

Talk About Frederick

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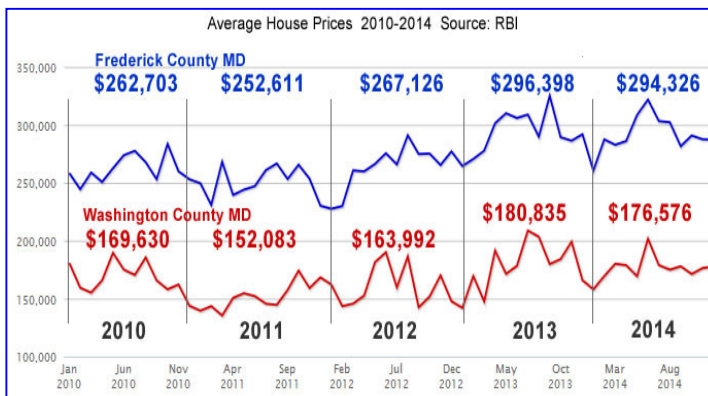
“Stay Warm!”



Housing Summary 2014 Frederick and Washington County, Maryland

How was the housing market? The quick answer to the question about our local markets is that things stayed roughly the same as in the previous year on many counts.

- The average sold price dropped compared to 2013. Frederick County dropped slightly (-1%) and Washington County dropped somewhat more (-2.3%). Next month, I will report average price changes by town.



- The good news is that more houses were sold in 2014. We saw a 3% increase in Frederick County (total 3,236), and 15% increase in Washington County (total 1,537).
- The average number days a home stayed on the market rose slightly in Frederick County from 62 to 64 days. In Washington County it dropped from 104 to 97. Days on market varies a lot by house price.
- In Frederick County foreclosures are about 11% of total sales while short sales make up about 7%, for a total of 18% of all sales. In Washington County, the total of bank mediated properties is 30% with foreclosures representing 23% of all sales, and short sales representing 7%.
- The ratio of list price to sold price remained the same as in 2013 – 96%. Meaning sellers got 96% of the price they asked. For example if the asking price was \$300,000, the seller got, on average, \$288,000.

- Interest rates: 30-yr interest fixed mortgage rates started at 4.67% in January and ended at 3.86% in December.

Classic Beef Stew (from A Taste of Home)

Here's a good old-fashioned stew with rich beef gravy that lets the flavor of the potatoes and carrots come through. This is the perfect hearty dish for a blustery winter day.

Ingredients

- 2 pounds beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 to 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1-1/2 cups chopped onions
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can (10-1/2 ounces) condensed beef broth, undiluted
- 3 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 6 medium carrots, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 cup sliced celery (1-inch lengths)



Directions

- In an oven-proof Dutch oven, brown beef in batches in oil; drain. Return all meat to the pan. Add onions, tomatoes, broth, tapioca, garlic, parsley, salt, pepper and bay leaf. Bring to a boil.
- Cover stew and bake at 350° for 1-1/2 hours. Stir in carrots, potatoes and celery. Bake, covered, 1 hour longer or until meat and vegetables are tender. Discard bay leaf. Yield: 6-8 servings.



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New Year's Resolutions for Homeowners

GET IT PAID OFF - We all know that making extra payments can shorten the life of your mortgage loan, but do we really understand what that looks like? Consider: The monthly principal and interest on a \$150,000 mortgage with a 30-year term and an interest rate of 5.5 percent totals \$852. Paying an extra one-twelfth of that **amount, or \$71, each month would increase the payment** to \$923, but also shorten the term by five years and one month, cutting the interest expense by \$30,789.

REASSESS - If your house has declined in value in recent years, you might be able to save some money in 2015. Review your property tax assessment and request a hearing date within the required time if the assessed value is under what you are paying in taxes. If your property value has declined by 10%, in essence your property tax should decline as well.

KEEP THAT CREDIT SCORE UP - There is a lot of benefit in a great credit score, especially when it comes to buying a house. It helps you borrow money quickly, and with a low interest rate. If you missed, or were late, on any payments in 2014, try to improve your credit in 2015 by making all payments on time.



10 Great Tips for Decluttering!

It's a New Year! While the wind and snow are blowing outside, it's a perfect time to make a fresh start inside and get rid of that old clutter! Here are 10 tips for decluttering:

1. START EARLY and END HAPPY

It's never too early to begin the downsizing process. Begin by focusing on typical problem areas such as the attic, basement, garage, closets, file cabinets. Set a timer and do 15- 20 minutes at a time.

2. GET GENEROUS

Now is the time to make arrangements to "gift" some of your treasures to special people in your life including, and especially family, helpful neighbors, friends, favorite organizations, or a church/synagogue.

3. BEGIN SORTING

Trash, Keep, Donate/Consign. Use boxes, bags, or bins.

When the task is complete place the donate/consignment bin in the car and deliver right away.

4. TAX DEDUCTIONS

If you donate goods, save your receipts. It can come back to you at tax time. Not only are you doing good, but you're also getting a little back which encourages you to give a little more next time. Use the Goodwill or Salvation Army valuation guide to get the maximum amount (find it online).

5. SAVE YOUR MEMORIES

You may have boxes of old photos from every holiday, vacation and birthday party attended. Consider the following ways to preserve family photos and stories: a customized process of audio and video recordings called Life-Storying. Copy your special photos on to CDs, or try your hand at scrap booking. Services now exist that will take all your photos, slides, and videos and do it for you.

6. NEW LOOKS FOR BOOKS

If you own large quantities of books, you need to spend time downsizing your collections. Books occupy lots of space and are heavy to move. Consider donations to libraries or senior centers, or sales to used bookstores. Call on a book dealer for older books with potential value.

7. RECYCLE THE TOXINS

Take time to put together a box or two of household, yard, and automotive cleaning products, as well as paint, that are considered hazardous. Visit Earth911.org for more information on hazardous collection in your area.

8. OUT OF DATE ITEMS

Check for out-of-date spices, canned goods, and pharmaceuticals.

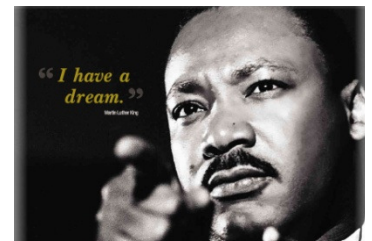
9. PURGE

Shred excessive paper. Keep what you need for tax records and get rid of the rest. Start new files for 2015.

10. LIVE WITH WHAT YOU LOVE!

Martin Luther King Day

Each year, on the third Monday in January (January 19th this year), citizens in the United States honor Martin Luther King, Jr. for his incredible contributions to the Civil Rights Movement. Many participate in a **Day of Service**. Initiated by Congress in 1994, King Day of Service builds on that that legacy by transforming the federal holiday honoring Dr. King into a national day of community service grounded in his teachings of nonviolence and social justice.



The aim is to make the holiday a day where people of all ages and backgrounds come together to improve lives, bridge social barriers, and move our nation closer to the "Beloved Community" that Dr. King envisioned.