

## July homes sales plummet

### Median prices fall 8 percent in Lee

By Dick Hogan  
[dhogan@news-press.com](mailto:dhogan@news-press.com)

**Source: The News-Press, Thursday, August 24, 2006**

The sales price and number of homes sold in Lee County tanked in July, according to data released Wednesday.

A house sold with the assistance of a Realtor dropped 8 percent to \$264,600 from \$287,500 a year ago, and the number of homes sold dropped 32 percent from 1,026 to 694. That's according to a report by the Florida Association of Realtors.

It was the second month in a row that prices dropped year to year. The last countywide decline before that was June 1999, when the median price fell 1 percent to \$105,200.

As the market cools off, it's becoming harder to sell a house, said real estate agent Christa Brooks, of Cape Coral Waterfront Realty. "There are some sporadic sales, but boy, you've still got to make it worthwhile and you have to have an outstanding piece of property. Never mind marketing — price is what talks right now."

Those buying homes now are often getting deep discounts. Brooks' client Roger Lolly closed recently on a Gulf-access canal-front condo in Cape Coral for \$189,000 — \$60,000 less than its assessed value.

"Last year I probably could have got it for \$289,000," he said, referring to the red-hot market for homes that ended abruptly in late 2005.

"I'm going to hold on to it for a year, maybe two years, for the market to come back. We'll bottom out; in the next couple months it'll be the worst it's going to get," said Lolly, manager of Old Florida Funding.

Meanwhile, he'll rent it out, possibly for \$1,000 a month.

Prices and sales were down all over Southwest Florida.

Collier County had the biggest sales decline in the state at 51 percent — 227 sold in July compared to 459 last July, and the median price dropped 6 percent from \$490,400 to \$461,800.

Charlotte County's sales dropped 37 percent from 374 to 236, and the median price there dropped 4 percent from \$236,600 to \$228,300.

Statewide, sales dropped 33 percent and prices inched upward slightly.

Nationally, the existing-home market was down as well. Purchases in July declined 4.1 percent, more than economists forecast, to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 6.33 million, the National Association of Realtors said. That was the lowest since January 2004.

Sales fell 11.2 percent from a year earlier, and the supply of unsold homes climbed to a record. The median nationwide price of a home sold last month was \$230,000, up just 0.9 percent from the same month last year.

Real estate broker Denny Grimes of Denny Grimes & Co., who tracks real estate figures for The News-Press MarketWatch annual symposium, said there are almost 13,000 unsold homes on the market in Lee, more than three times what were there a year ago.

Prices haven't hit bottom, he said, but "the encouraging sign I see is that sellers are finally realizing there's a problem" and they're finally starting to cut prices.

That's not the case in Collier County, however, said Phil Wood, of John R. Wood Realty in Naples.

Sellers are generally standing firm, he said. "We're not seeing any big price decreases. What buyers should look for if they're looking for a bargain is a must-sell situation like divorce, moving out of town and so on."

One Fort Myers man who sold his house recently — Grimes was his agent — said he's happy with the result.

Ken Carletta, 70, sold his house in south Fort Myers for \$457,000, a far cry from the \$290,000 he paid nine years ago for the furnished Aubuchon Homes model home.

Carletta, a retired sales manager with Union Carbide, sold the house because his wife died two years ago "and I wanted to get out from under the burden of the house."

He is renting an apartment now and is happy to have sold in less than a month.

— The Associated Press contributed to this report

## **SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES**

### **FLORIDA HOME SALES**

July 2006: 14,451 (-33 percent)  
July 2005: 21,691

#### **MEDIAN PRICE**

July 2006: \$250,800 (1 percent)  
July 2005: \$248,200

### **LEE COUNTY HOME SALES**

July 2006: 694 (-32 percent)  
July 2005: 1,026

#### **MEDIAN PRICE**

July 2006: \$264,600 (-8 percent)  
July 2005: \$287,500

### **COLLIER COUNTY HOME SALES**

July 2006: 227 (-51 percent)  
July 2005: 459

#### **MEDIAN PRICE**

July 2006: \$461,800 (-6 percent)  
July 2005: \$490,400

### **FLORIDA CONDO SALES**

July 2006: 4,260 (-37 percent)  
July 2005: 6,739

#### **MEDIAN PRICE**

July 2006: \$210,200 (-1 percent)  
July 2005: \$211,900

### **LEE COUNTY CONDO SALES**

July 2006: 179 (-50 percent)  
July 2005: 356

#### **MEDIAN PRICE**

July 2006: \$346,300 (35 percent)  
July 2005: \$256,700

### **COLLIER COUNTY CONDO SALES**

July 2006: 169 (-62 percent)  
July 2005: 450

#### **MEDIAN PRICE**

July 2006: \$352,400 (1 percent)  
July 2005: \$350,500