

# RMLS Market Action – December 2009 Recap

**Real estate activity in Oregon and SW Washington up in most RMLS areas**

In the December 2009 RMLS™ Market Action report, sales activity was up in most areas that we cover, compared to December 2008. Though this is a positive sign, it should be taken with a grain of salt, because last December brought record lows for pending and closed sales in many areas.

**Portland** saw a 52.6% increase in closed sales this month and a 40.9% increase in pending listings, while **Clark County** closed sales were up 48.1%, and pending sales rose 33.8%. **Baker County, Coos County, Curry County, Lane County, the Mid-Columbia region and Union County** also saw both closed and pending sales increase over last December.

**Sales volume down for the year in most areas**



Given lower sales totals and lower prices, this should come as no surprise, but total sales volume for the year fell in most areas in 2009. Portland dropped from \$6.3 billion in 2008 to \$5.5 billion this year. Lane County was down from \$740 million in 2008 to \$669 million in 2009.

Notable, however, is an increase in sales volume in Curry County – up to \$66 million this year from \$59 million in 2008. And Clark County matched its total sales volume of \$1.2 billion in 2008.

**Year-end stats, Clark County shines**

Clark County seems to be ahead of the pack when it comes to sales activity. For the year, pending sales were up 19.5% and

closed sales up 13.8% compared to 2008. That's far ahead of most areas; for example, in Portland, pending sales were up 4%, and closed sales were down 0.9%. Only Curry County outpaced Clark County in percentage of sales increase for 2009, with pending sales up 31.3% and closed sales up 23.7%.

However, the increase in sales has come at a price – Clark County saw the largest decrease (-12.6%) in median sale price for the 11 areas we cover.

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## **Distressed Property Update for Portland & Clark County**

**21.9% of listings distressed in PDX, 31.7% in Clark County**

The latest report from the Mortgage Bankers Association indicated that the rate of foreclosure for people with fixed rate loans and good credit is on the rise.

The AP reports that homeowners' inability to keep up with payments is now more due to unemployment, rather than the subprime loans that contributed to the initial increase in foreclosures.

A quick search on *RMLSweb* reveals that in the Portland Metro area, distressed properties currently make up 21.9% of active residential listings (this number takes into account listings that require third-party approval, as this typically indicates a short sale and those that are marked as bank-owned).



In Clark County, 31.7% of residential listings are

distressed.



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# June 2009 RMLS Market Action Shows Positive Activity in Several Areas in Oregon & Southern Washington

The latest issue of the RMLS™ Market Action for June 2009 shows increases in accepted offers, closed sales and a decrease in inventory in several regions.

## Accepted Offers

The five county Portland Metro Area saw a month-over-month increase in pending sales (8.4% comparing June 2009 with June 2008) for the first time since December 2006. Pending sales also increased for the third month in a row in Clark County, Washington. The following regions also saw an increase in pending listings in June 2009: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Lane, Mid-Columbia and Union.

## Closed Sales

Closed sales in Clark County increased 14.8% comparing June 2009 with June 2008. This is the first increase since September 2008.



The following regions also experienced increases in closed sales: Columbia Basin, Curry, Douglas and Mid-Columbia.

## **Inventory**

Inventory in all three of our largest service areas (Portland Metro, Clark County and Lane County) dipped to the lowest it's been since August 2007. In addition, the following counties experienced drops in inventory from the previous month: Columbia Basin, Coos, Curry and Douglas.

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# **Pending Sales Continue to Increase in Clark County**

One of the most interesting statistics I saw in the latest issues of Market Action was the increase of pending sales compared to May 2008 in Clark County. This was the second month in a row that the number of pending sales rivaled that of the same time period a year ago. This is good news! But what caught me by surprise was that the number of closed sales is still down from the same time a year ago.

So I started to wonder:

1) On average how long does it take for pending listings to show up as sold? According to the National Association of Realtors® pending home sales typically “become existing-home sales one-to-two months later.”

2) What percentage of accepted offers fail these days? Using a formula that I got from my new friend Chuck Reiling, a real estate professional in Seattle, WA, I took a stab at calculating the fallouts for properties in Clark County.

Following Chuck's formula I looked at the pending listings monthly from May 1, 2007 to May 31, 2009 and the closed sales from June 1, 2007 to May 31, 2009. Like Chuck I staggered the

pendings by one month to allow for a “typical” close time and I used a two month running average to adjust for variances.

Here’s a graph of the ratios:



The average pending vs. closed sale ratio is 17 percent. You’ll notice that the last few months have all been above that rate, with May 2009 coming in at 31.4 percent (the highest so far).

According to Eric Newman, a Mortgage Banker with Summit Mortgage Corp, these numbers may not actually reflect sale fails, but rather sale delays. Newman says that these days there are a number of factors that increase closing time, from waiting on bank approval when needed (approximate average of three weeks) to overwhelmed underwriters (current response time for FHA loans is around 21 days).

For example, I did a quick search in RMLSweb and discovered that out of the 552 properties that went pending in Clark County in April, approximately 117 were marked as requiring 3rd party approval (not all of these listings are short sales, but most of them are) and 122 were listed as bank owned. That’s almost half of the pending listings – 43 percent.

While it’s likely that a percentage of these more complicated transactions do fail, it also may be that these listings take longer to close so the typical one month lag may not apply. Newman says we would expect that most of those pending listings will probably not be recorded as closed until June because many loans are taking 45 to 60 days to close in the current market.

What do you think? What are you seeing out in the field?