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MARKETPLACE GREENVILLE

TEACHING, NURTURING, GROWING FOR 70 YEARS

COMMUNITY PULSE

META HENDRICKS
Executive Director, Meyer
Center for Special Children

READ THE STORY
ON PAGE 3





On hand for the completion of the new and upgraded women’s sports facilities at Clemson University: from left, in back, Ben Barfield, Vice President and Division Manager; Steven Barber, Operations Manager; Paul Hendsbee, Assistant Superintendent; Parker Howard, Assistant Superintendent; Steven Cain, Assistant Project Manager. In front, Courtney Sigmund, intern; Project Director Kimberly Bailey; Project Manager Chelsey Williams; and Jordyn Early, intern.

Clemson Women’s Sports, Brasfield & Gorrie Celebrate Expansion

Clemson University’s new women’s sports facilities are ready for action.

General contractor Brasfield & Gorrie led construction on the new and upgraded facilities for the university’s lacrosse, gymnastics and rowing teams. Clemson’s women’s sports program expansion is the largest recent expansion of women’s sports in the nation, according to a press release.

“It has been an honor to lead this construction team — which included women who are students and graduates from Clemson — to build spaces that expand opportunities for Clemson’s female student-athletes,” said Kimberly Bailey, Brasfield & Gorrie Project Director.

The facilities will support female athletes while giving them a place to rest and recover, she said.

New facilities include a 9,000-square-foot lacrosse facility; a 6,900-square-foot, 1,000-seat lacrosse stadium; a new lacrosse field; a 24,000-square-foot gymnastics training facility; a 10,000-square-foot athlete recovery center; 252 parking spaces; a 1,100 square-foot reconfiguration of the rowing facilities for a new sports medicine room; and HVAC upgrades to the rowing building.

Garvin Design Group and HNTB Corp. collaborated on the project.

Bon Secours Opens Medical Center in Fountain Inn

Bon Secours St. Francis Health System has opened

a medical office building in Fountain Inn at 910 N. Main Street. Four medical practices will be in the building, which cost \$5.5 million to build.

“The goal is to continue the Bon Secours legacy of providing quality and compassionate care, while also expanding access by providing a closer-to-home team of providers,” said Wayne Fraleigh, Chief Operating Officer for the Bon Secours Medical Group.

Medical practices in the building are Fairview Family Practice; Carolina ENT – Simpsonville, which specializes in ear, nose, and throat conditions, and is relocating to the new facility; and satellite offices for Palmetto Pulmonary and Critical Care and Carolina Surgical Associates.

Satellite offices will give patients in the Fountain Inn area a convenient option for respiratory care and access to a multi-specialty surgical team; X-rays and a lab will also be available, Fraleigh said.

Addison Homes Receives Award From Department of Energy

Addison Homes, a South Carolina home builder with headquarters in Greenville that specializes in healthy, high-performance homes, has received a Housing Innovation award from the U.S. Department of Energy.

Addison Homes prioritizes increased comfort and durability, better indoor air quality, and ultra-energy efficiency, said Todd Usher, founder and President of Addison Homes.

The DOE Housing Innovation Awards program recognizes builders constructing Zero Energy Ready Homes and using innovative technologies and modern building science principles, according to a press release. Zero Energy Ready Homes meet rigorous requirements from the DOE.

Addison Homes has received seven housing innovation awards; more than 25 builders were recognized this year; Addison Homes was the only winner from South Carolina.

The award to Addison Homes was for its Keowee home plan, which addresses indoor air quality and water and energy efficiency. The home has a solar photovoltaic shingle system to generate renewable energy; an encapsulated crawl space for the HVAC system; a smart thermostat that monitors interior and exterior conditions and indoor air quality; and other features.



Usher

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COMMUNITY PULSE

After 70 Years, Children With Disabilities Still Learning And Growing At Meyer Center

BY KATHY LAUGHLIN

People move to the Upstate for jobs, economic prospects, even the arts or foodie scene. Others choose Greenville so that their children can access the care, therapies and opportunities offered at Meyer Center for Special Children.

“We’ve had families move here specifically because our services are so unique,” says Meta Hendricks, who became Executive Director of Meyer Center five years ago.

Meyer Center’s students have a range of disabilities; most reside in Greenville, but also Spartanburg, Anderson and Pickens counties.

And at least one family moved from New York City.

“They didn’t feel like their child was getting the best care, not under one roof,” Hendricks says.

They traveled south to tour Meyer Center, then told Hendricks:

“We felt the love and acceptance. We committed that day to moving here so that our kid had the opportunity to be in that environment.”

The school was founded in 1954 by a local surgeon, Dr. Leslie Meyer, under the auspices of United Cerebral Palsy and located at Greenville General Hospital (now Prisma Health).

This year’s 70th anniversary is meaningful, not just because of the school’s longevity. Children with disabilities could not attend public schools until 21 years after Meyer Center opened – when Congress passed what is now the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.

“It was commonly thought that children with disabilities couldn’t understand, and they couldn’t learn,” Hendricks says. “That’s not true at all.”

Students at Meyer Center meet one or more of the 13 criteria for special education and qualify for two of three therapies: occupational, speech or physical therapy.



Fun is a part of the curriculum at Meyer Center for Special Children, which was founded 70 years ago. PROVIDED

Almost all students need speech services, Hendricks says.

“Student IQs vary. For children whose IQs are near average, we have one-on-one devices, and they use a keyboard to type sentences and stories. Without that technology, it is difficult for them to articulate

what they want to say,” she says.

The staff fine-tuned the technology to create a success story for one child with profound challenges.

“He has a form of cerebral palsy. His body does not cooperate with him,” Hendricks says. He can’t point at a screen,

much less type.

“Our speech therapists worked with him to set up what’s called an eye gaze device. It looks like an iPad, with pictures that represent language,” she explains.

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“He can use his eyes to lock in on the object that he wants to convey. Then it speaks for him. He is so proficient that he can tell knock-knock jokes. He can say, ‘I’m hungry.’ But he can also say, ‘Hi, this is my name. This is how old I am. Will you be my friend?’ He’s not trapped in a body where he can’t express what he wants – or how he feels.”

Meyer Center moved to its current location at Stone Plaza off Rutherford Road in 1997, the same year it became the first charter school in the state. The nonprofit school joined the South Carolina Public Charter School District in 2016.

A team of professionals, with input from parents, works to fulfill each child’s specific needs.

Classes have six to 10 students, one teacher and two teaching assistants. Two registered nurses administer medications and help children who have feeding tubes. Therapists move in and out of classrooms to practice skills or pull a child out of class to work individually.

“There’s not a single child here who is the same as another. Our focus is to meet every child where they are,” Hendricks says.

“We consider the whole child and how we can set them up for success, not just their ability to access the curriculum. We look at feeding and dressing and writing, but also their ability to function in life and hopefully find employment and some long-term independence. We vigorously strive toward helping children reach their full potential.”

That kind of intensive care is expensive. It costs about \$150,000 a year to sustain one of the school’s 11 classrooms, Hendricks says. The center’s annual budget is nearly \$5 million.

About 60% of the funds come from the Department of Education and Medicaid reimbursements, and the rest comes from fundraising – events and “individuals who care about our passion,” she says.

Children ages 6 months to 3 years old are part of Meyer Center’s state-li-

censed day care. Parents pay based on a sliding scale, but no more than \$500 per month.

Ages 3 through second grade become part of the Public Charter School system, and families pay no tuition. “As a child with a disability, they are entitled to a free and appropriate public education,” Hendricks says.

Students graduate from Meyer Center after second grade, or earlier if the gap begins to close between that child and a same-age peer without a disability, she says.

Children with disabilities need to be with peers, she says. “It piques that natural curiosity to keep up, to compete, but mostly to be included.”

Hendricks – who recently married Les Hendricks, an attorney in Pickens County – came to Meyer Center after almost 11 years with the Pickens County Meals on Wheels.

“Meyer Center and Meals on Wheels are similar in a way. No one plans to need the services. So, when you need the ser-

vice, you need the service. You really can’t afford to wait,” she says.

Enrollment at Meyer Center has grown by 44% to 105 children since Hendricks arrived. She says her priority has been to shrink the waiting list – 80 families when she took the job. Children are accepted into the school through a lottery.

“We still have a waiting list. That’s our next challenge. We’ve filled every space in the building,” Hendricks says.

“As our community grows, so does the need for our services. As we look to the future, we envision expanding our facilities to create a state-of-the-art campus that will allow us to serve more students and offer more programs. The future is full of potential for our students and our organization.”

The 1954 Club has been established in honor of Meyer Center’s 70th anniversary. Individuals are asked to pledge a monthly gift of \$19.54 or more. For information or to volunteer, go to www.meyercenter.org.

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Countybank, Greenwood Capital Pledge \$73,000 To United Way

Countybank and Greenwood Capital donated \$73,552 to the United Way as part of their annual fundraising campaign.

The funds were distributed to local United Way organizations in Greenwood, Greenville/Greer and Anderson based on donations made by associates.

Associates made personal donations totaling \$47,602; another \$3,950 was raised at the Casual for a Cause fundraiser; the Countybank Foundation provided an additional \$22,000.

“Countybank and Greenwood Capital’s annual fundraising campaign ... gives our organization and associates an opportunity to make a positive impact in our communities,” said R. Thornwell Dunlap III, President and CEO of Countybank.

Dunlap received the United Way of the Lakelands Shining Star Award this year. The award is presented to an individual, business or organization that exemplifies leadership through support of United



From left, Sam Barnett, SBA Business Development Associate, Countybank; Ken Harper, Chief Banking Officer, Countybank; Yobany Banks-McKay, Vice President of Corporate Engagement, United Way of Greenville County; and Reigan Yoder, Executive Assistant to the President and CEO, United Way of Greenville County.

Way’s mission and vision.

Countybank and Greenwood Capital hold an annual fundraising campaign to support local programs that focus on education, financial stability, health and basic needs in the Greenwood, Greenville,

Greer and Anderson communities.

This year’s fundraising campaigns were chaired by Dustyn Attaway, Universal Associate; Patrice Freeman, Customer Relations Manager for Countybank in Greenwood; Eva Drake, Mortgage Consultant for Countybank Mortgage in Greenville; and Carrie Logan, Retail Banking Administrator for Countybank in Anderson.

Founded in 1933, Countybank has locations in Greenwood, Greenville, Simpsonville, Greer and Anderson.

Virtual Luxury Tour of Homes Partners with Stoneledge

The Home Builders Association of Greenville will present the Upstate Luxury Tour of Homes, a showcase unveiling architecture and design in the Upstate. Stoneledge Luxury Homes is the presenting sponsor.

“The Home Builders Association of Greenville proudly presents a groundbreaking experience – our Virtual Luxury Tour of Homes. In this digital showcase, we seamlessly blend innovation with ele-

gance, offering a unique journey through the finest homes crafted by visionary builders,” said Taylor Lyles, CEO of the Homebuilders Association of Greenville.

“The Virtual Luxury Tour of Homes is ... a testament to the evolution of homebuilding, where technology meets timeless sophistication.”

Stoneledge Luxury Homes builds custom homes. The company’s work revolves around quality and client satisfaction. Stoneledge has a team of design and construction professionals.

“Watch the client and how they react ... their authentic reaction will tell you if it is beautiful or not,” said Meranda Bailey, Head Designer & co-founder of Stoneledge Luxury Homes. “This reminds us that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and our client is the one who should ultimately love their new space.”

To explore Stoneledge Luxury Homes and the work of other builders, go to LuxuryTourofHomes.com. A yearlong subscription to the tour costs \$15.

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Q&A

LOCAL BUSINESS EXPERTS
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For information on how your business can appear on this page, email Teasley@localiq.com

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David Greene
Attorney at Law

QUESTION:
I don't think I owe the IRS what they say. Can I submit an Offer in Compromise and what kind of documents do I have to submit with the Offer?

ANSWER:
The Offer in Compromise program is a voluntary program that is offered to taxpayers who are delinquent in their taxes. There are three types of offers, but the one you will submit is an Offer based on doubt as to liability. This means you do not believe you owe the tax the IRS is charging you. In this case you do not have to submit any financial information. However, you do have to give a detailed explanation why you are not liable for the tax and submit supporting documentation to prove you are right. Also, there is no filing fee for this type of Offer. However, you must still offer to pay some amount. This is because there is always an uncertainty whether or not a tax court judge would find the taxpayer liable for the tax. Therefore, both you and the IRS are “gambling” on the outcome and both must be willing to compromise to obtain a sure result. Visit my blog at www.greenelaw.legal to learn more. If you would like my help in reviewing your situation, please come in for an appointment. Your initial consultation is free and you will be under no obligation. For all of my readers, if you have any legal problems, such as unpaid taxes or estate planning needs, I can help. Don't forget that we can now prepare and file your return for you.

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The Home Builders Association of Greenville was founded in 1960. The association was formed so home builders and other industry professionals could work together to promote new homes, home remodeling, and repairs and improvements. For information, go to hbaofgreenville.com.

Stoneledge Luxury Homes is a design/build firm. Client services include architectural plan design, interior design, guaranteed closing dates, comprehensive warranties, move-in assistance, and help with furniture and home décor.



Events At Judson Mill Hosts Galentine's Soiree

Events at Judson Mill is celebrating Valentine's week with a "girls' night out," called Galentine's Soiree, on Feb. 10.

The event at Judson Mill in Greenville will celebrate friendships among women with dancing, sweet treats, bubbles, espresso martinis, and a photo booth.

Tickets are \$40 and are all-inclusive; groups of six or more can save 10%. All guests must be 21 years of age or older. The event will take place from 8 to 11 p.m. at Events at Judson Mill, located at 701 Easley Bridge Road.

"We hope to see as many Greenville women as possible so we can all celebrate each other," said Tammy Johnson, the CEO of High Spirits Hospitality.

For tickets, go to <https://highspiritshospitality.ticketspice.com/galentines-soiree-a-girls-night-out?t=judson>

Events at Judson Mill is comprised of two renovated spaces on the campus of the historic Judson Mill.

Grants Support Programs For People With Disabilities

The Barbara Stone Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on supporting programs and ini-



tiatives for individuals with disabilities in the Upstate, recently awarded nine Community Innovation Grants.

The foundation invests in innovative programs that directly support individuals with disabilities through the bi-annual grants program.

The following nine nonprofit organizations received grants totaling almost \$32,000.

- Able SC – \$2,050, movie nights and cooking classes
- Adaptive Pickleball - \$2,000, Project 500
- Clarity Upstate - \$8,800, pediatric hearing aids
- Lions Vision Services - \$3,000, Vis-ABILITY
- David's Table – \$5,000, Family Camp Scholarship Fund
- International Ballet Greenville - \$2,000, International Ballet Thrive Upstate Ballet Classes
- Prisma Health Roger C. Peace Rehabilitation - \$5,000, Prisma's Community Health and Wellness Space at Unity Park
- Trailhead Community Farm School - \$1,500, Family Summit
- Upcountry History Museum - \$2,000, Connections Cafe

Lara Ceisel is Executive Director of the Barbara Stone Foundation. The 2023 Board of Directors includes Nick Skenteris, President; Michele Reeves, Vice President; Riku Oinonen, Treasurer; Brooke Schmidt, Secretary; and Lee Sowell, Matthew Collins, Marion Elliott, Elizabeth Piper, Jimmy Kimbell, Amy Hallasy, Audra Vellucci, Jay Blankenship, Dana Gantt Moore and the Honorable Nick Theodore, President Emeritus.

The deadline to submit spring grant applications is March 15. For information, go to www.barbarastonefoundation.org/grants/application-process or email Lara Ceisel at lara@barbarastonefoundation.org.

Since 1991, the Barbara Stone Foundation's goal has been to influence community systems, policies and culture to provide equitable opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the Upstate. The organization identifies gaps in services and invests in and creates innovative programs.

Two signature initiatives are Green-

ville CAN (Collaborative Action Network) and the UP (Upward Professionals) Employment Initiative.

Greenville Symphony Orchestra Presents Star Wars: A New Hope

The Greenville Symphony Orchestra will present "Star Wars: A New Hope in Concert," featuring a screening of the complete film. Composer John Williams' Oscar-winning score will be performed live while the film runs.

The concert will be led by conductor Thiago Tiberio on May 4 at the Bon Secours Wellness Arena.

Tickets are on sale. Prices start at \$29.50, before taxes and fees. Tickets can be purchased online at BSWArena.com or ticketmaster.com.

Williams scored all nine of the Star Wars films, beginning with 1977's "Star Wars: A New Hope." He won an Academy Award for Best Original Score for the first film. The scores for "The Empire Strikes Back," "Return of the Jedi," "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" and "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" were each nominated for Best Original Score.

The presentation is licensed by Disney Concerts, the concert production and licensing division of Disney Music Group, which is the music arm of The Walt Disney Co.

The Greenville Symphony Orchestra presents a diverse mix of concert performances, educational programming, and community engagements that reach more than 50,000 individuals throughout the Upstate each year.

During the symphony's 76th season in 2023-24, it will be led by six finalists vying for the title of Music Director.



Laurens Electric Contest Deadline Feb. 2

Laurens Electric Cooperative is offering a contest that grants four students an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., or Columbia this summer.

To apply for the annual Washington Youth Tour and Cooperative Youth Summit, young people need to submit an application, provide two references, and participate in an interview. Four students will be awarded one of the two trips, which begin June 15 and July 15.

Students in the cooperative's service area who are in their junior year of high school are eligible to apply for the Washington Youth Tour. Students in their sophomore year in high school are eligible to apply for the Cooperative Youth Summit. Youths do not have to receive power from Laurens Electric Cooperative to qualify.

The deadline for applications is Feb. 2.

Participants in the Washington Youth Tour will travel with other South Carolina students to Washington, D.C., where they will meet with their state representatives and senators, visit historical sites, learn about cooperatives, and spend time with students from across the country.

Youth Summit participants go on a private tour of the S.C. Statehouse, meet with the governor or lieutenant governor, engage in team-building exercises, and learn about electric cooperatives.

Contest winners also will be eligible to compete for up to \$5,000 in college scholarships, based on a community service project or podcast challenge.

For information or an application, go to laurenelectric.com/Youth, or contact Laurie Riser at laurier@laurenelectric.com or (800) 942-3141.

Businesses Asked To Take Survey

The S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce and the S.C. Chamber of Commerce are conducting a Palmetto Business Barometer Survey that allows large and small businesses to share their opinions with state government leaders and policymakers. The survey is brief and easy to submit.

Owners or managers can fill out the survey. Answers are confidential. Go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HWZCHNN>

5 Home Energy-Efficient New Year's Resolutions



By Drew Hamblen, Fairview Custom Homes
Board President Home Builders Association of Greenville

High energy consumption hurts the environment and your wallet. As you make your New Year's resolutions, consider helping your home be more energy efficient. Reducing your energy consumption doesn't involve demanding tasks, simple home activities can make a big difference. Here are some suggestions to help you reduce energy consumption in your household in the new year.

Heating and Cooling System.

As you plan home maintenance activities this year, add a calendar reminder to clean or replace the heater and air conditioner filter. Your air filter helps maintain optimal air quality in your home and keeps your system running smoothly. Maintenance experts recommend writing the date of the new filter on the side of it, so you remember when you last changed it.

Appliance Usage. The beginning of the year is an excellent time to start forming new habits. When it comes to using the appliances in your home, there are easy practices you can incorporate to

lower your energy consumption. For example, try using your large appliances in the early morning or late evening, which are generally considered off-peak hours. The result can be lower energy bills. Your utility provider will have insights on recommended usage times. Alternatively, not running your appliances, such as air-drying clothes or dishes, can lower energy bills.

Water Heater. According to [EnergyStar.gov](https://www.energy.gov), water heaters use about 20% of a home's energy. One way to reduce your water heater energy consumption is to take shorter showers. Another option is to set your water heater to 120 degrees. Savings resulting from turning down your water heater temperature are based on reducing standby losses (heat lost from water heater into surrounding area), according to [Energy.gov](https://www.energy.gov). Set too high, or at 140°F, your water heater can waste anywhere from [\\$36 to \\$61 annually in standby heat losses](#).

Outdoor Water Usage. Taking shorter showers and turning off the faucet while brushing your teeth are standard water-saving techniques in your home. You can incorporate several outdoor water-saving usage behaviors

into your routine this year. For example, it's best to water your lawn in the morning to avoid evaporation. And if you're willing to give your home garden a refresh this year, consider planting native or drought-tolerant plants.

Recycling. You can reduce the garbage you generate by buying and using products wisely and recycling everyday household items. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, plastic bottles are the [most recycled plastic product in the U.S.](#) Recycling 10 plastic bottles saves enough energy to [power a laptop for more than 25 hours](#). If you haven't already, take advantage of your curbside recycling program in your community. If you're not in a program, contact your county or municipality to determine your recycling options.

To learn more about increasing your energy efficiency, green products and building techniques available to you, contact **Taylor Lyles, CEO, Home Builders Association of Greenville** or www.hbaofgreenville.com



www.HBAofGreenville.com

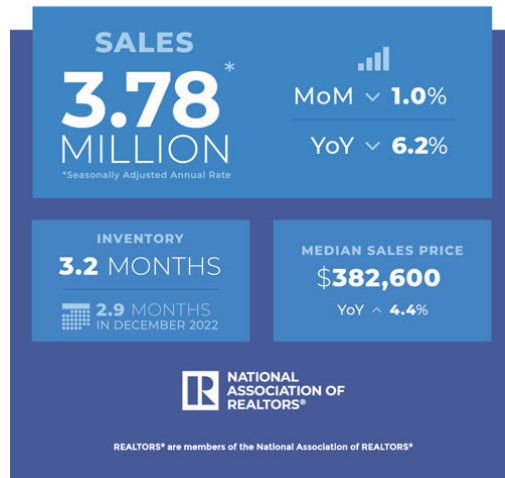
Existing-Home Sales Slid 1.0% in December



Rhett Brown
2024 President of The Greater Greenville
Association of Realtors® Broker
Associate with Marchant Real Estate Inc.

HOUSING SNAPSHOT

EXISTING-HOME SALES DECEMBER 2023



Existing-home sales retreated in December, according to the National Association of REALTORS®. Among the four major U.S. regions, sales slipped in the Midwest and South, rose in the West and were unchanged in the Northeast. All four regions experienced year-over-year sales decreases.

On an annual basis, existing-home sales (4.09 million) dropped to the lowest level since 1995, while the median price reached a record high of \$389,800 in 2023.

Total existing-home sales – completed transactions that include single-family homes, townhomes, condominiums and co-ops – decreased 1.0% from November to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.78 million in December. Year-over-year, sales declined 6.2% (down from 4.03 million in December 2022).

"The latest month's sales look to be the bottom before inevitably turning higher in the new year," said Rhett Brown, 2024 President of The Greater Greenville Association of Realtors® and Broker Associate with Marchant Real Estate in Greenville, SC. "Mortgage rates are meaningfully lower compared to just two months ago, and more inventory is expected to appear on the market in upcoming months."

Total housing inventory registered at the end

of December was 1 million units, down 11.5% from November but up 4.2% from one year ago (960,000). Unsold inventory sits at a 3.2-month supply at the current sales pace, down from 3.5 months in November but up from 2.9 months in December 2022.

The median existing-home price for all housing types in December was \$382,600, an increase of 4.4% from December 2022 (\$366,500). All four U.S. regions posted price increases.

"Despite sluggish home sales, 85 million homeowning households enjoyed further gains in housing wealth," Brown added. "Obviously, the recent, rapid three-year rise in home prices is unsustainable. If price increases continue at the current pace, the country could accelerate into haves and have-nots. Creating a path towards homeownership for today's renters is essential. It requires economic and income growth and, most importantly, a steady buildup of home construction."

REALTORS® Confidence Index

According to the monthly REALTORS® Confidence Index, properties typically remained on the market for 29 days in December, up from 25 days in November and 26 days in December 2022. Fifty-six percent of homes sold in December were on the market for less than a month.

First-time buyers were responsible for 29% of sales in December, down from 31% in November 2023 and December 2022. NAR's 2023 *Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers* – released in November 2023 – found that the annual share of first-time buyers was 32%.

All-cash sales accounted for 29% of transactions in December, up from 27% in November 2023 and 28% in December 2022.

Individual investors or second-home buyers, who make up many cash sales, purchased 16% of homes in December, down from 18% in November and identical to one year ago.

Distressed sales – foreclosures and short sales – represented 2% of sales in December, virtually unchanged from last month and the previous year.

Mortgage Rates

According to Freddie Mac, the 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 6.60% as of January 18. That's down from 6.66% the prior week but up from 6.15% one year ago.

Single-family and Condo/Co-op Sales

Single-family home sales edged lower to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.4 million in December, down 0.3% from 3.41 million in November and 6.1% from the previous year. The median existing single-family home price was \$387,000 in December, up 4.0% from December 2022.

Existing condominium and co-op sales recorded a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 380,000 units in December, down 7.3% from November and one year ago (both 410,000 units). The median existing condo price was \$343,800 in December, up 8.2% from the previous year (\$317,700).

Regional Breakdown

At 470,000 units, existing-home sales in the Northeast were unchanged from November but down 9.6% from December 2022. The median price in the Northeast was \$428,100, up 9.4% from the previous year.

In the Midwest, existing-home sales retracted 4.3% from the prior month to an annual rate of 900,000 in December, down 10.9% from last year. The median price in the Midwest was \$275,600, up 5.9% from December 2022.

Existing-home sales in the South descended 2.8% from November to an annual rate of 1.72 million in December, a decrease of 4.4% from the prior year. The median price in the South was \$352,100, up 3.8% from one year ago.

In the West, existing-home sales grew 7.8% from a month ago to an annual rate of 690,000 in December but were down 1.4% from one year before. The median price in the West was \$582,000, up 4.8% from December 2022.

About NAR

The National Association of REALTORS® is America's largest trade association, representing more than 1.5 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries. The term REALTOR® is a registered collective membership mark that identifies a real estate professional who is a member of the National Association of REALTORS® and subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics.

The Greater Greenville Association of REALTORS® represents over 3,800 members in all aspects of the real estate industry. Please visit the Greater Greenville Association of REALTORS® web site at www.ggar.com for real estate and consumer information.

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Four Of Seven Best Cities For First-Time Homebuyers In New York, Iowa

PAUL DAVIDSON
USA TODAY

First-time homebuyers have faced an array of hurdles in recent years, from low housing supplies to lofty prices to soaring mortgage rates.

In November, first-time buyers accounted for 31% of all existing home sales, up from 28% in October and a year earlier but below a historically normal 40%, according to the National Association of Realtors.

To help fledgling shoppers find their dream home, Realtor.com picked the best small- to midsize towns for first-time buyers based on several key characteristics – price and affordability, ample housing inventories, price growth potential, shorter commutes, lively culture and a young demographic.

Of the top 10 towns, three are in New York state and two are in Iowa.

As you peruse the list it would be helpful to keep in mind the national midpoints. Across the U.S., the median home price is \$382,230; housing prices are projected to fall 1.7% this year; the average home price to income ratio is 5.4; there are 38.6 home listings per 1,000 households; the average travel time to work is 29 minutes; and the share of homeowners age 25-34 is 5.4%.

Here are Realtor.com's top seven towns for first-time buyers, in reverse order:

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Median home price: \$260,000
2024 home price growth forecast: 7.2%
Average home price to income ratio: 4.3
Home listings: 33.1 per 1,000 households
Average travel time to work: 21 minutes
Share of homeowners ages 25-34: 9.5%
Yelp culture and lifestyle businesses per 1,000 households: 20



The U.S. median home price is \$382,230. GETTY IMAGES

Cheektowaga, New York

Median home price: \$199,000
2024 home price growth forecast: 3.9%
Average home price to income ratio: 3.1
Home listings: 26.6 per 1,000 households
Average travel time to work: 21 minutes
Share of homeowners ages 25-34: 7.2%
Yelp culture and lifestyle businesses per 1,000 households: 22.6 (tops in category)

Council Bluffs, Iowa

Median home price: \$200,000
2024 home price growth forecast: 4.5%
Average home price to income ratio: 3
Home listings: 37.6 per 1,000 households
Average travel time to work: 21 minutes
Share of homeowners age 25-34: 6.4%
Yelp culture and lifestyle businesses per 1,000 households: 13

Newington, Connecticut

Median home price: \$290,294

2024 home price growth forecast: 9.1%
Average home price to income ratio: 3.4
Home listings: 37.8 per 1,000 households
Average travel time to work: 23 minutes
Share of homeowners age 25-34: 6.6%
Yelp culture and lifestyle businesses per 1,000 households: 19.2

Winterset, Iowa

Median home price: \$269,400
2024 home price growth forecast: 9.9%
Average home price to income ratio: 4
Home listings: 47.8 per 1,000 households
Average travel time to work: 23 minutes
Share of homeowners age 25-34: 7.3%
Yelp culture and lifestyle businesses per 1,000 households: 18

Benton, Arkansas

Median home price: \$197,500
Average home price to income ratio: 3
2024 home price growth forecast: 3.1%
Home listings: 50.2 per 1,000 households
Average travel time to work: 25 minutes
Share of homeowners age 25-34: 7.6%
Yelp culture and lifestyle businesses per 1,000 households: 17.9

Irondequoit, New York

Median home price: \$187,000
2024 home price growth forecast: 10.4% (tops in this category)
Average home price to income ratio: 2.5
Home listings: 34.1 per 1,000 households
Average travel time to work: 22 minutes
Share of homeowners age 25-34: 8.2%
Yelp culture and lifestyle businesses per 1,000 households: 14.9

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