Home sales stay ahead of last year's pace

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
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SENECA — Midway through the year, the local housing market is trending modestly ahead of last year's pace, but some real estate professionals are just fine with that.

Second-quarter housing market information released this week by South Carolina Realtors has no sizzling numbers that indicate the market is on fire, but rather continues to reflect slow and steady improvement, particularly in the western Upstate area that encompasses Oconee, Pickens and Anderson.

Judy Webber, co-owner of Carolina Real Estate in Clemson, is content with how the market is behaving.

"I think we have a very healthy, stable market right now," Webber said Thursday. "If people price their homes right, they're getting them sold."

For the second quarter covering the months of April, May and June, 1,022 homes were sold in the tri-county area, which is an increase of 4.5 percent over the 978 sold during the same period a year ago.

Through the first six months of the year, western Upstate home sales reached 1,724, or 4.4 percent ahead of the 2013 mid-year pace of 1,652 closings. Statewide, home

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sales year-to-date are up just 1.6 percent over 2013 numbers.

The steady pace suits Realtor Julie Allen of Golden Corner Realty in Seneca just fine.

"I like the way the market is right now, just moving along and we're back where we were in 2004," Allen said. "Homes are definitely selling quicker — as long as they are priced in the market and in good condition, they're going to sell."

In June, the average number of days a home was listed on the market until sale plummeted 16 percent to 99 days compared to 118 days in June of 2013. The only areas around the state where homes were spending less time on the market in June were Charleston (71 days), Greenville (78 days) and Columbia (83 days).

"It's a very busy time for everybody here," Webber said. "This is typically when everything in town is abuzz as people are coming and going to the university. It's always a real good time for the company."

Adding to the overall favorable picture in the housing market is a loosening of the purse strings by financial institutions to make home loans.

"We're doing a lot of 100 percent USDA loans," Allen said. "If anybody's got pretty good credit and a good job, they can get a loan."

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Six months into 2014, some Realtors are content with the steady and healthy way the local housing market is behaving.