



*...because
your move
matters!*



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***Keeping YOU in Focus
with Full Service***

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Sheila Dowell's “Home News”

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

Market Update

The word around every water fountain is the same: there are 10,000+ employees moving to our neighborhoods in the next 3 years! How does that impact the value of my home?

The 1st thing to remember is that there are many new developments that have been started recently nearby: Harpers Preserve @ 242/I-45 (1700 new homes), Woodforest @ 1488 and just north of Honea Egypt/FM2978 (5500 new homes), Harmony Development (2600 new homes) just off Rayford Road and, of course, Creekside/Timarron in The Woodlands (5000 homes).

One of the newest neighborhoods is Springwoods Village, a \$10 billion development by Coventry Corp out of Dallas, Texas. It is located adjacent to the new Exxon campus. Their first 3 builders were announced late last year. Taylor Morrison will build luxury single-family homes, Sullivan Brothers of Houston will develop townhomes and small single-family homes, and Houston-based Martin Fein will construct luxury apartments. (Note: Darling Homes was just acquired by Taylor Morrison-no word yet on whether they will be included.) Taylor Morrison will build the 22-acre Preserve District, which will feature 51 homes ranging in size from 3000-4800 square feet and starting at approximately \$400,000. Model homes will be ready by October 2013. Sullivan Brothers will build the 16-acre Harper Woods, a new-urbanist neighborhood with 90 homes. The community's goal is to make green transit by foot, bike and public transportation more feasible - especially for the Exxon employees that will work a few minutes away! Townhomes/Homes will start at \$295,000 and range in size from 1500-3000 square feet. Models will be available by September 2013. Martin Fein's 339-unit multifamily project will be called The Belvedere at Springwoods Village. Units will be ready by December 2013 and rental rates are expected to range from \$925-2300/month. Other home builders and multifamily developers will have a chance to build in future residential sections in Springwoods Village. Total expected homes: 4500-5000. WOW- That's almost 20,000 new homes in just those 5 developments!

We have had a reduced inventory of available homes in the past 2-3 years. I believe we will have more inventory beginning the end of this year and even more in 2014. New schools are being added to all of these neighborhoods...they have jogging trails, neighborhood pools and parks. New construction is always a factor in our resale markets-especially with our relocating corporate buyers. If they are in the Oil/Drilling business, they will probably move again in less than 5 years! Consider your own personal needs if you are contemplating a move in 2013. It's my 21st year of fulltime real estate - I'd love to help.

~ Sheila

28432 Meadow Forest, 5500+ sqft SINGLE STORY Custom home on a 1.21 acre GOLF COURSE lot in the upscale acreage community of High Meadow Ranch. 18 miles from The Woodlands, 10 miles from HP/249! Built in 2009. ML#191023339

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“Master Chef-in-Training”

Michael is Sheila’s husband of 30+ years. His hobbies include ballroom dancing (Still Dancing!), oil painting and gourmet cooking -especially baking.

I have been adding back some of my comfort foods lately: lasagna, chocolate chip cookies, and now bran muffins! I was reminded recently of how Sheila used to make them for us years ago when SHE was the Major Cook in our family! We went on a cruise out of Galveston in January. And, unlike our normal “vacation routine”, had breakfast in the restaurant every day. Warm, high-topped bran muffins were offered every morning. As soon as we got back, I began testing recipes-looking to replace what we included every morning. Here’s one of them that I liked - if you have a favorite, please send us the recipe!

Bran Muffins

- 1 cup bran
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 egg
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup molasses
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup flour (any kind will do-1 used a mix of whole wheat/white)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- optional: raisins, walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and either grease a 12-cup muffin tin or line with baking cups (always easier, I think). In a large bowl, combine the bran, buttermilk and baking soda. The baking soda should activate and begin to create bubbles through the mixture. While this is soaking, mix the egg, vegetable oil, molasses, honey and vanilla in another smaller bowl until smooth. Add this to the bran mixture and stir with a wooden spoon until thoroughly combined. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt (and raisins and walnuts, if using). Pour flour mixture over the bran mixture and stir until combined and no flour streaks remain, but make sure not to over mix. Scoop the batter into the prepared muffin tin, filling each cup about 3/4 full. Bake in preheated oven for about 20 to 25 minutes, or until the tops are deeply golden and the edges are beginning to brown. (Makes about a dozen.)

Note: These are not overly sweet, so if you want a sweeter more “treat” of a muffin you might want to increase the honey a bit. ❖



Thank You for Your Referrals and Personal Business!

To Nira Miller and Don Lott for believing in their Dream of owning their own Home in The Woodlands. After years of renting, Nira and Don decided to buy their 1st home. They had a 4 week old son and knew they wanted to put down “family roots” in The Woodlands.

To Pam and Michael Forde-again! I sold Pam and Michael’s home in Panther Creek in 2012. In January, 2013 they moved into their NEW Darling Patio Home in Woodforest. They can sit on their front porch and watch the golfers tee up!

To James and Veronica May-again! They moved into their beautiful home in The Woodlands and decided to rent the patio home they had been living in for a few years. It leased in 2 days!

To Jake and Keli Washburn, who bought the home they leased last year. This was such a smart purchase-no moving vans to schedule AND they got a great price!

To Kathy Kirby for entrusting me to sell her patio home in Legends Ranch. A relocating couple from Sugarland were excited about how beautifully maintained it was.

To Sean Connelly-I sold his home in the Spring of 2012-to the 1st couple who looked at it... now he’s a homeowner again-thanks!

2013: STILL A “SMART MARKET” FOR INVESTORS:

In the Houston Metropolitan Markets, investment properties are still a good way to diversify a retirement portfolio because:

1. We are having a “population explosion”. Many of people moving in have not lived in Texas or in Houston before. They want time to decide what neighborhood fits their Lifestyle and their Commuting Needs. In Montgomery County we are well aware of the population growth: we have increased over 50% in the last 10 years and are looking at several large relocations over the next 5 years. The rental market here are has been very tight in 2012!
2. Many of the Generation Y/Millennials (27-37 year olds) do not have home ownership at the top of their priority list. They’ve seen their parents struggle through several ups and downs in the real estate market and have seen in the short term some of them lose value in their homes. Companies cut back on hiring in the last 5 years, so looking for employment has lead to more moving around for this group - not conducive to homeownership.
3. Even with the softer real estate home market and the record low interest rates, getting a mortgage for the 1st time homebuyer has been difficult. Lenders are looking for rock solid income streams and substantial down payments-20% down is preferred. It takes years to save that amount of money.

If you decide to become an investor in residential single family homes, it is important to understand our market here. Property taxes are high. Even with the low investor mortgage rates (less than 5%!), we can expect very little cash return over and above our expenses. Vacancy factors, property management fees and repairs all contribute to this. So why should we invest in these? In a 10 year plan, much of your note will be paid for by someone else-the tenant! And, I believe we are in an appreciating market-equity build up is another good reason to invest now. One caution: be selective when choosing your rental investment...if you can, focus on schools and neighborhood amenities. Location, location, location is still the most critical element in a long term real estate investment. ❖

13 HOT HOME TRENDS FOR 2013

1. **Smarter, Less Costly Automated Controls:** With lives continuing to be busy and automation costs coming down, it's become more affordable to control a home's systems—temperature, security, electronics, lighting, and more—through a single device, even from an iPhone, iPad, or iPod. Doing so can eliminate multiple controls and make it easy for home owners to manage things around their home, even when they aren't there, says Jim Carroll, a founder of Savant Systems in Cape Cod, Mass., which designs and develops integrated automation solutions. "The average family has more than 80 different devices that can be controlled with one system," he says. Anna Lowder and husband Harvi Sahota are incorporating more of these systems in homes they build for their Mercer Home residential building company in Montgomery, Ala. One example is the Nest Intelligent Thermostat, which can be controlled remotely, react intuitively to home owners' habits, and adjust to conserve energy costs.

2. **Outdoor Living Rooms and Screened Porches:** A trend that began a few years ago continues to inspire home owners to think beyond terraces and decks. These spaces have more of the feeling and function of an indoor room—better furnishings, fire pits, curtains, and even televisions and audio systems. Further helping to blur lines between outdoor and indoor spaces is the rise of screened porches, which have gained more indoor accoutrements such as fireplaces, making them livable nearly year-round.

3. **Outdoor Kitchens, Vegetable Gardens, and More:** Interest continues in outdoor food preparation of all kinds—as simple as a grill and as elaborate as a built-in cook's station with sink, storage, beer tap, pizza oven, refrigerator, and countertops! Newer amenities include a hybrid grill that permits cooking with both gas and wood or charcoal and prefabricated kitchens that save funds, says landscape designer Michael Glassman in Sacramento, Calif. With a kitchen in place, many home owners move on to plant a vegetable garden nearby—starting with what home owners want to eat and cook—tomatoes, peppers, garlic, and herbs for gazpacho or spaghetti sauce—and learning through practice what thrives in an area's soil and climate.

4. **Themed Designs:** After years of stark contemporary design, themed decorating is making a comeback, according to Montclair, N.J.-based designer Blanche Garcia. "There are more home owners asking for a European flair, perhaps antique scones and velvet pillows," she says. And partly due to excitement from the recent royal wedding, British-style motifs continue to proliferate, including Union Jack flags, red phone booths, and hounds tooth, floral, and crown patterns, says Paul Berberian, creative director of Brewster Home Fashions, a wallpaper company in Randolph, Mass.

5. **Media Frenzy:** With more families remaining home for "staycations" rather than traveling, rooms are being devoted to TV and other multimedia entertainment with comfortable seating, tables, and good lighting. They're designed to have a more "home-y" feel than media rooms of the past, Garcia says.

6. **New Neutrals and Color Pops:** With much of the country still in the financial doldrums, neutrals remain more popular than vibrant hues, says Erika Woelfel, director of color marketing at Behr Paint in Santa Anna, Calif. Nevertheless, neutrals aren't the same whites, creams, and beiges, she says. "A blue-gray that works well with the range of popular blues and the purples they've replaced are making inroads; they offer a fresh background," she says. In contrast, bright new accents such as such as raspberry-pink may attract greater attention than a straightforward red. There's also a range of yellows, which complement blue-grays. And designer Ron Marvin of Ron Marvin Design in New York also sees a trend toward orange and purple accents. How long will these colors last? "Paint colors tend to move in cycles of five to 10 years and follow other home-décor categories, which in turn follow fashion," Woelfel says.

7. **More Double-Duty Furnishings:** With the building of many more smaller homes and the baby boomers trend of moving into patio homes and condos, more furniture and furnishings need to do double duty in smaller spaces. Expect to see ottomans used for seating and storage, couches that convert to beds, and coffee tables that can rise for dining.

8. **Lighter Looks:** Smaller homes and spaces call for scaled-back pieces and better illumination that makes rooms look larger. "I don't like overwhelming rooms," says Courtney Fohrman of Fohrman Interiors in Chicago. To achieve this, she suggests swapping out large bookshelves for wall-mounted shelves, opting for tailored furniture over clunky items, and welcoming natural light.

9. **Green Merchandise:** Interest in sustainable products and materials keeps attracting attention—particularly when it comes to choosing paints, adhesives, countertops, and flooring. "Most furniture companies and paint manufacturers have at least one item or line that fits the green movement," Garcia says. Large paint companies such as Benjamin Moore, Glidden, Kelly Moore, and Sherwin Williams offer zero-VOC or odor-free paints, according to Healthy Homes Plans, founded by Linda Mason Hunter, author of *The Healthy Home: An Attic to Basement Guide to Toxin-Free Living*. 10. **Energy and Water Efficiency:** Efforts to conserve energy and water throughout the home continue to be popular, including low-water toilets and sinks, better functioning furnaces, and improved insulation. In some areas, solar panels are more integrated into roofs so they're less of an eyesore. Gray recycled water can be used in toilets and to water gardens, while more drought-tolerant plants and replacements for impermeable hardscape allow greater water retention.

11. **Panelized Homes:** More factory-built homes help to cut building costs at the site by reducing the amount of labor time needed in the field. Besides cost savings, there's the ability to improve quality control, says Eric VanDerHeyden, executive vice president of RSI Development in Newport, Calif., which uses a variety of plans ranging from 1,232 square feet to 2,500 square feet. "It can cut the cost in half and construction time from a year to eight weeks," he says. ❖

Source: Consumer news

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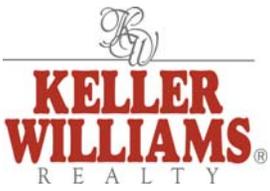
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