



*... because
your move
matters!*



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Distinctive Homes ~

Distinctive Lifestyles

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Sheila Dowell's “Home News”

*News To Help You Save
Time, Money and Have Some Fun!*

From the Desk of Sheila Dowell ...

The subject of Real Estate is one that everyone has an opinion on today.

I am told that home prices in California are dropping and then asked if that means Houston prices will follow. I don't know...my favorite response has always been: “My Crystal Ball is Cloudy”!

However, having been a Real Estate Broker in the Houston Metroplex for 26 years AND having studied Trends, I can say the following...our last Real Estate peak was in September, 2007. Our recovery began in late 2012 and has continued to date. Page 3 of this newsletter is dedicated to reminding us about the strength of Houston's core economy and why we have prospered when other states have not. I believe we will have a healthy real estate market in 2019. However, prices will have stabilized. That means, no big increases. Move-in ready will be more important in 2019 than ever before. Don't have a pool? Target March-May if you are planning to list a property without a pool. South Texas Homebuyers “begin sweating” in our Summer heat and homes with pools become the #1 Sellers! Coming onto the market with a pool in May? Create a price that prompts a buyer to close before August 15th. School starts early here and the market slows down immensely once September starts.

On a national level, rising interest rates have impacted ALL of our markets throughout the U.S. At the 4.5% mortgage rate commonly quoted today and an expectation of 5% in 2019, many prospective homebuyers will decide to continue renting instead. Over 30% of the U.S. population now lives in counties where buying a median-priced home requires at least \$100,000 in annual income, according to a recent Bloomquist report. (And don't forget-the best interest rates are only available to buyers with “the best credit scores”!)

Locally in 2018, homes under \$300k have been in short supply. Months of inventory for them has ranged from 2-3 depending on time of year. Homes with pools in all price ranges have hovered at less than 4 months of inventory for most of the year. Homes over \$400k without pools have lingered the longest-typically 7+ months of inventory..some price points as much as 12 months of inventory. Pricing for ALL levels will be critical in 2019.

Michael and I moved here in 1982. We've seen SO much change! But one thing hasn't changed: the value in owning real estate here. We don't have the double digits increases that some of the states have. But over the long run, our real estate values continue to go up. And that's a good thing!

~ Sheila



“Master Chef-in-Training”

Michael is Sheila's husband of 30+ years. His hobbies include ball-room dancing (Still Dancing!), gourmet cooking - especially baking, and -just added- GOLF! We played golf 15 years ago (Michael, the natural athlete and Sheila... not so), so the return to this sport has been a bit slow. Fortunately, we aren't thinking of competing with this sport!

With the Holiday Season comes “The Holiday Baking”! In an effort to better manage the sugar in our favorite recipes, Sheila has switched us to Sola Sweetener instead of sugar. She 1st checked it out in her beloved Breakfast Bran Muffin Recipe, substituting ALL the sugar with Sola. We were both amazed! The muffins tasted the same and the sugar content had been reduced by at least 2/3 from the original recipe. The SOLA story follows:

Motivated by a personal journey to lose weight, improve wellness, yet continue to eat the delicious meals he loves, Dr. Bosarge, a leader in regenerative medical research, co-founded The Sola Company with Chef Ryan Turner, a culinary expert in low-carbohydrate diets, in 2012. Tasked with finding a healthy sugar replacement that would be indistinguishable from sugar, after two years of development Chef Ryan hit upon a blend of ingredients that, when combined, taste, bake, caramelize, and measure just like sugar. Sola® Sweetener became available to consumers in November 2016.

HEB carries many of the SOLA products-which we are tasting and will be sharing over time. My next goal: making my New York Cheesecake using Sola Sweetener. Visit Sola's website for recipes-Appetizers, Desserts, Dinner and Lunch meals and more: www.SolaSweet.com . Let us know if you find a recipe you love. We don't want to “lose the taste”...only the sugar! ❖

Get Your Gadget Fix

Cooler Insert keeps ice and melting water away from food and drinks, eliminating cold hands, water-logged food and messy cleanup. Simply fill the insert with ice and place it inside any standard-sized cooler. The ice lasts longer, the food stays cooler, and there's more room left for goodies. Price: \$44.95*

Hue Go is a wireless, portable device that's part of Philips' ambient smart-lighting system. Via the smartphone app or button on the device, you can control lighting color and brightness or let the available spectrum of 16 million colors run random. Take entertainment to the next level by syncing the device to music, movies or your favorite gaming device. The rechargeable battery lasts up to three hours. Price: \$79.99*

Petnet SmartFeeder is an automatic food dispenser that allows you to manage delivery of appropriate portions at specified intervals. The integrated app alerts you to product updates, successful feedings and when food is running low. It also connects to Amazon Alexa for voice-controlled feeding. Price: \$119*

*Prices are approximate ❖

Thanks to All my Clients for their Referrals!

Thanks to SO many of my clients for their continued support!

A BIG thanks to Spencer and Katie Covey. Their magnificent, 1 of a kind country home, sold in 2 days AND they moved to a smaller home without any downtime. ALL this while managing their Event Center, Magnolia Meadows! Launched in the Fall of 2017, they quickly had 40 venues on their books and were ready to grow the business even further. Planning a Wedding, Renewing Your Vows, Planning a Banquet for 250 or A Special Event? Visit them at www.magnolia-meadows.com .

Another Thank You to Ray Coleman, longtime Appraiser and Woodlands homeowner for listing his beautiful Townhome with me. It SOLD to an Exxon relocation Buyer who was SO happy to stop commuting from Beaumont!

Thanks also to another one of my investors: Cecile Hanus. She lives “the dream”: retired with an income stream that include rental income.

After 25 years of being in Full Time Real Estate Sales, I still get excited when I am asked to help someone with the biggest investment they will probably ever make!

All-Natural Air Fresheners

It's the time of year when we start thinking about celebrating at home with our Family and Friends. Some Tips for YOUR home or for Gift Giving during The Season!

Whether it's the insistent smell of last night's dinner or the dog's wet coat after a rainstorm, there are times when the air in our home needs to be freshened. Store-bought air fresheners and candles are an option, but the perfumes and chemicals can sometimes cause headaches, nose and throat irritation, and other health issues. If you're looking for all-natural alternatives to try, these options may help.

Scented pillow sachets filled with any combination of dried ingredients, like chamomile, vanilla, lavender and jasmine are all said to help with better sleep. Whether that's true or not, your sleeping area will smell like a dream!

DIY room sprays can be used to make your home smell like a spring breeze. Fill a misting bottle with a 1-to-1 ratio of water to vodka, add 12 drops of lilac essential oil, and shake. If the scent isn't strong enough, add one additional drop at a time of lilac oil until you achieve the desired strength.

Freshen carpets naturally with a homemade mixture of 1/2 cup baking soda, 2 teaspoons dried rosemary and a few drops of lavender essential oil. To do so, finely chop the rosemary in a food processor, then add it to a plastic bag with the rest of the ingredients and mix well. Sprinkle over carpets, let sit for 15 to 20 minutes and then vacuum.

Empty commercial plug-in fresheners with glass containers can be refilled with your choice of natural ingredients. Simply remove the wick, fill the container with a 1-to-1 ratio of your favorite essential oil and water, replace and you'll be ready to go.

Wreaths of eucalyptus, rosemary or bay laurel secured with wire and hung up in a bathroom are not just decorative; shower steam will trigger the release of their refreshing scents each time you bathe. ❖

- A free market evaluation of my property.
- I'm interested in buying a home.
- Purchasing investment property.
- Giving you a referral.

- Now In three months In six months
- I have a question for you.
- Enter me in this month's drawing for:
\$100 Gift Certificate to Tommy Bahamas (12-28-18)

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HOUSTON TOPS IN GROWTH POTENTIAL

If the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Houston, TX is Big Oil, you should widen your perspective. To begin with, the largest city in Texas gets most of its electricity from renewable energy. But today's Houston is much more than an energy hub. The nation's 4th-largest city has a dynamic, diversified economy that is brimming with innovation, technology and entrepreneurship. This and much more has made Houston our top-ranked metro for Economic Growth Potential. (excerpted from *Business Facilities' 2018 Metro Rankings Report*)

Headquarters to NASA's manned space program and the global energy industry, Houston has long been at the leading edge of innovation, particularly at the corporate and institutional levels. The Houston region is home to more 140 high-growth startup tech companies with total venture funding of \$1.3 billion. Business accelerators such as Houston Exponential work to facilitate innovation and entrepreneurship in the area. The region's concentration of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) workers gives Houston the knowledge base necessary to sustain tech-focused industries.

The Houston region is one of the most important industrial bases in the world and ranks No. 2 in manufacturing GDP in the U.S. Houston also is home to the largest medical complex in the world, the Texas Medical Center, which provides clinical health care, research and education at its 58 institutions. Houston is the birthplace of nanotechnology and ranks as one of the top ten metro areas handling significant research and commercialization.

Additionally, the Houston area ranks 4th in the nation for Fortune 500 headquarters. Twenty companies on the 2017 Fortune 500 list are headquartered in the Houston metro area. Houston has a distinctly pro-business environment that stimulates rather than stifles business growth. ❖



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