



See No Evil, by Raymond Waites, High Point.

High demand, low rates contribute to 'crazy' real estate market

Insane. Crazy. Off the chain. That's how people in real estate are describing the Piedmont Triad market.

"It's unlike I've ever seen it, and I've been in the business 22 years," says Kathy Haines, a Realtor® with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Yost & Little.

Homes in good condition in desirable neighborhoods are selling quickly and bringing top dollar, agents say. It's not unusual for sellers to have a number of offers on the table within hours of a home being listed, and those offers typically are above the asking price.

"It's a seller's market, and it has been for quite some time," says Wendy Loftis, a Realtor with Keller Williams Realty.

Brokers say the last time the Piedmont Triad real estate market was this hot was ... never. Even during the good times leading up to the Great Recession, when the local real estate business was strong, the market wasn't this red hot. The supply of homes for sale was not this tight.

"Houses are selling the same day" they are listed, says Jay Brower, a Realtor with Allen Tate Real Estate. The first to view the home often becomes the buyer.

Brokers say one indicator of the



Realtor® Kathy Haines with a prospective buyer. Homes are selling rapidly, often for more than the asking price.

intense competition for houses is the amount of "due diligence" money that a buyer is willing to risk. It's money the interested party gives the seller to show commitment. If the deal falls through for any reason – even a termite infestation – the seller keeps the due diligence money.

A couple of years ago, Brower says, the interested party might lay down \$500 or \$1,000 in due diligence money on a typical home.

Nowadays, it's not uncommon to see \$5,000, \$10,000 or more offered as due diligence money "on a regular house," Brower says. "I'm not talking about million-dollar houses."

The local market started heating up in spring 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic set in. A combination of factors – including more people working from home and people scrambling to leave big cities for more livable towns – conspired to make available housing scarce. Attractive mortgage interest rates fueled the housing rush and continue to do so.

Another factor, brokers say, is that the pandemic caused many to hunker down in their current home and be conservative with their dollars. Ideas about moving to a new home were put on hold.

Uncertainty and a shortage of available land in Guilford County led new home construction to stall. The election season added even more caution.

Housing supplies shrank as demand rose. Gov. Cooper listed real estate companies as essential businesses, but Guilford County halted real estate transactions for a month last spring. That added more pressure.

When real estate sales resumed in mid-April 2020, the market exploded.

"I know it's totally crazy, but last year I had the best year I've ever had," Loftis says.

The market in Greensboro is similar to what's being reported in Raleigh, in Charlotte, and in communities around the nation. Housing demand is skyrocketing.

The tight supply of available homes affects sellers as well as buyers. Sellers must have a house to move into, or assurances of quickly getting a home, in order to put their house on the market.

Loftis says she has 10 homeowners who are prepared to list their homes for sale, but are holding off "because they don't have a house to go to."

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Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.



Chair yoga for seniors

Chipper Nuckles leads an online chair yoga class sponsored by Senior Resources of Guilford. The class is just one of many services offered to Guilford County's senior citizens by the agency. Senior Resources also coordinates Meals on Wheels, which provides hot, nutritious meals to seniors living at home. Story and photos, page 2.

Senior Resources depends on volunteers to help serve its Guilford County clientele

When the phone rings at Senior Resources of Guilford, it usually means someone needs help. Last year Guilford County residents called Senior Resources more than 6,000 times.

Sometimes the caller just needs guidance, such as where to find advice with filing income taxes.

Sometimes the caller is looking for ways to help an elderly loved one or neighbor stay independent and at home.

Maybe it's wintertime, and the caller needs help paying the heat bill. Maybe it's summertime, and the caller is looking for some sort of heat relief.

Whatever the topic, the staff and volunteers at Senior Resources are prepared to help find solutions.

"We provide services that promote and support independent living for

our older neighbors," says Ellen Whitlock, executive director.

Think of Senior Resources as the hub in an information and referral network of more than 400 resources, including other non-profit organizations and human



services agencies of all kinds.

Major businesses are part of the network as

well. Duke Energy, for instance, helps fund the program that provides fans to help people stay cool when the mercury spikes.

Senior Resources provides no financial assistance, Whitlock says, but connects callers with other community organizations that may be able to help.

More than 1,000 volunteers supplement the staff of 19 full-time and about 20 part-time employees.

"We could not do the work of serving more than 10,000 clients

a year without the support of our volunteers," Whitlock says.

Volunteers make possible one of Senior Resources best-known programs, Meals on Wheels. The program recently returned to delivering hot meals to hundreds of older citizens each

weekday. During the pandemic lockdown, the volunteer drivers delivered frozen meals once a week.

"We are incredibly grateful to those volunteers," Whitlock says, "and many are GMA members."

Senior Resources also runs seven community nutrition sites throughout the county where older citizens can enjoy a meal and take part in health and wellness activities.

Just being with others can be therapeutic. "It gets them out of the house, increases their socialization, and reduces isolation and depression," she says.

Senior Resources has been a GMA member for about 25 years. Dur-



Meals on Wheels volunteer Laura Miller (left) and Senior Resources Assistant Director Ashlyn Martin check a delivery.

ing baseball season, GMA turns its parking lot over to Senior Resources, which collects parking fees from fans. Funds raised "help provide nutritional support to older adults."

The agency takes advantage of GMA's free member benefits, such as Workplace Workshops, and networking. GMA membership led Senior Resources to its website designer, to professional advisors, and a person who now serves on the agency's board.

GMA, Whitlock says, has led to "some great contacts for us." Senior Resources of Guilford senior-resources-guilford.org 336-373-4816

Real estate

Continued from page 1

At one point in mid-May, there were about 248 homes for sale in all of Guilford County, says Mike Barr, CEO of the Greensboro Regional Realtors Association (GRRRA). Those 248 homes were enough to supply the market for less than 20 days.

In other words, if no other homes came on the market, the available inventory would sell out in a little over two weeks.

The average sale price of a local home in the first quarter of 2021

was up 13 percent over last year, or about \$270,000 vs. \$240,000 last year. That's according to Heather Dodson, GRRRA president and an agent with Keller Williams Realty.

"The competition is fierce right now," she says.

And it looks like this sellers market will be with us for a while.

"Economists expect this market to last for another two to three years," Dodson says.



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The Guilford Merchants Association is a nonprofit organization founded in 1906. The Association is a business membership organization focused on supporting member companies with educational programming, lead generation activities, marketing opportunities, and overall enrichment while serving as a catalyst for community growth and prosperity.

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There's more profit, less cost in growing relationships with your existing clients

BY ADRIENNE CREGAR JANDLER

One of the many trends we've seen with businesses shifting to working remotely is a greater number of companies adjusting their marketing to focus on new client (acquisition) offers and doubling down to make sure that they are staying visible to new clients in this more dispersed market.

However, with so many promotions and special offers out there, keeping existing clients happy, engaged with your business and knowing they are appreciated is especially important. This is where retention marketing comes in.



Jandler

Retention marketing focuses on maintaining and growing existing customer relationships; the result is a higher marketing return on investment through continued sales at a lower cost per sale.

In addition, retention marketing is easily done in-house, often through existing client communications and with your customer service team, keeping costs to a minimum.

Consider that the probability of selling to an existing client is 60 to 70 percent, while the probability of selling to a new prospect is only 5 to 20 percent.

Not only does retention marketing decrease your expenditure on acquisition of new clients, but you have a much greater opportunity to expand the products and services that you sell to clients already using (and happy with) your services.

How can these upsells and cross-sells impact the bottom line? According to Bain & Company, a 5 percent increase in customer retention can boost profits by 25 to 95 percent.

And don't overlook the fact that loyal customers don't just spend more, they also refer more.

A large part of retention marketing centers around maintaining regular communications with your clients, and providing support as

BUSINESS SUCCESS

well as offers that are specific to their needs. Most customer relationship management tools simplify maintaining client-specific details, and include the ability to directly send email with personalization, streamlining this effort.

Here are five ways you can increase client retention, using in-house resources:

- Ongoing customer training and education. Help clients maximize the benefits they receive from your products and services by educating them with webinars, self-service tools, a knowledge base, or videos for on-demand learning.
- Regularly scheduled communications (email newsletters, updates, user groups, Slack, etc.).
- Solicit their input and involve customers in development of new service offerings. If you conduct testing of new products, clients often enjoy participating.

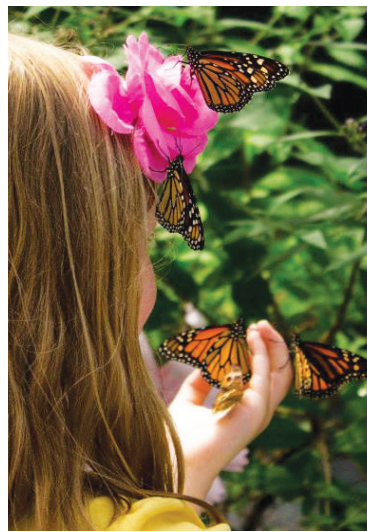
A 5 percent increase in customer retention can boost profits by 25 to 95 percent.
– *Bain & Company*

- Provide a feedback loop with surveys and periodic calls to check in.
- Formalize customer appreciation efforts with thank you notes, samples of new product, or occasional cards, client-only discounts, coupons or gifts.

While these may seem basic, many companies are so focused on gaining new business that these efforts are planned but not implemented, or may be done inconsistently. 2021 is a great time to refocus on expanding your relationships with existing clients.

Adrienne Cregar Jandler is president of Atlantic Webworks.
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PIEDMONT TRIAD PLACES



Photos © Bailey Blackburn

This High Point farm raises butterflies

The rolling Piedmont between N.C. 68 and Sandy Ridge Road once was dairy farm country. Now there's a different sort of agricultural enterprise here, one that raises monarch butterflies, not Holsteins.

Nora and Brandon Aker own All-A-Flutter Farms. In addition to raising monarchs and teaching others how to raise them, the farm grows milkweed (the host plant for monarchs) and nectar-producing plants for butterflies to feed on.

Hosting visits from school groups and family outings is a major source

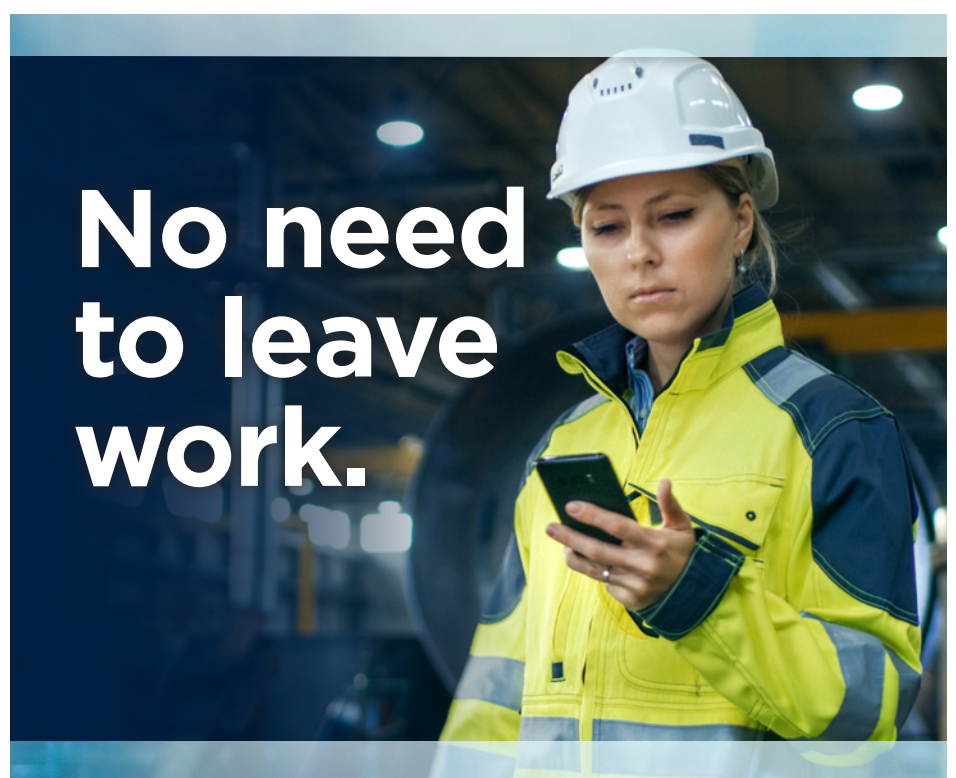
of revenue for the farm. The pandemic put a halt to those functions, making the operation more reliant on the sale of nectar-producing plants and Caterpillar Castle Life Cycle kits, which provide everything needed to raise monarchs.

The farm hopes to resume normal operations and welcome the public soon, Nora Aker says.



Photo by Donnie Roberts
Nora and Brandon Aker, owners.

All-A-Flutter Farms
7850 Clinard Farms Road, Lot B
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all-a-flutter.com



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Julie Howe is an account manager with McNeely Pest Control.

Networking, building relationships, solving problems are how she grows the business

Julie Howe is one of those GMA members who doesn't let temporary challenges throw her off her game.

Yes, the pandemic continues. And yes, she'd prefer fewer Zoom meetings. But in spring 2021, this is the business world we live in, so she makes the most of it.

She Zooms, she listens, she learns, she networks, and her focus has brought new customers to McNeely Pest Control, where she's an account manager.

"I give kudos to GMA, because they try to make Zoom meetings fun and as beneficial as they can," she says.

Howe, a member of GMA's BIZ-Links networking group, likes how GMA often sets up breakout rooms within a general Zoom meeting. "You get

PARTICIPATION = SUCCESS

to have some one-on-one time with two or three other people," Howe explains. "I have made some relationships there."

McNeely Pest Control serves homeowners, individual businesses, and corporate customers. Howe concentrates on companies that manage large facilities and multi-family housing.

Her territory is broad, ranging from Rockingham County in the north to Randolph and Chatham counties in the south.

In addition to controlling six-legged critters, McNeely's services include installing French drains, crawlspace improvements, and getting wildlife out of homes and offices and back

into nature. The company has five entomologists (bug experts) on staff as well as canines trained to sniff out bedbugs.

"That's another offering that's somewhat unique in the marketplace," she says.

In addition to GMA, Howe is active in a number of other leads organizations as well as the Piedmont Triad Apartment Association.

"It keeps me busy," she admits, "but all those relationships are very important."

"People do business with people they like and trust," she says. "That's a key component in any business relationship. If you can make it easier for them to get a problem solved, that's a win-win for everybody."

McNeely Pest Control
www.mcneelypest.com
336-292-4968

Virtual visits to healthcare providers show steep rise thanks to pandemic

BY BRIAN D. MILLER, M.D.

Virtual patient visits with healthcare providers have been available for years. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened awareness, resulting in exponential growth nationwide.

Virtual visits and e-visits have made it possible for patients to receive care without having to enter medical facility waiting rooms, where patients were concerned about being exposed to contagious COVID patients.

Not all patient concerns are appropriate for virtual care, but health issues simple or minor in nature are perfect for virtual interactions.

Through video and audio technology, the provider can see the patient, assess skin color, watch respirations, hear a cough, see a rash, or instruct a patient to move a body part – all just as if the provider and patient were in the same room.

For a virtual visit, simply log on from a laptop or smart phone to have all your minor illnesses treated and questions answered by a provider. You can get real-time advice and prescriptions

YOUR HEALTH

from home or your desk at work.

E-visits allow you to fill out a questionnaire for specific concerns and receive a written care plan with prescriptions as needed. Virtual visits allow video or audio-only conversations, giving the physician an opportunity to ask more detailed questions and conduct a physical examination via photos or video.

Cone Health offers e-visits or virtual visits with a board-certified, Cone Health-credentialed physician or advanced practice provider.

When the pandemic ends, virtual care will remain as a means for patients and companies to increase their access to care while reducing their healthcare costs.

Payors, employers, physicians, and patients are realizing the cost savings and convenience that telehealth affords.

Virtual care can positively impact productivity and is an excellent way to care for your employees.

Brian D. Miller, M.D., is medical director, Annie Penn Hospital and Virtual Care, Cone Health.



Miller



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Paintings in the living room have been in the home since it was first occupied by the Price family.



Michael and Eric Fuko-Rizzo.

The famous Julian Price House begins new phase as an inn

The new owners of one of Greensboro's most storied houses are writing their own chapter.

Hillside, that imposing English Tudor home on Fisher Park circle, is now the Julian Price House Inn.

Since purchasing the 1929 mansion out of foreclosure in 2016, owners Michael and Eric Fuko-Rizzo have restored and refurbished the property in a manner that honors the home's heritage while making it inviting and cozy for 21st century guests. And yes, the 10,000-square-foot house (including the full basement) is remarkably cozy.

The couple, who had previously purchased, refurbished and sold a series of houses in Greensboro, bought the home with the intention of living in it.

That notion, says Michael, "quickly blew out the window when we realized the size and scope of the property." Translation: It was a lot to manage and take care of, what with a 1.5 acre lot, the

NEW MEMBER PROFILE

original steam heat system (now replaced), and construction materials from roof to floorboards that simply can't be found at your local DIY store.

Some background: Julian Price, president of Jefferson Standard Life, hired New York architect to design his new home in 1928. The family moved in a year later. After Price died in an auto accident in 1946, family members remained in the home for about a decade.

Hillside then was given to First Presbyterian Church, and it became the manse for the congregation's senior minister.

The expense of upkeep, Michael says, led the church to sell the home in the 1970s to interior designer Sandra Cowart. Hillside remained her home for 41 years.

The next chapter in the home's story, which involved a TV crew from the show "Hoarders" filming the removal of the contents of Hillside, made the house famous internationally.

But the greatest interest



The master bedroom suite on the second floor, overlooking Fisher Park.

remains local. In 2018 Hillside was the show house for a Preservation Greensboro fund-raiser. Some 9,000 persons paid to tour the home and admire the handiwork of top interior.

"After realizing how many people appreciated the home, it seemed kind of like a crime to close it back off again, to make it a private residence," Eric says. "It made more sense to somehow open this home to the public."

The owners joined GMA on the recommendation of one of their vendors. They say they look forward to developing more relationships with GMA members and contributing to the business community.

Roughly half the home is dedicated to the inn, whose five bedrooms can sleep nine.

The couple have the other half, including the main kitchen and former servant's quarters, for themselves and their twin 6-year-old daughters.

They market the inn as part of a walkable neighborhood, featuring restaurants, a brewpub, and lush Fisher Park itself.

Guests seem to approve.

"We've never had a single complaint," Michael says. He thinks Julian Price would approve of how the house is being positioned and preserved for its next hundred years.

"This is probably how he would want to see it," Michael says. "He put a lot of work into developing this."

Julian Price House Inn
(336) 510-0519
julianpricehouseinn.com



The Julian Price House Inn has five bedrooms and can accommodate nine guests overnight.



Corporal Eric Early, Sergeant Mike Overman, and Corporal Ryan Coggins sing the national anthem.



Rookie of the Year Officer Brooke Villasante.

2021 Police & Citizens Awards go virtual

GMA recognizes exemplary police officers each year during National Police Officers Week with a banquet and awards ceremony. This year, the Police & Citizens Awards were presented during a virtual event on May 13, thanks to the pandemic.



Greensboro Police Chief Brian James.



Purple Heart and Medal of Honor recipient Officer Travis Hopkins.

MEMBERS SHARE

What has been a blessing or positive outcome (personal or professional) during the past year?

Answers from members of the Competitive Advantage Networking (CAN) group, a GMA membership networking group.



'The biggest blessing for me was getting my dog on March 1, 2020, shortly before the pandemic began. He has been great company for me, keeping my spirits up when we were all forced to spend more time at home - and I had the time to train him!'

*Jan McDiarmid
Cruise Planners*



'I discovered running because the gym closed, and I needed to do something! I did some virtual races and along the way made a new friend, who is now my BRF (best running friend)!'

*Cheryl Bice
StitchFX*



'I got married, my husband and I bought our first home, and we added a new family member, a golden retriever puppy named Maple. Through all the craziness that came with 2020 and into 2021, it was awesome to have my family, friends, and co-workers there to support me every step of the way.'

*Chloe Wooten
TRC Staffing Services, Inc.*



'Our business grew during the pandemic. Pet ownership increased, and we have seen an increase in pet parents wishing to give good care to the pets that carried them through this past year. Our curbside and local delivery service has grown tremendously and is here to stay!'

*Alison Schwartz
All Pets Considered*



“Anthem,” by Ogden Deal, Greensboro.

Take a moment – slow down and enjoy the sculpture all around us

You don't have to go inside a museum or gallery to enjoy sculpture in Greensboro and High Point. It's all around us, in public places and accessible to anyone. These are just a few examples of public art in our community, available to all.



“Family,” by Charles B. Foster, High Point.



“Chalice,” by Roig, High Point.



“Machine #1,” by Charles Ross, High Point.



“Planet Earth,” a project by Sidney and Ricki Gray, Tony Forrest and Erik Beerbower, Greensboro.



GMA staff welcomed members to the Noontime Network May 14 at Hilton Garden Inn. It was the first in-person networking event since the pandemic shutdown began. From left are Mark Prince, Monzi Jimenez, Michelle Bolick, Sharon Smith, and Holly Smith.



Sue Falcone of Remarkable! A Speakers Bureau, and Dick O'Donnell of Man in Green, Inc.

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