

10 THINGS

You should know about today's Virginia real estate markets

Think locally and longer-term, and do your homework.

1 There's no such thing as a national real estate market.

If you read the newspapers, you might get the idea that real estate markets are the same everywhere. If conditions are bad in San Diego or Detroit or Miami, they must be bad everywhere, right? *Wrong!* Real estate markets are local; when you're looking to buy or sell, pay attention first to sales price trends, volume and inventory in *your* target market or region, rather than to misleading headlines about national sales trends.



2 Virginia home values are stable.



From October 2006 through October 2007, the average price of a Virginia home has *grown* 4.3 percent, from \$222,800 to \$232,487. Yes, there are pockets in Virginia where home prices have declined – largely due to unsustainable price growth in those markets during the past two years – but even in those areas, generally speaking, homes are still worth more now than they were three years ago. Overall, since November 2004, the average price of a typical Virginia home has appreciated 42 percent, from \$163,750 to \$232,487 today. *For details: VARealtor.com/HomeSales*

3 The market favors Virginia's first-time home buyers.

First-time buyers in Virginia are younger and have higher incomes – they're typically 25-34 years old and earn a median income of \$71,300 annually (22 percent higher than the national average of \$58,300). They made up 29 percent of all Virginia homes sales in 2006. And there's currently plenty of inventory for first-time buyers to choose from. *For details: VARealtor.com/2006BuyersSellers*



4 Housing demand in Virginia is set to grow.

Estimates show the Commonwealth's population will increase by almost 500,000 by 2010. These new Virginians will need a place to live. *For details: CooperCenter.org/Demographics*



5 There are hundreds of reputable mortgage companies ready to lend.

Buyers with good credit and a realistic view of what they can afford should have an easier time obtaining mortgage approval. Help is also available for those with damaged credit or limited means through the Virginia Housing Development Authority and other organizations.

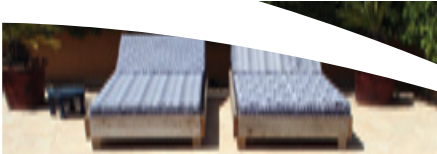


6 A house is a place to make a home, not just a buck.

Most purchasers don't buy a house to flip it. They buy it to live in. The value of strong communities, rooted families, civic pride, comfortable retirement, and a higher quality of life can't be expressed on a balance sheet.

7 Owning a home builds wealth in a way that renting can't.

According to the Federal Reserve Board, the average renter's net worth is \$4,800, while the average homeowner's net worth is \$171,000. Clearly, it *pays* to own a home.



8 It's prime time for second homes.

Savvy investors and prospective retirees know real estate is important to their portfolios. About one third of all home sales are second homes or vacation properties and Virginia has plenty of inventory and desirable locations for those seeking them.

9 Use a Virginia REALTOR®; get up to 26 percent more for your home.

The median selling price of single-family FSBO homes in Virginia was \$249,500 compared with \$313,400 for REALTOR®-assisted home sales at the end of 2006, a difference of \$63,900. The advantage of developing an ongoing relationship with a professional – a REALTOR® – speaks for itself. *For details: VARealtor.com/2006BuyersSellers*



10 Now really IS the time to buy.

Housing inventory levels are the highest in years, and interest rates are low. If you're a buyer, this market is for you. *But...If you need to sell first, be patient, and price your home correctly.* Right now Virginia homes sell after an average 127 days on the market, only five days more than the 10-year average of 122 (though this number varies among price ranges and markets). Competitive pricing is important. Experts agree, well-priced homes sell faster.