Upstate real estate market staying hot

Sales up more than 20 percent over last year

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
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SENECA — A sizzling market is keeping real estate professionals in the tri-county area busier than they've been in years.

With first-quarter sales in the books, the South Carolina Realtors numbers released this week prompted the organization to proclaim that 2015 is shaping up "to be a healthy and energetic selling season."

Through the first three months of the year, 918 closings were recorded in the western Upstate market that includes Anderson, Oconee and Pickens counties — a jump of almost 21 percent over the 761 sales notched during the first quarter of 2014.

Realtors like to say the market heats up in the spring when temperature rise and flowers bloom, and that was the case in March; they recorded 389 sales, which is an increase of 32.3 percent over March a year ago.

Adrienne Hennes, who brokers residential and commercial properties, said there are not enough hours in the day to handle all the calls she's getting.

"All four quarters have been good for me," Hennes said. "I have a good quarter every quarter. I work until 10 every night, and I have

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more people calling and calling. It's never been slow for me."

Hennes is not alone.

Ryan Keese of Keese Realty can barely find time to catch his breath during the current hit cycle.

"I've been slammed," Keese said. "I've been so busy I really haven't had time to look at how other Realtors are doing. I haven't had my head above water just to call around and see how everybody else is doing. It seems like it's really picked up for sure."

Keese said he would love to see a consistent eight to 10 months of this kind of activity, because in recent years "it's come and gone." He's not about to complain, however, and is just enjoying surfing this wave in the market.

"I was busy in December and January, which I never was even in the good economy," Keese said. "It's refreshing to be busy and to have stuff going on, but I'd like to see the consistency and keep seeing inventory being moved."

SCR chief executive Nick Kremydas said he doesn't see anything slowing down the market.

"On average, more people are employed and making more money than they were this time last year," Kremydas said. "Coupled with the mostly positive jobs picture, it is widely expected that mortgage rates will remain as they are for at least the first six months of the year."

Other positive signs in the statewide market, according to SCR, are new listings up almost 3 percent to 11,079, pending sales climbing 8.7 percent to 6,766, and the median sales price up 5.8 percent to $165,000.

The median sales price is the point where half of the homes sold for more and the other half for less.

Year-to-date, the median sales price in the local market stood at $145,000, which is 11.5 percent higher than the $130,000 median price at this time a year ago.

11.5 percent

carlos@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6686
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