



HOME DELIVERY

Residential Real Estate Trends, Issues and News for Consumers

The National Association of REALTORS® distributes *Home Delivery* every month to real estate, personal finance and consumer journalists as a resource for background or story ideas.

From Outhouse to Out-and-Out Luxury

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, less than 70 years ago, more than one-third of homes in the United States didn't have a flushing toilet. What a difference a few decades make.

Today's bathrooms are inner sanctums – retreats where homeowners can relax, refresh and rejuvenate. And today's buyers have come to expect the best from their bathrooms. In a recent NAR survey, 45 percent of recent buyers made some improvement to their bathroom within three months of purchase.

Some of the latest bathroom features include:

- Tubs with pop-up TVs
- Refrigerated medicine cabinets
- Warmed toilet seats
- Waterproof speakers

For more 2007 bathroom design trends, visit *Realtor® Magazine Online's* Architecture Coach, www.realtor.org/RMOArch.nsf/pages/ArchCoach200707?OpenDocument.

Story Springboard

- One person's throne is someone else's toilet
- Talk to Realtors® about some of the bathroom design trends they're seeing locally, and interview homeowners who have recently remodeled or improved their bathrooms to learn what bathroom elements are really important to consumers in your region.

FHA = Financing Help ASAP

In the past three years, about 20 percent of mortgage originations have been in the subprime market, and 14 percent of today's homeowners have subprime mortgages. While many subprime loans have helped people achieve their dreams of homeownership, abuses in the subprime market have caused many families to lose their homes and life savings.

Now, some at-risk borrowers may soon find relief from the Federal Housing Administration. FHA's recently introduced FHASecure initiative allows subprime borrowers who have fallen behind on their mortgage payments because of resetting adjustable-rate mortgages to refinance into an FHA-insured mortgage.

Borrowers must meet eligibility requirements, including good payment histories and at least 3 percent in home equity. Details are outlined at

www.hudclips.org/sub_nonhud/html/pdfforms/07-11ml.doc.

Story Springboard

- Financing still favorable
- Buyers who can qualify for conventional loans (which account for 77 percent of the mortgage market) and FHA-insured mortgages still have ample financing opportunities. Talk to Realtors® in your area about recent home buyers who were successful at securing a mortgage and becoming homeowners.

Blogs Across America

As online social networking gains popularity, more and more Realtors® are using blogs to educate consumers about their local real estate markets and demonstrate their industry expertise.

Now, consumers can get a sampling of what Realtors® across the country are blogging about on "Let's Talk Real Estate," accessible through Realtor.com. Realtors® can start their own blog on the site, and highlights from these blogs are posted daily at <http://talk.realtor.com>.

Recent posts run the gamut of issues faced by Realtors® and their clients these days, from selling in a challenging market to subprime mortgages to rising property taxes.

Story Springboard

- Building a better business through blogging
- Some Realtors® have successfully integrated blogging into their business models. Talk to Realtor® bloggers in your community about why they blog and what results they achieve. For some examples of blogging success stories, visit www.realtor.org/rmomag.NSF/pages/feature1amay06?OpenDocument.

Please contact Stephanie Singer, 202/383-1050, or via e-mail at ssinger@realtors.org, for additional ideas, sources, data and resources.