

HOUSECALLS

THE GABE SANDERS' BLUEWATER REALTY TEAM'S MAY 2016 NEWSLETTER



Gabe Sanders

For the fireplace, fire dogs abound

You can get plenty fancy -- or at least expensive -- buying andirons (or fire dogs) to hold up the logs in your fireplace. BC displayed at Santorini, Greece.

A fantastic variety are available for prices ranging from few bucks to many thousands of dollars.

Pricey

For \$40,000, there are unique brass and wrought iron Jean Royere Rare "Boule" Andirons from 1stdibs.com. They look kind of like two Xs with brass globes.

Priceless:

A pair of terracotta fire dogs from 17th century

Nice Price:

Wrought iron Stacked Ring Fireplace Andirons. They cost \$59 a pair at westelm.com.

For the full andiron experience, Google it or search Pinterest. Like so many things you never saw in one place until the Internet, andirons come in a spectacular variety: Dutch kids, hounds, dogs, horses, giraffes, cats, owls, geese, George Washington, ships and other designs that are twisty, cubic, French, and mystifying.

Small or tiny? Starter homes bloom

In a world where things seem complicated, the romance of a tiny home is a new lifestyle trend, but, ironically, not without its complications.

Smaller homes generally are selling well throughout the country, especially since first-time buyers have returned to the housing market.

But the tiny house movement is different. These homes, which are usually no more than 350 to 500 square feet, appeal to people who want to save money on housing, live simply, or lessen their footprint on the earth.

According to tinyhousecommunity.com, you can buy plans and materials for a DIY tiny home for about \$35,000 or a finished tiny home for about \$75,000.

In areas with high rent and housing costs, this might seem an inexpensive choice, but there are issues with living tiny.

To begin with, a tiny home has to be either on a foundation or on wheels.

Zoning and city building codes can be an impediment to building a tiny home on a foundation near a city even if the tiny home is stick built. Minimum size and lot requirements are common. In addition, cities often insist that the home hook up to city services, sometimes raising the cost to \$17,000.

Meanwhile a tiny house on wheels has different prob-

lems. Many jurisdictions consider it to be a Recreational Vehicle. This means owners are often limited to a bivouac in RV parks, probably not in a preferred neighborhood and sometimes not year-round. Also these parks add a lot rent.

Private citizens often advertise parking for tiny home with lot rents from \$300 to \$750 per month.

One tiny house blogger had an entirely unique experience, though. After a frustrating 2.5 years of building and detailing his tiny home, he had spent about \$40,000 on plans and materials. He then bought a small lot in the country for his home on wheels. One day, he came home to find the tiny house gone. A group of drug addicts actually dragged the tiny house away. He did get the house back but his wife's taste for tiny living was gone.

Read more at caseyfriday.com.

Small instead of tiny

A few builders, like D.R. Horton, are building starter homes. They say the entry level is the strongest market right now, and any time they see that they expect further competition.

These starter homes in secure communities run about \$128,000 for 1,560 square feet.

In 2015, the average home size rose to 2,720 square feet, according to the National Association of Home Builders. That was up from 2,660 square feet in 2014.



Claudine Porikos Group One Mortgage



3 ways to tame student loan debt

Student loans can make buying a home a challenge because they can be included in the buyer's debt-to-income ratio, or DTI, the percentage of monthly income that is spent on payments for mortgages, loans, and minimum credit card payments.

This ratio is one factor lenders use to decide whether a buyer can afford a mortgage. They prefer a DTI ratio of 36 percent, but sometimes make allowances. The house payment is an important part of DTI, affected by the home's price, taxes and interest.

Whether student loans are included in DTI depends on the type of loan. For a conventional mortgage or VA loan, student loans will be included even if the payments have been deferred.

If you apply for an FHA loan, student loans will not be included if the payments have been deferred for at least 12 months.

The best plan to get started in a home if you have student loan debt is to have less debt, make more money, or move debt around, according to housing writer Marcie Geffner.

Don't get a car loan if you want a house. Settle for a used car that you can pay cash for. Pay off installment debt and don't use credit cards. Some

Study: Little Chance Florida Home Prices Will Drop

The likelihood of home price declines across the United States over the next two years remains low at 5 percent, according to Spring 2016 Housing and Mortgage Market Review published by Arch Mortgage Insurance Company (Arch MI). For most of Florida, the risk is even lower.

The report by Arch MI attempts to gauge the likelihood that home prices will be lower in two years based on recent economic and housing market data. Despite the low overall risk of home price declines, however, some areas in the "Energy Patch" states (coal-, oil- or natural gas-producing) remain at heightened risk. While home prices probably won't decline even there, they may experience slower than normal economic and home price growth, according to Arch.

Statewide, Florida's risk of a price decline over the next two years is only 2 percent in

24 Florida counties, including Miami-Dade and Broward. And the likelihood in a handful of other places, such as Palm Beach County, is only 3 percent.

"Apart from a subset of energy extraction states, home prices should rise faster than inflation thanks to strong fundamentals," says

Dr. Ralph G. De-Franco, Arch MI's Chief Economist. "Positives include strong affordability, home prices generally below their historical relationship with incomes, U.S. job growth of more than 2 million jobs a year, and a low levels of construction relative to growing demand."

On a state level, Alaska, North Dakota, Wyoming and West Virginia currently have the highest risk of home prices declines. Total employment continues to weaken in those states, even as home prices continue to rise.

Florida's Housing Market



lenders will remove an installment payment if the loan will be paid off within 10 or fewer payments.

An option that may be open to some is to pay off all or part of a student loan with a private loan from family.

Married buyers may be able to move their debt around if they don't live in a community property state. They could refinance an existing auto loan and put it in the name of the spouse.

You can also increase income. Generally, income must be documented for two years to be included in DTI. But a buyer's college history can make up almost all of that two-year time frame. A new job isn't necessarily a negative, especially if it comes with a higher salary. You must have 30 days of pay stubs.



Research leading to a vaccine?

Zika virus is tied to a neurological disorder

Zika virus is a disease that is spread by a virus to people, primarily through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito, but also by sexual intercourse with an infected person.

The most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild, so people don't go to the hospital. Many people don't realize they are infected.

In May 2015, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) issued an alert regarding the first confirmed Zika virus infection in Brazil. On February 1, 2016, the World Health Organization declared Zika to be a public health emergency of international concern.

At this point, most of the diagnosed cases in the U.S. are among women who traveled to South America.

The virus can be spread from a pregnant woman to her fetus and has been linked to



a serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly. Infected babies have undersized heads and reduced mental capabilities.

The CDC recommends that pregnant women delay travel to areas with Zika until after their child is born.

It's tied to another disease

Evidence that the Zika virus can cause a paralyzing neurological disorder is grow-

ing. Research published in The Lancet confirmed a link between Zika and Guillain-Barre syndrome, a neurological disorder in which the immune system attacks the nervous system. It causes temporary but sometimes severe paralysis. Brazil, Colombia and El Salvador have reported increases in cases of the disorder.

The hunt is on for a vaccine

Some 15 pharmaceutical companies are working intensely to develop Zika vaccines. Sanofi, SA, Inovio Pharmaceuticals and NewLink Genetics are among them.

The U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and BharatBiotech International are farther along than others.

Scientists quoted in The Wall Street Journal feel confident that they will be able to shorten normal development and testing timelines, which could take a decade or more.

No place to dig a garden?

Grow edibles porch or balcony

Lots of dwarf vegetable varieties are available today for container gardening on your porch, or even balcony.

Start with big containers. The greatest challenge of container vegetable growing is watering, since soil dries out faster in pots than in the ground. A larger volume of soil won't dry out as fast, but be sure that any container has holes so excess water can drain away.

Self-watering containers have a reservoir beneath the soil topped with a grid through which the roots can reach down to the water. With these containers you won't have to water as often, but you still have to fill the reservoir daily.

Spread mulch over the soil in pots just as you would in a garden.

Herbs are easy to grow, especially if you begin with transplants. They add a fresh-grown taste to almost any meal, but remember that all herbs need full sun. Some, such as rosemary, prefer dryer soil and fewer nutrients.

With pots, you may be able to finesse a sun shortage. Place a wheeled pot trolley (available in garden centers) under a large pot and move it to follow the sun.

Baby greens, such as lettuce and spinach, are simple to grow. Sow seeds right in the pot. They take a week to sprout, but then will quickly reach a harvest size of three to four inches.

Grow dwarf varieties of tomatoes that only grow to a certain size and bear all their fruit in a few weeks.

Buy transplants rather than trying to start them from seed. You need a large container, at least the size of a five-gallon bucket. Self-watering containers are wise because they even out the water and fertilizer supply and deter cracking, but you still will need to water frequently in summer. Provide a cage for all but the most dwarf determinate tomato varieties.



How big is the solar system compared to, say, a soccer field?

Former NASA scientist Mark Rober was amazed by recent news that an unseen ninth planet is orbiting the sun.

The planet can only be inferred to exist from mathematical evidence. But, scientists say, it's there, orbiting the sun every 15,000 years or so.

This inspired Rober to demonstrate just how far away the ninth planet would be. So he went to a soccer field.

On the first yard line of the soccer field, he placed a soccer ball. That was to be the scale of our sun.

On the 10th yard line, he placed a fleck of pepper. That's mercury.

19th yard line: Venus, the size of a round pin head.

26th yard line: Earth, the size of a pinhead, orbited by a grain of salt (the moon).

40th yard line: Mars, a fleck of pepper.

135 yards away from the sun and out of the soccer field:

Jupiter, a grape.

2.5 soccer fields away: Saturn, a smaller grape.

5 soccer fields away: Uranus, a pea.

8 soccer fields away: Neptune, a pea.

And finally, the elusive and mysterious planet 9. Pea size. To travel to it from the soccer sun on the first yard line, you must walk for about five and a half hours to make the 17.5 mile distance. That is 309 soccer fields away, if you're counting.



<<<< **Featured Listings** >>>>

Unique Old Florida charm. Enter the home with wood floors and Miami Dade wood ceilings, with wood burning fireplace, exposed beams and vaulted ceilings. Open floor plan with views of the pool from living and family room. Hurricane impact sliders opens up the family room to enjoy the Florida outdoors.



Great Stuart Location

Live like you're on a vacation every day in this totally updated oceanfront penthouse (4th Floor) condo in Indian River Plantation on Hutchinson Island in Stuart FL. This spacious 2 bedroom, two bathroom condo has had just about everything re-done within the past few years.



Oceanfront Penthouse

Solid CBS home in a well established Hobe Sound neighborhood. 3 bedroom, 2 bath home plus garage which has been converted into 4th bedroom. The 4th bedroom could possibly be a mother-in-law suite with separate entrance. Enter home into a large foyer area that opens to a spacious living room .



Hobe Sound 4 BR

One of the true gems for affordable communities in Jensen Beach. This 3 BR, 3 Bath lakefront townhome (2 bedrooms downstairs and one on second floor) and a 1 car garage is beautifully updated with lots of custom touches. The large back patio is half screened and half open and has private views of the lake.



Jensen Beach Townhouse

March Real Estate Market Report

Click on the Image for the full report

Monthly Market Detail - March 2016
Townhouses and Condos
Martin County

The Voice for Real Estate® in Florida

Summary Statistics	March 2016	March 2015	Percent Change Year-over-Year
Closed Sales	121	137	-11.7%
Paid in Cash	73	103	-29.1%
Median Sale Price	\$155,750	\$123,000	26.6%
Average Sale Price	\$205,465	\$146,397	40.3%
Dollar Volume	\$24.9 Million	\$20.1 Million	24.0%
Median Percent of Original List Price Received	94.4%	93.5%	1.0%
Median Time to Contract	37 Days	40 Days	-7.5%
Median Time to Sale	76 Days	78 Days	-2.6%
New Pending Sales	144	153	-5.9%
New Listings	148	147	0.7%
Pending Inventory	214	228	-6.1%
Inventory (Active Listings)	398	428	-7.0%

View all Market Reports for Martin County, Saint Lucie County, and Florida (statewide)

Click on the name of the region above to view the reports.



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