



Jessica Nelms/Staff

Partially completed homes and others in foreclosure offer bargain opportunities for buyers at the Water Edge subdivision on Lake Keowee. Despite the great deals available, many buyers are sitting on the fence waiting to see what happens with the economy.

A buyer's market?

Despite housing bargains, some cautious amid economy

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SENECA — There are great bargains to be had in real estate at the moment, but given the uncertain economic backdrop, few appear to be rushing to make deals.

To be sure, it is a buyers' market out there. According to Bankrate.com, rates on 30-year fixed mortgages dipped to 5.13 percent Friday, their lowest level since the early 1970s.

Further stacking the playing field in favor of the buyer is the increasing number of bank-foreclosed properties entering the market, real estate professionals point

out.

The result is that great bargains are showing up on real estate listings that would have been enthusiastically swooped up by buyers two years ago, before the subprime mortgage crisis erupted in June 2007 that sent the financial markets and the U.S. economy into a tailspin.

As a result, housing developments that sprang up four or five years ago when banks were eager to lend have now screeched to a halt. In some instances, developers have walked away, leaving subdivisions unfinished.

For instance, when cash-strapped national builder Levitt &

Sons filed for bankruptcy early last year, it halted construction on dozens of projects from South Carolina to Florida. At Levitt's once much-ballyhooed Tradition project in Port St. Lucie, Fla. on the Atlantic Coast, less than 100 out of 1,200 planned homes are occupied.

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH?

Closer to home, a Lake Keowee subdivision is struggling to find its identity after several developers failed in attempts to complete a promising project.

Waters Edge at Lake Keowee is accessible from state Highway 188 by way of Burns Mill Road and Safety Harbor Road. Once past the impressive stone wall entrance on

the right are tennis courts. Adjacent to the tennis courts is an unpaved dirt road. "Home for Sale" signs dot several lots with homes not completely finished.

Steve Graham, president of the Waters Edge Homeowners Association (HOA), said he and his wife bought their home at the subdivision in 2001.

"When we bought here it was one of the nicest locations on the lake and reasonably priced compared to the Crescent communities that are more expensive," Graham said.

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