

Florida's existing home and condo sales up in September 2011

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Florida's existing home and existing condo sales continued their upswing in September, according to the latest housing data released by Florida Realtors. Existing home sales increased 10 percent last month with a total of 15,036 homes sold statewide compared to 13,723 homes sold in September 2010, according to Florida Realtors.

"One of the most overlooked statistical trends in all of real estate is the growth in home sales, both single-family and condo, in the state of Florida," said Florida Realtors Chief Economist Dr. John Tuccillo. "We've seen an upward trend in sales since January 2011, and September's sales were a full 10 percent above September 2010. Even prices, which have been static over the past few months, are well above where they were in January 2011.

"One of the reasons for this is stabilization in the distressed property market. This is not a problem that's going away, but there's a degree of certainty that is helping the market."

Fifteen of Florida's metropolitan statistical areas reported higher existing home sales in September; 11 MSAs had higher existing condo sales.

The statewide median sales price for existing homes last month was \$133,900; a year ago, it was \$135,000 for only a 1 percent decrease. According to analysts with the National Association of Realtors, sales of foreclosures and other distressed properties continue to downwardly distort the median price because they generally sell at a discount relative to traditional homes. The median is the midpoint; half the homes sold for more, half for less.

The national median sales price for existing single-family homes in August 2011 was \$168,400, down 5.4 percent from a year ago, according to NAR. In California, the August statewide median resales price was \$297,060; in Maryland, it was \$241,564; and in New York, it was \$220,000.

In Florida's year-to-year comparison for condos, 6,666 units sold statewide in September, a 10 percent gain over the 6,035 units sold in September 2010. The statewide existing condo median sales price last month was \$87,200; a year earlier, it was \$81,800 for a 7 percent increase.

"Historically low mortgage rates and stabilizing home prices all across Florida's local housing markets continue to attract potential buyers — housing affordability conditions are very favorable right now," said 2011 Florida Realtors President Patricia Fitzgerald, manager/broker-associate with Illustrated Properties in Hobe Sound and Mariner Sands Country Club in Stuart. "However, financially qualified buyers are still being denied home loans because of overly restrictive lending requirements, and that's a significant obstacle to the housing recovery."

According to Freddie Mac, the interest rate for a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 4.11 percent in September, down from the 4.35 percent average during the same month a year earlier. Florida Realtors' sales figures reflect closings, which typically occur 30 to 90 days after sales contracts are written.

This article was contributed to The Log by Florida Realtors.