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Q&A

More photos, please

Q: As buyers, can we request more photos of properties for sale in NH?

A.: At the risk of stepping on a soap box, let this be a message to anyone involved in selling a home: Buyers want and need more photos.

In the case of an out-of-state buyer in the middle of an employment change, sometimes pictures are all the buyer has.

A property for sale is in a beauty contest. The aisle it walks is the photo gallery and it should depict all the features of the home. Sellers should go online and view their own listing and try to see it from the Buyer's perspective. If the listing agent didn't get a chance to take more than one photo to get it in the MLS, call them to schedule another photo shoot.

If spring comes along and all those winter photos are still posted, it's time to go back and update them to spring and summer photos with all the flowers, etc.

If there is a pool, take a picture in-season without the cover. Include the grill (with steaks sizzling away) for added discussion by the buyers. If there is a garage, you guessed it, get that one, too. Sometimes photo diversity can not be made available for a small home or a condo, but the more you can offer the viewing audience, the more sales will occur.

It's important that the entire home gets in the shot not just the corner. If the seller has a collection of photos from the home, which includes gardens and other features, create an album and leave it on the table for the buyers to view as they come for a showing.

It goes a long way when it's mud season and all the true beauty surrounding your home has yet to become visible to a potential buyer. And, if you don't like the photos that were taken, make sure to have more taken.

Sellers should also make room dimensions of the living room, kitchen and master bedroom available for posting along with the photos. Ask your agent to create a virtual tour. Those are very popular and buyers love them.

Answer supplied by Marie Mailhot, REMAX Omega Group, 23 W. Webster Street, Manchester.

This information has been provided by the Greater Manchester/Nashua Board of Realtors in conjunction with the New Hampshire Union Leader's Advertising Department. Any questions about the content should be directed to the realty board at 166 S. River Road, Bedford, N.H. 03110 or by e-mail to info@gmnr.org.

Prospect Hills - Lebanon, NH

Information photos, Page F3

Inside: Feature Home of the Week



BRADY SULLIVAN
PROPERTIES

Realtors expect hot NH market for rest of year

By PAUL FEELY
New Hampshire Union Leader

After a tough winter, local Realtors expect the housing market in New Hampshire to heat up as the warmer months approach.

"I expect the year to play out like in 2010, but in reverse," said Chris Masiello, president and CEO of the Masiello Group.

"It will be a tale of two years — we are having a slow first half of the year, but I expect things to pick up pace in the second half."

It's been four years since home prices in the U.S. began heading south and there are signs at both the top and bottom of the housing market that things are starting to improve.

The problem is at the middle, where some buyers, looking to take advantage of a large number of foreclosures for sale, are having difficulty securing financing, or job security fears prevent lenders or potential buyers from pulling the trigger on a sale.

"I think that we have stabilized, but that there is some uncertainty in the market," said Michael Caouette, president of the Greater Manchester-Nashua Board of Realtors.

"I think gas prices have somewhat hampered consumers from taking action in the past few months. The previous two quarters in New Hampshire were up in numbers; if we had not seen the spike at the pump we would have more than likely seen another increase this past quarter."

An old expression states that "cash is king," and nowhere is that more true than in luxury home sales.

Across the country, industry reports show that sales of homes valued at over \$1 million (1.5 percent of all U.S. home sales) are enjoying an uptick in most states. In some of these deals, well-heeled investors, buoyed by gains in the stock market, are paying for properties entirely in cash.

"Along the New Hampshire Seacoast, and in the Lakes Region, we do see those transactions occurring," said Masiello.

The biggest issue is the so-called mid-level range properties, priced on average between \$100,000 and \$500,000, which account for more than 60 percent of U.S. housing stock.

Foreclosures and short sales, and an uncertain labor market, combine to keep buyers away in some regions, but here, Realtors are optimistic.

"In Bedford, I would say the mid-range properties are in the \$300,000-\$500,000 range, and we have not seen anything stalled in this marketplace, when the properties are priced aggressively," said Caouette.

"The same is true for Manchester, with a more affordable average range, around the \$200,000 mark. I think you will find that when gas prices stabilize and as the economy moves from stabilized to recovering, we will start to see pricing trends in a steady upward trend."

"Loans and underwriting

have tightened up to where they were 15, 20 years ago," said Masiello.

"That will leave some people out, but it should also mean that the market doesn't get overwhelmed every seven years or so by an overabundance of credit."

In New Hampshire, home sales increased 36 percent in March, and the state's "day on the market" statistic dropped from 145 to 141 since February.

"The last buyer I was working with in Manchester, we had a hard time finding what they were looking for due to a lack of inventory in their price range, which 18 months ago had plenty to pick from," said Caouette.

"Just because sales have not increased substantially is only one factor, we do not have two-plus years of inventory on the market like some other states, in many cases we are only looking at six to 12 months' worth, and in some situations less than six months' worth."

"If you look at the overall affordability of homes and condos and the fact that buyers can literally buy a house for what they are paying in rent, I am excited about the upcoming months," said Caouette.

"Buyers are being given a great opportunity to lock in a rock-bottom interest rate on an investment for many years to come."



The Villages at Loudon offers a one bedroom model as well as larger homes.

LARISSA MULKERN PHOTO

Developer: Demand up for Loudon condos

By LARISSA MULKERN
Union Leader Correspondent

LOUDON — The real estate market may be in a slump, but that hasn't stalled construction — and sales — much at the Villages at Loudon, a new development of single-family homes priced between \$165,000 and \$320,000.

Thus far, 19 homes have been built and sold, and six lots are reserved. The development, age-restricted to residents 55 and older, already has received the requisite Attorney General's Office approval for all five phases of the 100-unit planned community, according to Carol Schoch, the principal broker with East Coast Communities Realty Group.

Schoch has been representing the development since it started in 2006. The Villages at Loudon is being developed by Mario Plante of MDP Development, who bought the 80-acre parcel — a former gravel pit — on Forest Road.

No doubt the mortgage cri-

sis, stock market crash and the economy slowed sales, but not because of lack of interest.

Schoch said the demand for new housing at the Villages at Loudon exists. The problem is that people have to sell their older homes before moving into new homes.

"Do people want to live here? Absolutely. The problem has been when people have to sell their houses. We would have sold 50 units right now if the buyers didn't have to sell their house first," she said. With 35 years of development experience under his belt, Plante stimulated sales by offering to purchase buyers' homes in the house-trade offer. He has since purchased seven homes, which he in turn leased to cover costs until real estate sales conditions improve.

Those sellers purchased new units at The Villages. Schoch said the Villages were faced with a market flooded with low-priced, foreclosed homes.

► See **Condos**, Page F3

Brady Sullivan has recently broken ground on 12 new homes at **Prospect Hills in Lebanon, N.H.**, in a Planned Unit Development conveniently located just one mile off Route 89 at Exit 17 directly across the street from the new Lebanon Middle School. This convenient location is just 4 miles from Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. This 70 acre subdivision maintains ample open space acreage and is approved for a total of 171 homes with panoramic views of the Upper Valley.

Available home selections include 3 or 4 bedroom Colonials with farmer's porches and attached garages and 2 or 3 bedroom L-shaped Ranches with attached garages. Ranches are priced from \$179,900 and Colonials are priced from \$229,900. Standard features include garages with automatic openers, full basements, stainless steel kitchen appliances, brushed nickel lighting and wall to wall carpeting. Upgrades of bamboo flooring, granite countertops, daylight windows in the lower level and central air are also available.

Homes at Prospect Hills are serviced by public water and public sewer and all homes have forced hot air by propane heating systems. The low annual Homeowner's Association Fee of \$1,344 will cover landscaping and snow removal.

The on-site sales office at **Prospect Hills** is located at 56 Mountain View Drive and will be open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and no appointment is necessary. For additional information, please call Patricia Simpson at **Brady Sullivan Properties** at **603.657.9728**. Floor plans are available on line at **www.bradysullivan.com**.

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Steel framing and concrete foundations are being erected at The Residences at Portwalk in downtown Portsmouth.

COURTESY PHOTO

Work under way to bring 5-story luxury apartment building to Port City's downtown

PORTSMOUTH — The first floor steel framing is in place, and the second floor concrete deck is complete for The Residences at Portwalk, a \$6.8 million mixed-use apartment building in the heart of the city.

Cathartes Private Investments of Boston is the developer of The Residences at Portwalk, and Pro Con Inc. of Manchester is the architect and construction manager.

The five-story, 52,000-square

foot luxury apartment building is situated between the Deer Street retail district and Market Square.

The Residences at Portwalk will offer one- and two-bedroom design configurations, ranging in size from 720 to 1169 square feet. The 36 upscale apartments will feature gourmet kitchens with wood cabinetry and granite counters, Energy Star stainless steel appliances, living/dining room

or great room, and master bedroom suite with cultured marble vanity counter and shower surround, walk-in closet, laundry area and oversized windows.

Some floor plans include a raised ceiling and sliding terrace doors, offering scenic views of the city and the skyline. The Residences will have a private entrance with an elevator and a dedicated parking area.

Condos

They simply were waiting for the market to work its way back.

Curiously, potential buyers also voiced a desire for larger homes at the development, according to Schoch. Most of the homes were planned for 1,700 square feet or less, but in response to potential demand, the developer included a new, 3,500-square-foot model for those homeowners who might be downsizing from significantly larger homes.

New owners are enjoying the comforts of home with the amenities of a condominium association. The Villages actually is a community of detached single-family condominiums — for a monthly association fee of \$250, the homeowners get their driveways plowed, lawns maintained and access to a spacious clubhouse complete with gym, lots of space for gatherings, and a kitchen. A designated space for recreational vehicles and

boats, is also available.

"You're not just buying a house — you're buying into a community. That's huge. Now you'll be part of a community with people the same age. People that live here love it. They make friends and hang out, and have tea hours at the clubhouse." The clubhouse is "gorgeous," she said.

"This will be one of the best developments in the area. The residential push is coming this way," she said.

Real Estate Briefs

Area Realtors earn Coldwell Banker kudos

AMHERST — Three area Realtors affiliated with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's Amherst office have received international recognition as some of the top performing sales associates in Coldwell Banker's worldwide organization.

Ingrid Michaelis received induction into Coldwell Banker's International Diamond Society, a recognition earned by only 7 percent of all sales associates.

She is one of the top three sales associates in New Hampshire for total sales volume.

Siobhan Dalton and William Goddard are among the top three New Hampshire sales associates in total listings sold and were inducted into the International Sterling Society, a designation earned by the top 11 percent of all sales associates internationally.

Mosquito control firm buys in Brentwood

BRENTWOOD — Dragon Mosquito Control has purchased 29 Commercial Drive, a 6,000-square-foot industrial building on 4.4 acres.

The property was owned by McPost Land Holdings Co., LLC, according to broker The Kane Co.

Dragon Mosquito Control is the largest private mosquito control company in New Hampshire, Kane Co. said, started in 1989 by Sarah MacGregor, who serves as company president.

Dragon specializes in preparation of state special permit applications, mosquito surveillance, larval surveys, GIS mapping of mosquito habitats and appropriate control.

2 at Coldwell Banker certified as specialists

DERRY — Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage announced that Derry agents Charlotte McCaul, Fran Carney and Lorraine McCudden have achieved the Cartus Network Affinity Specialist certification.

The annual certificate is part of the

Certified Agent Advantage program, a professional standard available exclusively to members of the Cartus Broker Network of real-estate sales associates.

Mortgage Network pair earn certification

NASHUA — Mortgage Network, an industry leading independent mortgage lender, announced that loan officer Tom DeBenedictis and Northern New England Regional Manager Gina McCulloch of the Nashua office have earned Certified Mortgage Planning Specialist distinction.

Both have passed the qualifying exams to earn the designation granted by the CMPS Institute.

The CMPS Institute is a training and certifying organization created to help mortgage professionals integrate financial planning concepts into the mortgage process.

CMPS designees can offer clients strategies that encompass mortgages, debt, home equity and real estate investment.

Magazine: Coldwell Banker fastest grower

PARSIPPANY, N.J. — Entrepreneur Magazine recently ranked Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC as the fastest growing franchise among real estate companies in 2011 and 14th fastest growing franchise in all business categories, the company said.

Coldwell Banker Real Estate also ranked 75th in the Entrepreneur 2011 Global Top Franchises list and No. 90 in the publication's 32nd annual U.S. Franchise 500 rankings.

Meena Gyawali joins Jerome Duval office

MANCHESTER — Meena Gyawali has joined Jerome Duval & Associates Real Estate, LLC, as a Realtor in its 73 Haverhill St. office.

Owner/broker Jerome Duval said Gyawali has worked in real estate and on economic development projects in southern New Hampshire.