

Gabe's April 2013



HOUSECALLS

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Kitchens are so big, they need kitchens



Gabe Sanders

The newest additions to the big, comfy kitchens are kitchens.

Seems people like huge kitchens with fireplaces, comfy chairs and lots of family gathering and eating places, but they don't always like cooking smells. So architects are building Wok Kitchens, which is a cooking kitchen off the comfy room also called a kitchen.

Didn't that arrangement used to be called the living room and kitchen?

Whatever you call it, the room with the refrigerator has begun to take over the house. The floor area of the average kitchen increased by about 50 percent from 1973 to 2007. In 1973 and earlier, kitchens were small and closed so that cooking

smells were not a problem. By 2007, the kitchen was the major living area taking more than 12 percent of the overall space in the home. Kitchens have grown to an average of 303 feet. Of course, high end homes kitchens can be 800 feet or even 1,400 feet, according to the American Institutes of Architects Home Design Trends Survey.

All that casual kitchen space is great for entertaining, but when dinner is finished you either have to stack dirty dishes on the counter or get up and load the dishwasher.

Enter the Dirty Kitchen where you take the dirty dishes and, optionally, cook. Now, if you just moved the fridge into the dirty kitchen, couldn't you call the comfy kitchen a living room?

Daffodils aren't the only things that grow in spring. So do home sales.

If you start to notice For Sale signs cropping up and moving vans in the neighborhood, you know it must be spring.

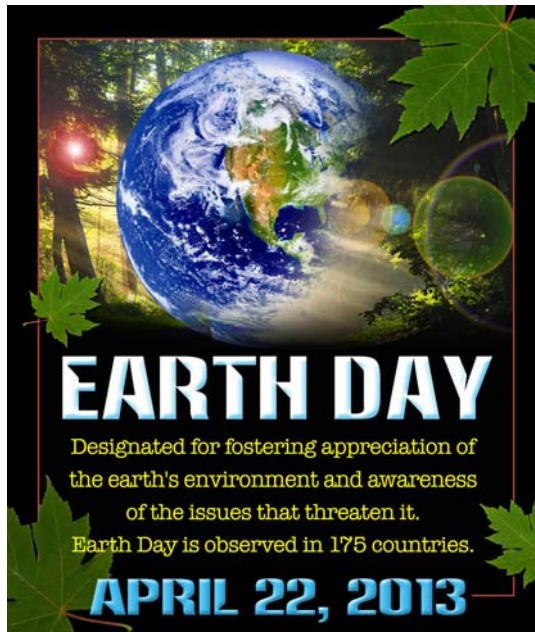
About 40 percent of home sales will be taking place from now to June, when the spring season gets people motivated to find a house, move and settle in before fall.

Spring is a good time to shop for a house, since there are typically more homes on the market and a lot more to look at. Sellers want to catch the spring sales wave, too.

This year, it remains a good year to buy says emeritus economics professor Karl Case of Wellesley College.

"It's certainly the best time in five years to buy," Case told Boston.com. "Interest rates are really low. Prices have come down a long way."

Meanwhile sellers will be happy to know it's a better time to sell. Average selling prices rose 8.3 percent in December compared to a year earlier, according to a report by CoreLogic, the housing-data firm. This is the largest gain since



May 2006.

Though sellers aren't getting the prices they would have asked before 2006, they are getting substantially more than last year or the year before.

Everyone is a bargain shopper these days looking for good deals on bank-

owned or foreclosure properties.

But foreclosure properties were down nationally 7 percent December to January 2013 and that means fewer new bargains are on the table. In California, new legislation brought default notices down 77 percent in January. This drop means that California buyers will find fewer homes to choose from. That could drive prices up.

If you are thinking of selling your house and moving to a place in the sun, there are still bargain properties available in states like Florida, Nevada and Arizona, states that continue to have higher foreclosure rates than the national average.

In any case, here's the overall outlook for spring:

Experts say the numbers suggest buyers might be seeing fewer homes on the market and that might mean higher prices. However, with home prices slipping and sliding with the spring rain, don't expect a dramatic market turnaround any time soon. Meanwhile sellers should be able to find a buyer, but they must be realistic about pricing.

Ask the Expert



The seller of a home we like says assuming his mortgage would be a good deal for us.

Would it?

Maybe. We can surely examine the deal. But with interest rates so low, don't get your hopes too high.

"Assuming a mortgage" means that the buyer takes over mortgage at the existing interest rate and repayment period.

This can be a great option if the mortgage has an interest rate well below the market. For example if the current market interest rate is 6 percent and the mortgage you want to assume is 4 percent, it's a good deal.

But, today, interest rates are very low and rates are generally better than they have been in years. Older mortgages are likely to have higher rates than loans you can take now.

Another consideration should be the seller's equity. The seller will want to be paid for the value he already has in the property. A buyer must come up with a mortgage buyout payment that will give the seller money for that value (or equity). That can't be part of the mortgage assumption, so it will have

6 Ways to Be a Good Neighbor

Developing relationships with your neighbors can make your life easier and your community safer—and maybe even result in lasting friendships. The good news is that it's easy to extend acts of courtesy to those who live close by.

1. Welcome new people to the neighborhood by stopping by and introducing yourself. Baking cookies is a traditional way to extend a warm welcome, but you can also bring them recommendations for local services, such as babysitters or landscapers; a children's activity kit filled with coloring books, crayons and games; or a list of important local phone numbers.



2. Little gestures can go a long way. Offer to collect your neighbor's mail, water their plants or feed their pet while they're on vacation. If that's too much of a commitment, you might offer to keep an eye out on their house while they're away.

3. Keep up your house and yard. This will help

maintain property values while keeping the neighborhood as a whole looking its best. Mow your grass regularly, trim your shrubs as needed and make facade repairs in a timely manner.

4. If you live in a condo or townhouse, think twice before plugging in noisy appliances near your neighbor's walls. A television, a hair dryer or even the beep of a microwave might be a little white noise for you but an annoyance for your neighbors.

5. Whether or not you're head of your community watch

program, there are always chances to help out. Keep your neighbors informed of relevant news, such as upcoming construction or recent crime. Extra eyes and ears are always welcomed.

6. If a neighbor lends you something, whether it's a tool or their time, return the gesture quickly. It's easy to move along with your project and forget they've done you a favor, so be sure to show your appreciation in a timely manner - your gratitude won't be overlooked.

to be paid in cash or with still another loan.

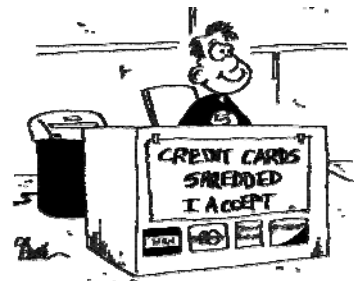
Remember, too, when you assume a mortgage, you don't assume the seller's credit rating. You still have to apply for the loan and meet all the lender's requirements. You'll find conventional lenders don't allow assumable mortgages.

You can still assume an FHA or VA loan (in most cases) but as the buyer you have to meet income and credit requirements.

One thing you must do before assuming such a loan is to make sure the loan is not delinquent. Any delinquent payments become YOUR delinquent payments if you assume the loan. You'll have to apply for a loan modification if you don't have the cash to pay up the delinquencies.

An FHA or VA loan actually can be assumed without the property being sold. This arrangement leaves the seller with

a huge amount of liability. In some cases the seller could end up owing on the loan, but not owning the property.



These new technologies make driving easier

If you haven't shopped for a new car in the last few years, and many people haven't, you'll be pleasantly surprised at what technology has brought for you.

* The air bag in a seat belt. The new, stronger shoulder straps in some cars have built-in air bags. Ford Motor Co. started offering them on its 2011 Ford Explorers. Conventional seat belts save lives but can cause serious injuries in violent crashes. Inflatable belts reduce the risk.



* See in the dark and avoid hitting a pedestrian. BMW AG is launching "dynamic spotlight" technology that uses an infrared camera mounted behind the grille. The software can pick out the outline of a person or animal and signal the car's headlight to illuminate them and prevent a collision. It also has an in-cabin alert that projects an icon representing a person on the

dashboard screen.

* Design your own dashboard. Some auto makers are ditching the dials in favor of a programmable screen that can display more information and allows drivers to personalize the look of the cockpit displays. The new Lexus IS F-sport, due out in June, is the first to have them.

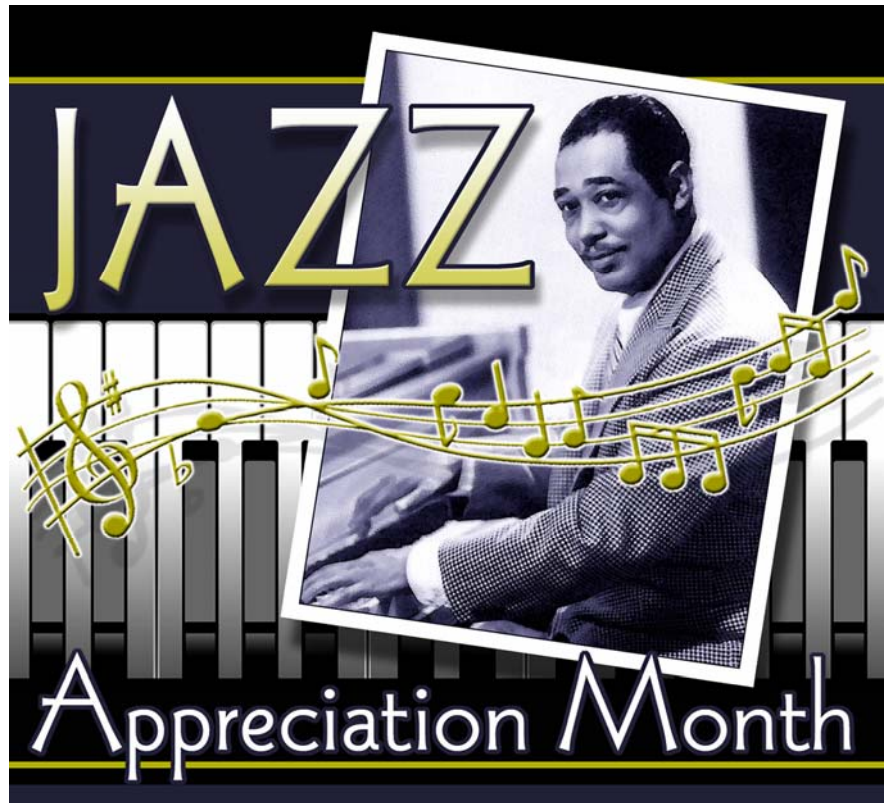
* Use the ninth gear for fuel efficiency. Chrysler says it will introduce a nine-speed gearbox designed to fit into a small front-wheel drive car. A German device maker says it can improve fuel economy by 10 percent to 16 percent compared with a six-speed automatic.

* Drive by computer. Experts at The Wall Street Journal say steering a car traditionally involves a series of mechanical connections that allow the wheel in your hands to guide the four wheels on the road.

Infinity's new Q50 series, by Nissan, boasts the industry's first steer-by-wire system, swapping mechanical elements for an all-electronic system that responds faster.

Roads becoming a junkyard?

According to a study by leading automotive market intelligence firm Polk, in January 2013, the average age of cars and trucks in operation in the United States was 10.8 years and rising. Trucks and SUVs have experienced a faster aging rate than passenger cars. A lot of people need a new vehicle, one reason auto sales are predicted to rise a half million to 15 million.



And then the cats invented jazz...

In the beginning the earth was void and without jazz.

And then there was Duke Ellington.

All the elements of jazz were here in 1899 when Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington was born in a middle-class African-American neighborhood in Washington, D.C. The sexy and melancholy blues were here with roots in gospel. There was sassy ragtime. And all the classical compositions of the European kings were here.

But it took the elegant Ellington to take them all and mix them up and the result was what some people called Jazz, but what Duke Ellington called American Music.

A pianist by age 7, a band leader by age 24, a worldwide sensation in radio, film and concerts by age 31, it's not surprising that by the time the Duke died in 1974, it would take a museum to hold his work, specifically the legendary Smithsonian Museum. That great institution of America

culture since 1988 has held his memorabilia and thousands of manuscripts of compositions.

Though it would no doubt draw the wrath of his fans to single out a list of compositions as his best, people who aren't familiar with Ellington have the advantage of iTunes and YouTube to get a taste of what the great one imagined:

* *Mood Indigo* (1930; Ellington, Bigard) -- Known for its sweeping introduction that mixed sections of the band. You'll hear a trumpet, trombone and clarinet (by Barney Bigard) join voices at the beginning -- an innovation. (NPR Top 100)

* *Take the A Train* (1938; Stayhorn, Ellington) -- Jazz standard.

* *Second Sacred Concert* (1940s; various) -- Check out Ellington's jazz sacred music: The awesome tune Supreme Being; The Shepherd; and Something About Believing.

Every year April is the month for Jazz appreciation at the Smithsonian. You'll find current and legendary mu-



Our Featured Listings

For those desiring the ultimate in privacy yet having close access to all the amenities Martin County has to offer, this is your future. Located on 4 plus acres of deep waterfront (320') on the South Fork of the Saint Lucie River. Custom designed and built to the highest standards. Currently configured with 4 Br, 2 Offices, Theater Room, Work rooms, 4 & 1/2 Baths and attached 5 car gar. Impact Glass throughout, with a great room concept featuring 42' Pecky cypress ceilings. Commercial grade kitchen with multiple cooking surfaces, both gas and electric, numerous ovens, commercial refrigerators, dishwashers, etc (see attached feature list). Master wing features dual offices and his and her bathrooms. Detached 1 Br. 1 Ba. updated guest home.

\$2,600,000

[Click here for more info.](#)

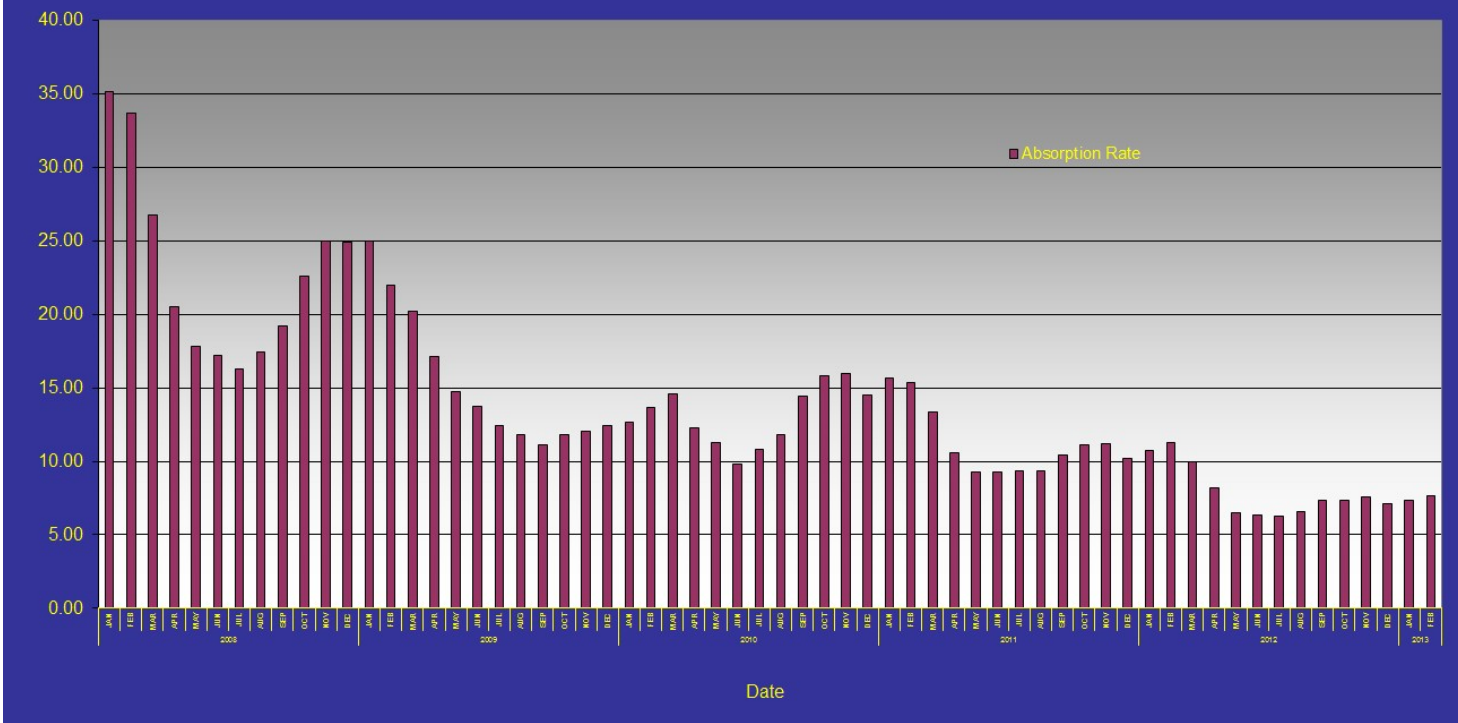


Deep waterfront home with dock and a 7,000 lb. lift just seconds from the wide waters of the Saint Lucie River. Immaculately maintained 3 BR, 2 BA home with an attached 1 BR, 1 BA apartment with full kitchen (2000) accessible from both inside the home or through private entrance. Perfect for the extended family or customize to make it your own. Private patio and lanai. Pool with salt water filtration, newer metal roof (2005), 140 MPH windows (2005), kitchen with granite counters and S/S appliances including a 5 burner Bosch gas stove, Thermador convection oven and Bosch Dishwasher. Optimal outdoor space with a spacious patio, tiki hut and garden overlooking the wide deep water canal. Numerous other updates throughout this well maintained home.

Offered for \$550,000

[Click here for more info.](#)

Martin County Residential Absorption Rate
(3 Mo. Average)



View the complete set of Martin County graphs at: www.TreasureCoastFLHomes.com



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