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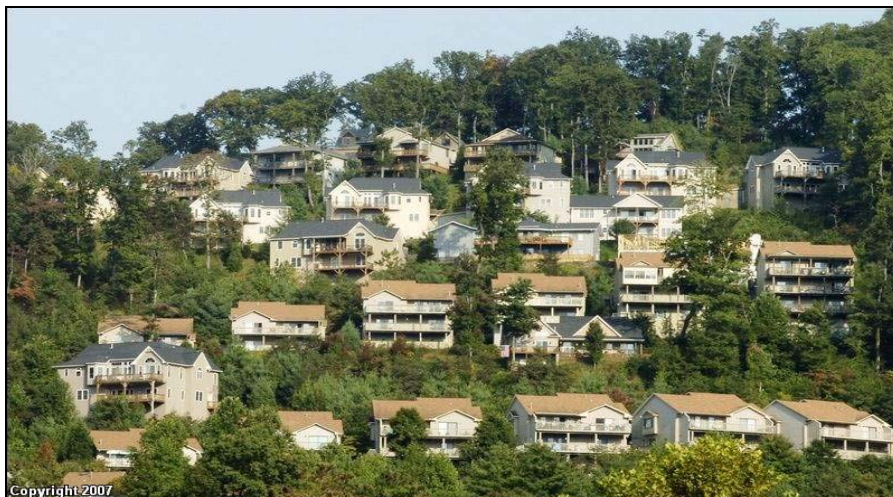
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Business

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Asheville bucks national housing trend as property values climb

by Dale Neal, DNEAL@CITIZEN-TIMES.COM, published March 23, 2007 12:15 am



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As more houses rise on the hills overlooking Sweeten Creek Road in South Asheville, prices are climbing with them. Asheville homeowners saw their homes appreciate an average of 11.7 percent last year, well above the national average.

ASHEVILLE - While many homeowners in major cities nationwide have seen their house values drop over the past year, Asheville homeowners continue to see their values going up.

The annual appreciation rate for Asheville was 11.7 percent for 2006 while the rate nationwide stood at only 5.9 percent, a rate that declined in each of the last four quarters.

While many housing markets were affected by speculative buyers "flipping" houses for profit, "people buy houses in Asheville to live in," said Tom Tveidt, research director for the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Asheville home appreciation 12th in the nation

by Dale Neal, DNEAL@CITIZEN-TIMES.COM

Updated Sunday, June 3, 2007 8:57 am

ASHEVILLE - Asheville ranks 12th in the nation among 266 metropolitan areas for home appreciation, according to figures recently released by the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight.

The ranking measured same-home appreciation between March 2006 and March 2007. **At 13.6 percent, Asheville's rate was significantly higher than the nationwide rate of 4.3 percent and the statewide rate of 8.0 percent.** Asheville had the highest ranking among all other metros in the state. Jacksonville had a higher appreciation rate, but was not ranked due to an insufficient number of transactions.

WNC housing values rise

Asheville area appreciation 9th in nation

by Mark Barrett, M^BARRETT@CITIZEN-TIMES.COM

Updated November 30, 2007 12:15 am

ASHEVILLE – Asheville area homes had the ninth-highest appreciation rate in the country over the past year, according to federal figures released Thursday.

The rise in values comes despite a sharp drop in the number of homes sold. Single-family homes in the Asheville metropolitan statistical area — Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson and Madison counties — increased 9.4 percent in value over the 12 months that ended Sept. 30, according to figures from the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight.

Potential buyers want to live in WNC

The national average was a 1.8 percent increase, the lowest since 1995, and values actually fell 0.4 percent nationally for the third quarter of 2007, the first quarterly decline in nearly 13 years. Values in the Asheville area rose 2.0 percent in the quarter. Of the 287 metropolitan areas ranked, 204 saw home values rise compared with the same quarter a year ago, and values fell in 84.

Some observers predict tougher times ahead for local real estate, which has seen big drops in the number of homes sold in recent months. The federal figures measure only a portion of the market. They are based on data on “conforming” home loans — those for less than \$417,000 — bought or backed by government-sponsored mortgage companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

That excludes homes with mortgages greater than \$417,000, condominiums and homes bought with subprime mortgages. Other national measures of the trajectory of home values have painted a more pessimistic picture but generally don't include information specific to Asheville. Also Thursday, the U.S. Commerce Department said the median sales price of a new home fell 13 percent in October compared with a year ago, the biggest 12-month decline since 1970.

'Pretty amazing'

The apparent growth in local housing values “is pretty amazing given the current housing market,” said Beth Burdick, mortgage adviser with Asheville-based Ashford Mortgage Advisors. The number of homes sold through the Western North Carolina Regional Multiple Listing Service — which includes the four Asheville MSA counties plus Transylvania County — was down 26 percent for the first 10 months of 2007 compared with the same period of 2006. But the median sale price was up 4.8 percent.

The number of sales fell 32 percent in October versus October 2006. Tom Tveidt, head of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce's research arm, said the area's strong results according to the federal figures are surprising. Home values here had been rising more slowly than in other areas a few years ago and therefore may not have as far to fall now, he said. The area has experienced no large economic disruption, and other factors that might push values down — large numbers of speculators or those unable to make higher payments on subprime mortgages — are less of a factor here than in other markets, he said.

Appreciation likely to slow

Burdick and analyst Don Davies, of Don Davies Real Estate, both said appreciation in the market is likely to slow soon and may be doing so already. National economic problems are a factor and, “Right now, there’s a lot more property on the market, so (buyers) know they don’t have to make an instantaneous decision,” Burdick said. On the other hand, she added, people still want to move to the region and buy a home, even though they are bargaining harder on price than they once did.

The federal report Thursday said the impact of market downturns on home prices is sometimes muted because “homeowners are hesitant to sell their homes for losses, often leaving their homes on the market for long periods awaiting the ‘right’ price.” Nationally, “While select markets still maintain robust rates of appreciation, our newest data show price weakening in a very significant portion of the country,” James B. Lockhart, director of the Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight office, said in a statement. Prices declined in more than 20 states, he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report. On the Net: www.ofheo.gov.

Appreciation rates

Metropolitan areas with the largest one-year appreciation in home prices.

• Wenatchee, Wash.	15.7%
• Provo-Orem, Utah	14.4%
• Grand Junction, Colo.	14.0%
• Ogden-Clearfield, Utah	14.0%
• Salt Lake City	13.4%
• Idaho Falls, Idaho	11.7%
• Austin-Round Rock, Texas	9.7%
• Beaumont-Port Arthur, Texas	9.4%
• Asheville	9.4%
• Billings, Mont.	9.1%

Note: Figures have been rounded.

SOURCE: Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight