

Market steadying for buyers, sellers of homes: agent

BY CASSANDRA KYLE, THE STARPHOENIX JANUARY 8, 2010



Norm Fisher of Royal LePage does not see a big impact from a late 2009 rise in prices

Photograph by: Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix, The StarPhoenix

An increase in house prices in the Saskatoon region in the fourth quarter of 2009 is not so "spectacular" that residents should be concerned about buying or selling homes, local real estate agent Norm Fisher said Thursday.

A Royal LePage survey shows prices for homes in the area rose between three and six per cent during the last three months of 2009 compared to the same period of 2008. Fisher, sales manager for Royal LePage Saskatoon Real Estate, said the price growth is slight when considered in the proper context.

"I think if you look at the big picture, a three per cent rise in prices is not that spectacular; however, given the economic conditions across the country, I suppose it is more than we might have expected," Fisher said.

Data from the survey indicates standard condominiums in the city sold for an average of \$197,500 in the fourth quarter last year, a 5.9 per cent increase from the same period in 2008.

Detached bungalows, meanwhile, sold for an average price of \$310,500, a 3.5 per cent increase over the fourth quarter of 2008, while a standard two-storey home sold for an average price of \$338,750, a three per cent increase over the fourth quarter last year.

"It's not that we've had such an amazing year of price growth, it's a combination of a little bit of growth and sort of a fairly bleak picture in Q4 of 2008," Fisher said of the results.

The company's forecast of a strong market through the first half of 2010 also applies to Saskatoon, he said.

Buyers, he said, will be looking to take advantage of low interest rates and longer mortgage amortization periods prior to the mid-point of the year when the federal government is expected to increase rates and decrease the repayment timeline.

"We could see a spurt of activity in anticipation of those things," he said.

Still, Fisher expects the steadying of the regional market to continue during the coming months.

"Unit sales are healthy, sellers can market a property successfully within a reasonable period of time, but they're not running away with bags of money -- buyers still have time to make good decisions," he said.

The Royal LePage report shows prices for homes sold in Regina in the fourth quarter of 2009 rose 5.7 per cent to \$259,000 for standard two-storey homes and increased seven per cent to \$185,000 for standard condominiums compared to the same period in 2008.

Prices dropped 0.4 per cent to \$273,000 for detached bungalows in Regina during the last months of 2009.

ckyle@sp.canwest.com

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