

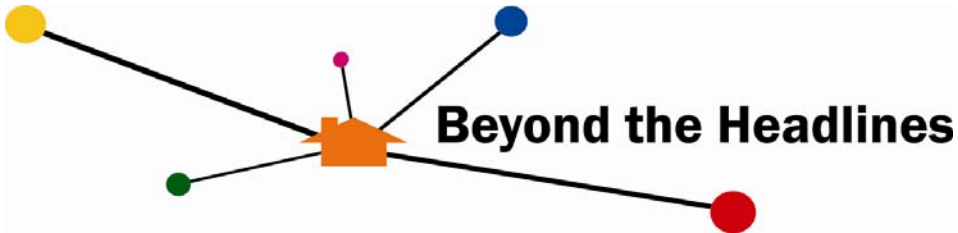
Don't miss the third annual Southern California Home Buyer's Fair

Thousands of potential home buyers are expected to converge the weekend of March 13 and March 14 at the Los Angeles Convention Center for the FREE third annual Southern California Home Buyer's Fair. The event is sponsored by the CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (C.A.R.) and the *Los Angeles Times*.

The Southern California Home Buyer's Fair, open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, March 13, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday, March 14, features more than [50 educational "how-to" seminars](#) designed to help home buyers navigate today's real estate market with confidence and peace of mind. Seminar topics range from understanding home prices and monitoring and fixing credit to applying for a mortgage and the importance of the home inspection. Several of the sessions also will be offered in Spanish.

The event is free to the public. In addition, the first 200 attendees each day will receive a free movie ticket (one ticket per person).

C.A.R. has created a [consumer fact sheet](#) about the event. Please visit <http://www.homebuyersfair.com/> for more information.



Reuters

Fewer homeowners see home values falling

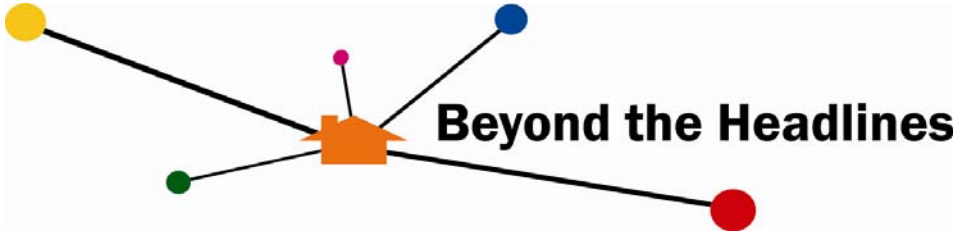
A recent report shows that one in five U.S. homeowners owed more on their mortgage than their home was worth in the fourth quarter; however, California's housing market is bucking the national trend and is telling a different story.

KEEP THIS IN MIND

- Although the report by Zillow.com claims that the percentage of American single-family homes with mortgages in negative equity rose in the fourth quarter, the report does not account for seasonal changes. The traditional home-buying season is April through August. Historically, this time period also is when median home prices rise. In September, median home prices generally show a declining trend, and remain steady from November through February. The change in the median home price noted by Zillow.com is a typical year-end seasonality adjustment in price.
- Unlike the national median home price, the month-over-month changes in California's median home price for 2009 were stronger than the long-run average. Low interest rates and tax incentives led to a rise in the demand for housing. As a result, housing inventory was constrained and created upward pressure on home prices.
- California's housing market has shown signs of stabilization since early last year. Sales of existing, single-family homes bottomed out in August 2007, and the median home price reached its trough in February 2009. In December, California's median home price was 25.1 percent above the low for the current cycle.
- In December, the median price of an existing, single-family home rose to \$306,820, an 8.4 percent rise year-over-year, the second consecutive year-over-year increase, and the 10th consecutive month-over-month increase, according to C.A.R.'s December sales and price report.
- Although home buyers should not focus solely on future home price appreciation, homeowners who purchase a median-priced house, live in their home for at least five years, and sell it at the then current median price, have averaged an annual rate of return of more than 11 percent, according to data collected by C.A.R. over the last 40 years.

To read the full story, please click here:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE61438O20100205>



In Other News...



The Wall Street Journal

Spec houses rise as builders bet on buyers before tax credit ends

Home builders are ramping up speculative construction to attract last-minute home buyers who want to tap a soon-to-expire tax credit.

To read the full story, please click here:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704820904575054922945714884.html?mod=WSJ_Real+Estate_RIGHTTopCarousel



The Mercury News

Homeowners rent out rooms to stave off foreclosure

Reeling from the recession's one-two-three punch of job woes, climbing mortgage payments, and evaporating equity, desperate Silicon Valley homeowners are dipping into a nearby income stream to avoid foreclosure: That bedroom just down the hall.

To read the full story, please click here:

http://www.mercurynews.com/business/cj_14360027



The Wall Street Journal

Builders start to look up

Fewer write-downs and new-home order cancellations along with improved order rates are some of the most positive signs from home builders since the housing market began to roll over four years ago.

To read the full story, please click here:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704533204575047813354806360.html?mod=WSJ_Real+Estate_LeftTopNews



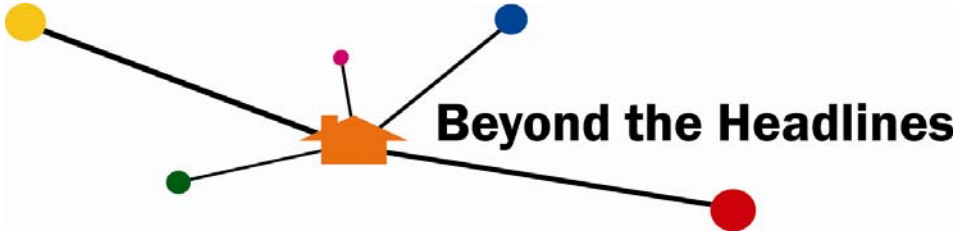
The New York Times

Loans for green homes

Borrowers looking to make energy upgrades in their homes that will lower utility bills, along with their environmental impact, may soon find additional options available to them.

To read the full story, please click here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/07/realestate/07mort.html?ref=realestate>



The Wall Street Journal

Pay borrowers to pay their mortgage?

How do you get borrowers to avoid walking away from homes that are deeply underwater without encouraging more to follow by writing down principal balances? One idea: Pay them to keep paying their mortgage.

To read the full story, please click here:

http://blogs.wsj.com/developments/2010/02/08/pay-borrowers-to-pay-their-mortgage/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+wsj%2Fdevelopments%2Ffeed+%28WSJ.com%3A+Developments+Blog%29&mod=WSJ_Real+Estate_BLOGSDEVELOPMENTSFEED



CNBC

Home loan demand drops despite dip in rates

U.S. mortgage applications dipped last week, reflecting reduced demand for home purchase loans even as rates on 30-year loans fell to their lowest since December, an industry group said Wednesday.

To read the full story, please click here:

<http://www.cnbc.com/id/35331784>



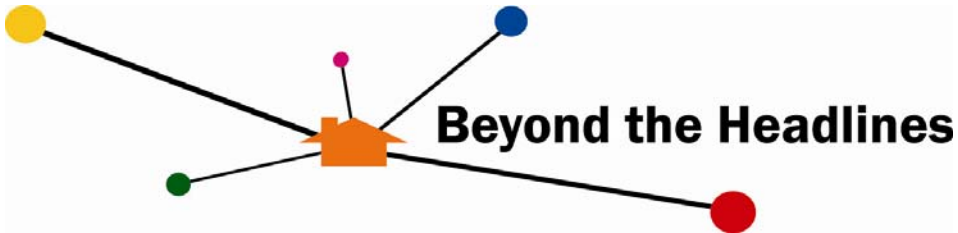
MSNBC

Report: 1 in 5 U.S. homeowners underwater

One of every five U.S. homeowners owed more on their mortgage than their home was worth in the fourth quarter, a trend that poses a serious threat to the U.S. housing market's recovery, real estate Web site Zillow.com said on Wednesday.

To read the full story, please click here:

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35335957/ns/business-real_estate/



What you should know about the market:

- One of the most important steps a home buyer can take when deciding which home to purchase is to conduct “drive bys” of the house and the neighborhood at various times of the day and on both weekdays and weekends. Taking the extra time to research the neighborhood will help determine if there is too much or too little social activity for the home buyer’s lifestyle; if there are barking dogs in the house next door; and if the home is located on a street with a lot of traffic during commute times.
- A study by *Remodeling* magazine found the average rate of return on value for an upgrade in a home declined from 87 percent in 2005 to 64 percent in 2009. Taking that into consideration, many real estate experts recommend homeowners remodel instead of adding on to their home. For example, having a large, formal living room and an everyday family room is less desirable than having one multi-use common space. So, rather than adding on, most homeowners are better served reconfiguring the existing floor plan or capturing unused basement or attic space.