



Lee existing homes sales, prices drop in August

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Prices and sales for existing homes in Lee County dropped in August compared to a year ago, according to a report issued today by the Florida Association of Realtors.

The median price of a single-family home sold with the assistance of a Realtor dropped 5 percent to \$250,800 from \$264,100 in August 2006. Sales were down 25 percent to 520 from 691 in August 2006.

Compared to July, the median price was up 2 percent from \$246,100. The number of sales was also up 22 percent from July's 426.

Prices have generally been falling since the all-time high of \$322,300 set in December 2005.

In Charlotte County, the median price fell 11 percent to \$186,500 from \$210,400 and the number of sales was down 19 percent from 274 to 223.

Figures for Collier County weren't available because the Naples Area Board of Realtors does not report its statistics to the state association.

Statewide, the median price fell 6 percent from \$246,800 to \$231,900 and the number of sales fell 26 percent from 15,252 to 11,279.

In a separate report issued today by the National Association of Realtors, sales of existing homes, depressed by turmoil in credit markets, fell for a sixth straight month in August, pushing activity to the lowest point in five years.

The national association said that sales of existing single-family homes dropped by 4.3 percent in August, compared to July.

The housing market has been battered by the steepest downturn in 16 years. Those problems were exacerbated in August by turmoil in credit markets, reflecting new worries about rising defaults in subprime mortgages.

The median price of an existing home — the point where half sold for more and half for less — edged up slightly in August to \$224,500, an increase of 0.2 percent from August 2006. It marked the first year-over-year price increase after a record 12 straight months of declining prices.

However, many analysts believe that sales and prices will fall further as the housing market receives additional blows from rising default rates that are dumping more homes on an already glutted market and causing lenders to tighten standards. These factors have made it harder for potential borrowers to qualify for loans.

— *The Associated Press also contributed to this report*