



## **Sarasota market continues to be bright spot in Florida real estate**

Sales of homes and condominiums compiled in the Sarasota MLS system, and sales within the Sarasota-Bradenton Metropolitan Service Area (MSA), are continuing to reflect strength compared to the overall state of Florida.

Statistics indicate the summer months have actually seen a strengthening of sales activity in the Sarasota real estate market, with overall sales in July 2007 up 7 percent from July 2006.

There were 369 single family home sales recorded in the Sarasota MLS in July 2007, compared to only 351 sales in July 2006 – a 5 percent increase, while the MSA showed a drop of 4 in single family home sales for the period. But even that figure stands out in stark contrast to other MSAs across the state. A total of 14 MSAs saw double-digit percentage declines in single family home sales, and statewide the real estate market saw a sales decline of 24 percent from July to July for single family homes.

Condominium sales were also up in the Sarasota MLS, with 159 sales in July 2007 compared to 141 sales in July 2006, for a 12 percent increase. Condos also saw a median price jump of 14.8 percent for the Sarasota MLS, from \$269,990 in July 2006 up to \$310,000 in July 2007.

The MSA fared better, with a 41 percent increase in condo sales, July to July. This was the third best performance in the state, and Sarasota-Bradenton was one of only six MSAs to show positive condo sales growth in July. Only two much smaller MSAs – Panama City (up 78 percent) and Fort Walton Beach (up 49 percent) – fared better than the local MSA. Statewide, condo sales were down 19 percent.

“When you look at the numbers, we are clearly seeing the Sarasota market taking the lead in the anticipated real estate market recovery in Florida,” said Joe Hembree, 2007 SAR President. “Our Association has taken the lead in educating the public concerning the fundamentals of our market, and this has made a big difference. Local real estate agents have also done an excellent job of counseling sellers on the need to price their properties realistically.”

With an eye toward the bigger picture, and discounting the historically abnormal years of 2003-2005, we have seen a return to the normal market experienced as recently as 2001 and 2002, Hembree noted.

In July 2001, there were 359 homes and 175 condos reported sold in the Sarasota MLS. In July 2002, there were 328 homes and 187 condos sold. The biggest difference this July is that the median price, even with recent declines, is still much higher than those recent years.

The median home in July 2001 sold for \$176,000, and the median condo sale price was \$132,000. The numbers went up a little in July 2002 - \$190,000 for a single family home, and \$179,900 for a condo. But the figures are much higher today - \$299,000 for a home, and \$310,000 for a condo – so the overall sales volume is far greater.

“The current market is in a normal adjustment period, which makes this an historic buyer’s market,” Hembree continued. “Our area has always offered tremendous amenities, abundant cultural assets, and great natural beauty and climate. Now, it’s all more affordable than it was two years ago.”

The lowest point in the recent local market was apparently reached in December 2006, when only 355 sales closed. Sales have escalated since then, and were much higher in July 2007, with 528 total sales – almost 50 percent higher than the sales low. The strong pending sales numbers – nearly 500 reported pending sales - continue to reflect a brighter future as the Sarasota area begins to enter the traditionally stronger fall and winter sales period.

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