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Just a Thought!

A new year, a fresh start and a chance for new beginnings. Every year gives us a tremendous opportunity to accomplish new goals and make the kind of connections that can enrich our lives forever. It's an exciting time as we face the year ahead to dive in and discover what's possible.

We're thrilled to head into another year where we can provide the kind of service, assistance and helping hands my customers have come to know and trust. Please make note of our contact information below and keep it handy in case you or someone you know needs us throughout the coming year! We're happy to help.

We thank you for another chance to serve you, another chance to earn your trust and friendship and as always, we wish you a year ahead filled with fond memories, amazing moments and abundance! Be well!



There is a "clean slate" feel to each new year. A chance for each of us to be more, learn more and do more than we have ever dared. A fresh beginning is possible for relationships old and new, and opportunities to make a difference in the lives of those we care about await.

We care about you and your family's needs and dreams. We will do all we can to be of service to you. What a tremendous blessing it is to have the experience and knowledge to help people find the homes of their dreams, locate the investment property that makes the most sense for them, and celebrate in the new-found friendships we discover with each and every customer.

What do you dare to do this year? How will you change your world, your life, your everyday experience? It is different for everyone, isn't it? We are excited and thrilled about the year ahead. We look forward to mastering the knowledge necessary to help our clients stay ahead of the economic shifts and ever-changing laws that govern us. It gives us the opportunity to do what we do best which, in turn, gives you the opportunity to do what *you* do best.

Here's to the year ahead! We wish you an amazing journey as you celebrate your world, your family, your job, your life.

What's YOUR Home Worth?

With market changes and an ever-shifting economic climate, now is the perfect time of year to get an idea of what your home may be worth. Many factors contribute to the market value and pricing of today's properties such as:

- Age of home?
- The condition of the property. Has it been maintained or upgraded? Does it need a new roof?
- Neighborhood or location?
- Fixtures and cabinets - does it look dated?
- Systems check - how is the heating/air

conditioning units and plumbing?

- Number of bedrooms/baths - is it comparable to the other homes in that area?
- Supply and demand?
- Comparable market pricing?

These are just some of the ways a true up-to-the-market analysis of your home can be determined. If you would like to know how much your home would sell for in today's market, give us a call or stop by our new web site and get an analysis of both your home and what is going on in your neighborhood at no cost to you.

www.DandJRealtors.com



A True Seller's Guide

For most people, their home is their largest financial asset, and deciding to sell it is a big decision that involves a lot of preparation and work and marketing. There is having your house on the market and there is having your house on the market to sell. The second one means that your home is in good condition and is priced right for someone to buy.

Rule #1. Take the term 'my home' out of the equation. You need to substitute the term 'the property' or 'the condo'. This little change will take out emotional ownership. This emotion will drive your decisions and that is not productive for a sale. Buyers have not developed an emotional attachment, so the fact that your kids grew up in the home, is more of a negative. It reflects on the age of the home more than the comfort the property has provided the current seller. To them, a property is location, layout, room sizes, land, view, space, amenities and other non emotional items.

Rule #2. This is a buyer's market. There are more properties for sale than there are buyers to buy them. These are the times we are living in. Lots of property on the market to compete with your property for those limited buyers.

What this means is that if buyers are comparing similar properties at the same price, they will go for the one that needs less work and is the easiest to get a mortgage on.

We used to say "if the property needs work, just make appropriate adjustments in the price to accommodate the work to be done." That just won't cut it in this type of a market. To be competitive in pricing, a property needs to be in good shape. Needs to be painted. Needs landscaping spruced up. Needs holes in the wall patched. Needs appliances to be working. Remember, you now have serious competition.

Rule #3. A buyer does not care what you paid for your home. If two houses are on a block and they are in the same condition, same basic location, same facilities and amenities, but their owners bought them at different times and paid different amounts for them, they still need to be priced the same. A buyer is going to pay according to the current market.

Rule #4. Your house will be competing with short sales and foreclosures. In both situations, there is a good chance they will be priced below the norm. Briefly, in a short sale, the owner has fallen behind on their mortgage payments for reasons that may have been beyond their control. They have negotiated with the lender to accept less than they currently owe on the property. There is no rule of thumb as to what the bank will accept and it is on a per property basis. (go to our website <http://www.DandJRealtors.com> and select short sales for more info.) The seller may accept a price but it is totally up to the bank and they are running 60 to 90 days to even get a response. A foreclosure is something different. In this case, after a court proceeding, the property no longer belongs to the seller and now belongs to the financial institution. Buying a foreclosed property may involve a lot of additional expense, so if a buyer is comparing your property to a foreclosed property, gently remind them of the additional expenses involved in buying a foreclosure and your property might end up being the best deal.

Rule #5. A Realtor® doesn't sell your property by themselves. The seller, the Realtor®, the Brokerage, and the other 20,000 local Realtors® work as a team to sell the property. If any part of this team isn't working together then properties stay on the market longer than necessary. There is not a time that any member of the team does not remember that the property belongs to the

seller. All decisions are made by the seller. However, the seller must remain an active part of the team. They must read the marketing reports provided by their Realtor®. This means understanding pricing and property maintenance. The Realtor® and their Brokerage are responsible for developing a marketing program for the property. All programs have certain financial restraints. Certain more expensive properties may require expensive marketing plans which will require participation by both the Realtor® and the seller. With over 83% of all transactions now having some influence by the web, many Realtors®, especially the D&J Realtor Group of Century 21 Hansen put major emphasis on Web marketing. We encourage you to look at our web site and see all of the locations where our properties are marketed.

Rule #6. Contract Negotiations - This is an integral part of the real estate transaction. In order for it to be successful, all parties need to be in the frame of mind to negotiate. Buyers need to understand that if they come in with a low ball offer and then come up some, they should not expect the seller to come down a similar amount. And believe me the buyers often do. They hear from the news media that they can get property for pennies on the dollar and figure that it applies to all property. However, many sellers come in with sometimes unreasonable demands also. In most cases, a buyer will take a mortgage or at least have the property appraised.

Rule #7. Know what to expect before you begin the process. Everyone has a **bottom line. Remember the buyers don't care about the seller's bottom line** for they have their own. Calculate it on paper and make sure that needs and wants are separate. The best thing you can do is to have an appraisal done before you list the property so you can see what the banks will accept. An appraisal will cost between \$350 and \$500. Appraisals are calculated, un-emotional and do not take into consideration that the seller has new appliances or high grade granite. Their amount is what they will loan off of.



All D&J Realtor® Group Realtors® are extremely qualified to give an accurate free Broker Price Opinion which is generally similar to an appraisal but uncertified.

Rule #8. Unlike in many other States, once the transaction has closed, the seller has no rights to be in the property so all items must be removed from the property and it, according to the contract, must be left in broom swept condition. Any entrance to the property after closing is totally at the will of the new owner. The seller needs to make sure that all moving is coordinated and completed prior to closing as it the case for mail forwarding and utility changes.

Rule #9. Oh yeah, you do get money for your property. Disbursements of the sale are done by the closing agent. They will get your payoff for any financial liens on the property. This may include, but may not, a bond for the water company if the property is a home so clear any outstanding water bills. Since taxes in Florida are paid in arrears, the closing agent will deduct your portion of the real estate taxes up to and including the date of closing.

If the seller is currently paying their mortgage company escrow for taxes and insurance, their financial institution will return the collected amount within 5 weeks of closing which is a nice little after closing bonus.

If you are a foreign seller, make sure that your D&J Realtor Group team member explains your obligations under the FIRPTA. The Foreign Investment in Real Property Tax Act of 1980 is a law of the United States of America that applies to the sale of interests held by nonresident aliens and foreign corporations in real property located within the United States.

Rule #10. This is most important rule of all. Trust D&J Realtors Group to help you get through all parts of the real estate transaction. With over 50 years combined experience in helping customers successfully complete their real estate transactions with many repeats and referrals, we must be doing something right.

The Adjusting of the American Dream

Market predictions are everywhere. Don't get me wrong, they definitely have their place. But the standard market predictions in real estate have been made much tougher for real estate pros and writers alike by all of the governmental toying.

I'm not complaining -- my phone definitely rang more after the announcement of the 2009 tax credit for homebuyers. My point is just that all the government stimulus past, present and future (and the inevitable expiration thereof at some point in time) makes it tough to call exactly how this whole thing will shake out.

But what we *can* predict are people, and human behavior. 2009 was the year of big, obvious behavioral-economics trends, especially in the real estate world. Here's what some experts think will happen in 2010:

1. Sellers will be more realistic about pricing. The

Real Estate Insight

There are pros and cons to be considered for every family, in every economy. Should you sell? Should you buy? Should you invest? What's smart for your long-term financial goals? There's a lot to consider, we know. We're here to help you understand every nuance of market trends and to answer these questions and more.

We would be happy to sit with you one-on-one to look at your overall goals and help answer the questions that pertain to you most. In a buyer's market, if you are looking to move into that bigger, better home of your dreams and can get it for a dramatically reduced price, then it makes sense. If you are unsure of the future or are curious about how to analyze the financial formulas, We're just a phone call away. There is no "one size fits all" when it comes to making the most of your investments. It helps to have a friend you can turn to, an advocate you can trust, a person who has done the homework for you.

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National Association of Realtors' 2009 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers revealed that the average seller accepted a final purchase price around 95 percent of asking. About 60 percent said they had reduced their home's price at least once and often several times.

Sellers who require top dollar are likely to stay put this year, and those who decide to sell will see the carnage from recent years past and list at more realistic prices and/or more readily agree to price reductions.

2. Buyers will make more holistic and sustainable home and mortgage decisions. Recent studies have shown that things like commute distance, proximity to extended family and "walkability" to desirable amenities have been shooting up the ladder of homebuyer priorities of late. More buyers than ever will buy below their maximum approved price.

In 2009, only 18 percent of homes sold were new homes. Older homes in stroll-and-shop districts will continue to be popular, as money-conscious buyers will continue to make sacrifices of vacations and luxury items to own and still be able to put money away.

Buyers will continue to buy older homes and remodel the homes themselves -- about 25 percent of homeowners in general did some do-it-yourself home repairs and remodeling in 2009, and this trend isn't going anywhere. Loads of buyers will use their tax credit to fund post-closing sprees at Lowe's and Home Depot.

Buyers are looking at the impact of every facet

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SOME REALLY INTERESTING STATISTICS
In the last 12 months over 16,000 properties went into Lis Pendens or Auction in Broward County.
The number was slightly over 14,000 in Miami-Dade and just over 9000 in Palm Beach County.



It's About Time!
Find the up-to-the-minute information you need today at:
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Stop By Our New Web

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of their prospective new homes on every element of their current and envisioned lives, rather than just falling for the biggest-and-best they can afford.

They will be more willing than in any other time in the recent past to wait for their finances to grow before moving up to a larger home and the correspondingly larger monthly mortgage payment.

3. Everyone will re-evaluate the inherent desirability of home ownership. The days in which owning a home was an unquestioned component of The American Dream are over. With sellers, we'll continue to see many walkaways as loan modification programs fail to galvanize lenders to help the struggling homeowners.

Also, many homeowners are questioning the value of a strong credit score in an market where even those with great FICOs can't get credit at a decent rate -- this will contribute to some owners' willingness to release their attachment to their upside-down homes.

Buyers are not immune -- they will be much more conflicted than ever before about whether homeownership is something they want in their lives. They will deeply consider the issue before buying.

But those who decide they *do* want to own will not be deterred by the market's volatility, the multiple offers, the run-down bank-owned properties, or anything else.

62 percent of first-time homebuyers participating in the survey said their primary reason for buying was the simple, deep "desire to own a home."

4. Everyone will take more personal responsibility for their real estate lives. Buyers will come to their

mortgage counseling sessions with their own household spending plans in place. They will have learned by now that they should be telling their mortgage professional what they can afford, not vice versa.

Homeowners will wade through books and Web sites on loan modification and bankruptcy, will obsessively check interest rates and nearby home sales data online, and will even take a more proactive role in marketing their homes via YouTube and social networking sites like Facebook.

They'll take home improvement classes instead of just calling the handyman. And they'll do all of this while cooking at home for friends -- in a nod to frugality -- and to save up for the occasional splurge to satisfy the two years' worth of pent-up urges to spend. In this way, 2010 will give new meaning to the term 'balanced budget'

Looking for this months recipes and wines?
Stop by our new and improved web site for
this months selections, and to start adding
our ideas to yours.

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