

Putting the Real Back into Real Estate

Sherry Campbell
Broker Associate, GRI

For those who don't know, in November of 2009, I teamed up with Jordana Ford to provide better service to clients wishing to sell their homes. Jordana has been working with me for two years staging homes for sale and assisting with the marketing, and I called her my "secret weapon". Our synergy together produced amazing results, where in most



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cases, we were able to sell homes in less than 30 days. We have carried this synergy over into 2010 and have continued to produce results on even the toughest to sell homes.

If you want to follow what we have done, please become a fan on our Facebook page under Sherry Campbell & Associates or check out our website at www.sherrycampbell.com.

Mariela Pardo will join us soon too as a relocation specialist. Our team continues to grow and become more well-rounded so we can make sure we are servicing our clients.

The sun is shining bright again in the Houston real estate market. The downturn was short lived and mostly media driven. According to a recent article in the *Houston Chronicle*, home prices are almost back to 2006 levels, which is when the market peaked. I could have predicted this four months ago when I saw the shortage of inventory and a flurry of buyers looking for homes.

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It's Time to Protest Your Taxes!

April 15 marked the income tax deadline, and May 31 will mark the deadline to protest property taxes. The county can legally increase your home's value by 10% annually, but I can assure you that homes in Houston do not gain 10% in value every year.

My advice is to monitor the valuation and protest immediately if you feel your value has gone up unjustifiably. Please feel free to call me at 281-797-7892 if you are uncertain. The appraisal district has made it easy to protest property taxes online, but if you are denied an adjustment online, you have the following options:

- Request a hearing with the appraisal district.
- At the first hearing you will have the opportunity to appear before a clerk. If you are again denied an adjustment, you will have the option to request a hearing before a panel.
- A panel hearing can be set. **ARRIVE ON TIME OR YOUR CASE WILL BE DISMISSED**, and make sure

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Mortgage News

By Randy Leonhardt, Laraby Financial Group

Spring is off to a very busy start in the real estate market. Mortgage rates have continued to hold at surprisingly low levels. New and existing home purchases are increasing at a faster than expected pace.

Market volatility has created some wide swings in the interest rates. Rates are expected to start to climb, but at this time we have not seen the rates increase. The 30 year conventional fixed rate has been in the 4.75%-5% range and the 15 year has stayed in the mid 4.25%-4.5% range.

Mortgage guidelines have started to loosen up. We are starting to see more conventional loans being approved with only 5% down. The industry has seen more banks moving back into the mortgage financing, more companies lending mean more options for financing.

The industry continues to revise the changes being made in the mortgage approval process. When you decide to look for a new property it is a good idea to talk to a loan officer early in the process to make sure you can qualify for one or more of the current mortgage products. The paperwork and the approval take longer now so it is a good idea to get application started.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions on current programs or rates at (713)278-0048.



The federal first time home-buyers tax credit combined with record low interest rates peaked the interest of many buyers. According to the Houston Association of Realtors, sales in March, 2010 increased a record 10.8% compared to March, 2009.

This is a great time to sell and buy, and interest rates are on the rise. Check out the article provided by Randy Leonhardt with Laraby Financial about the mortgage industry.

Houston Association of Realtors Update on Housing

April sales of single-family homes in Houston totaled 5,321, up 26.7 percent from April 2009. This marks the second consecutive month of increased sales activity. Broken out by segment, April sales of homes priced between \$80,000 and \$150,000 rose 31.4 percent; those in the \$150,000 to \$250,000 range climbed 30.3 percent; and those priced between \$250,000 and \$500,000 were up 30.6 percent.

Sales of luxury homes—those priced from \$500,000 to the millions—rocketed 53.4 percent. April sales of homes in the below-\$80,000 segment were flat compared to one year earlier.

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you have proof of property tax payments.

- Hire a property tax consultant to protest for you. You only pay if the company succeeds in lowering your property taxes. The payment is typically 50% of your savings.

Please feel free to call me and request a complimentary Comparative Market Analysis if you decide to protest your property taxes on your own this year. Good luck!

Residential Central Air Conditioning Maintenance Program

- Replace regular media air filter every month or pleated filters every three months.
- A/C tune up should be done in early Spring before the high demands of Summer. Includes washing condensing coil, check refrigerant levels and calibrating thermostat.
- Evaporator coil needs to be cleaned every two years and includes opening evaporator coil and inspecting for traces of oil, acid cleaning and rinsing, blowing out both drain lines, adding algae pills, and sealing opening.
- Ductwork needs to be visually inspected annually during winter months.
- Fall check-up including thorough visual inspection of the heat exchanger for gas furnaces to see if there is a crack or pin hole in it that could cause carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Air ducts should be cleaned every 5 years by a professional.
- Upgrade your complete A/C system every 10 years.

Fun in the Sun!

It's finally summer in Houston, and despite the heat and humidity, I am happy to see longer, more carefree days. If you are looking for something to do this summer, check out the new City Centre located at Beltway 8 and I-10 freeway.

This is a great mixed-use development with lots of great restaurants, shops, hotels, and residential living. I especially like the outdoor environment they have created at the City Centre. Most restaurants have outdoor patios with great ambience. One of my favorites is the Monnalisa, the lounge belonging to Hotel Sorella. At Monnalisa you can have a cocktail overlooking the swimming pool in a cabana. Very relaxing!

The following is a schedule of events City Centre:

June 11

Dancing Under the Stars With Fred Astaire
Dance Studios 7:30-9:30 PM

June 13

Father's Day Gifts on the plaza with Houston Motor Club, Orvis Fly Fishing and Edwin Watts Golf Shop Noon-5 PM

Month of June

Get out of the heat and into Studio Movie Grill's Summer Children's Series -11 weeks of summer fun! Children: \$1 / Adults: \$2. Visit studiomoviegrill.com

Another low-budget favorite of mine is the Miller Outdoor Theater in Hermann Park. Bring a blanket or lawn chairs and a picnic lunch, and enjoy a variety of performances from Shakespeare in the Park, to music and dance, for FREE! Check out the calendar of events at www.milleroutdoortheater.com.

There really is a lot to do in Houston, so get out there and enjoy your summer!

The Wallpaper Has Got to Go!

If you are thinking about selling your house in the next year or so, the first thing to think about doing is removing the wallpaper. It dates a home quickly and many buyers will walk away from a home that has wallpaper or even worse, not even want to go see it because of the wallpaper in the pictures. In some areas you can get away with it, such as the powder room, an upstairs bathroom or even an entry. That is only if it's a subtle pattern, clean and the seams are not peeling up. Otherwise...TAKE IT DOWN! NOW!

It could be one of the cheapest things that you can do that will make a huge impact on the resale of your home. If you have any questions about getting your home showcase ready, we'll be happy to do a walk-thru and offer guidance.