details or reservations.

Nature's Harmony Farm, a 126-acre sustainable farm in Elberton (about 2 hours east of Atlanta), produces farmstead raw milk cheese in addition to grass-fed beef and lamb, heritage turkeys, rare-breed pork, free range chickens and other seasonal meats. Nature's Harmony does not ship its cheese, so get it at the farm or at a designated drop-off point. For details, see www.naturesharmonyfarm.com.

Sweet Grass Dairy is a family-owned 140-acre farm in Thomasville, near the Florida border, that crafts old-world style cheese from 150 goats and 30 Jersey cows and is committed to sustainable, earth-friendly farming. Sweet Grass cheeses and other specialty items are available online at sweetgrassdairy.com.

AtlantaFresh Creamery in Norcross crafts small-batch yogurt and mozzarella cheeses using fresh raw milk, following the methods and traditions of old world dairy and cheese makers. Available at Whole Foods Markets, Kroger, Star Provisions and other local retailers, as well as at seasonal farmer's markets, and online. For product lists, see atlantafresh.com.

SITES to see

In a city the size of Atlanta, it's hard to keep up with what's going on when, which great new places are opening, and where the best deals can be found. But being in the know is getting easier, thanks to web sites that research the hottest happenings, then email the details to you daily (or, in some cases, weekly). The best part? They're free! Here are a few to get you started:

- ***Daily Candy,*** an insider's guide to "all that's fun, fashionable, food related, and culturally stimulating in the city you're fixated on," plus a Weekend Guide that comes out on Thursday so you actually have time to plan! (dailycandy.com/atlanta)
- ***Thrillist,*** "a gloriously free daily email on the newest food, nightlife, travel, entertainment and gadgets in your 'hood" that promises to "unearth all that's new, unknown or under-appreciated in your area." (thrillist.com/)
- ***Jessica Shops Atlanta,*** an "editorial" site that's updated daily with deals around Atlanta and online accompanied by weekly emails with product reviews, bargains and deals, sales, and other shopping info, plus exclusive invitation-only events. (jessicashops.com)
- ***LivingSocial*** offers "one fantastic deal every day" with discounts of up to 90% at local restaurants, bars, spas, theaters, and more. One-click purchase makes buying easy, and purchase vouchers are posted online the next day. A special link lets you share the deal with friends. If three friends buy from your link, your deal is free! (livingsocial.com)

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GOOD ¢ents

Home for the Holidays:

5 GOOD REASONS TO POSTPONE REDECORATING.

Sure, you want your home to look its best for holiday entertaining, but is the pre-holiday scramble worth it? Maybe not, especially when you look at January's options:

1. Furniture costs 10-50 percent less in January. Manufacturers release new styles in February, so showrooms drop prices to make room for new inventory. (Ditto July because new styles are introduced in August.)

2. Find major bargains on linens and bedding at January white sales. Sheets, blankets, pillows, towels and more are up to 60 % off retail.

3. Carpet and flooring are discounted in January. For the best prices, shop before February 15.

4. Peak season for indoor home improvements is mid-October through mid-December. In January, contractors are likely to give you better prices and more attention.

5. Relax. Your family and friends want to see you, not your furnishings. Dim the lights, take a deep breath, and enjoy their company!

Worth Quoting

You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you. *Dale Carnegie*

You are not stuck where you are unless you decide to be. *Dr. Wayne Dyer*

You must have long-range goals to keep you from being frustrated by short-range failures. *Charles Noble*

Animals are such agreeable friends — they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms. *George Eliot*

Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower. *Albert Camus*

Thanksgiving dinners take eighteen hours to prepare. They are consumed in twelve minutes. Half-times take twelve minutes. This is not coincidence. *Erma Bombeck*

Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, "What! You too? I thought I was the only one." *C.S. Lewis*