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### Whose Market Is It?

Real estate is a cyclical business. For months or even years conditions may favor the buyer. Then, over time, the pendulum will swing the other way and circumstances will favor the seller.



The market forces of supply and demand help determine whether it is a buyer's or seller's market. When the supply of homes is high, the sense of urgency for buyers lessens. Because there are more homes to choose from buyers can be more selective and may wield more power during the negotiations. In turn, sellers may need to lower their asking prices to attract consumer interest.

Conversely, in a seller's market, inventory is lower. Buyers have fewer options and the sense of immediacy is heightened. As a result, the number of bids on any given listing may increase, asking prices might rise, and buying terms may become more stringent.

A second factor that influences the market is mortgage interest rates. High rates mean it costs buyers more money to borrow from a bank or lender. Higher rates can lessen consumer demand. On the other hand, when rates are lower and buyers feel they can get more for their money it can propel them into the real estate market.

If you are considering buying a home it is critical that you determine whether it is a buyer's or seller's market. Equally important is to remember that real estate is local. Different factors could make it a seller's market in one city and a buyer's in another. To help you determine which conditions prevail examine how long listings are staying on the market, compare that rate to six months ago, and look at whether homes are selling above or below asking price.

Your real estate agent should be an expert in your local marketplace. His or her insight will be key. Remember the market climate – buyer or seller - will ultimately influence your decision when to buy and at what price and terms.

### An Ounce of Prevention

Welcome to world of homeownership. Along with the joys of decorating, entertaining and living in your new home, come some responsibilities. Immediately you might think of that monthly mortgage payment. But you would be wise to think about home maintenance too.



There are benefits to a proactive approach. Maintenance is almost always less troublesome and less expensive than a replacement or repair.

Routine upkeep will help your home maintain its value and it can make your home more energy efficient. Here are four home systems that benefit from routine care:

- **Furnace** - Check the filter monthly for dust and debris and replace as needed. Schedule a professional furnace tune up in the fall.
- **Chimney** – Chimneys that are used at least four times annually should be professionally inspected and cleaned at least once a year. Late spring or early fall is the recommended time.
- **Gutters** – Prevent clogs and wear and tear with regular maintenance. Of course autumn is the primary season, but regular inspections are important for keeping the system working right, especially when there are heavy rains.
- **Plumbing Pipes** – If there are trees in your yard, especially near your sewage and waste water out-take lines, use a chemical root killer to keep lines clear. Root systems can break through older lines.

Other systems that benefit from regular upkeep include hot water heaters, radiators, and septic systems.

### Go Green



Was your New Year's Resolution to live a little "greener" in '08? Start by using less hot water. Installing a low flow showerhead can save 350 pounds of carbon dioxide annually. Washing your clothes in cold or warm water instead of hot can save 500 pounds. For more ideas visit

<http://www.energysavers.gov/>