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“To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream, not only plan, but also believe.” ~ Anatole France ~

“Experience is not what happens to you. Experience is what you DO with what happens to you. ~ Aldous Huxley ~

Fed Mandates Real-Time Traffic Information...

New government rules call for states to provide real-time information about traffic congestion on interstate highways. States have two years to make the information available by phone or online. Within four years, states must provide traffic information for major non-interstate roads in cities, according to the Government Accountability Office. The Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials reports that many states have electronic traffic-monitoring systems already. Others are broadening existing systems or developing new ones.

Right now, Nashville is involved in a multi-million-dollar expansion of its traffic monitoring system. It will be completed by the end of 2010. The Tennessee project will double the number of overhead message boards that warn motorists of traffic problems. The traffic information is available at www.tdot.state.tn.us. The Interstate 95 Corridor Coalition has a Web site (i95coalition.org) showing real-time traffic conditions on I-95 from North Carolina to New Jersey. A similar system is in the Upper Midwest for I-90 and I-94. Information is given at www.i90i94travelinfo.com or by dialing 511. The AAA Auto Club says traffic-warning systems can prevent driver frustration and road rage.

One truck driver quoted in USA Today says he doesn't use Internet sites for traffic warnings, but the overhead signs are very helpful. They provide instant information on current conditions.

Has The Housing Market Finally Bottomed Out???

Has the housing market has finally bottomed out. Is this really the case? Some experts say yes...but others think that the current uptick in prices is just a quick head fake, and state that some markets *still* haven't bottomed out yet.

We've read a number of articles on the subject, and here's what various folks are saying.

Some people they think that the housing prices are going to continue to decline as a whole, and that we've not yet hit the basement in most states. However, these economists warn that there are some states that aren't close to hitting their bottoms yet, like New York, for example.

Other people say that we have mostly hit rock bottom, and the consistent population growth we have in the US, an estimated 10 million or more new people in home buying mode per year will cause the demand to buy homes to be driven up, and thus prices to slowly but steadily increase.

New home buyers to the market include new US residents, young adults entering the work force and people who had lost their homes, and over the next few years will have re-established credit and saved enough money for down payments.

One of the main reasons several experts who think we still have more price declines ahead of us cite the fact that while home *sales* have hit rock bottom, *prices* haven't.

But, as the prices continue to drop, homes may finally start selling.... (Or at least that's what they *think* is going to happen.)

Now, some of these pundits state that the recent upward trend in prices has been mostly caused by ridiculously low interest rates and the new and existing home buyer tax credits.

These experts say that the market prices are temporarily inflated, *artificially*, by the government's manipulation of interest rates and the tax code.

We agree that these factors have to be involved at least to some degree in the recent spike in prices in many markets. So are these price hikes just a "head fake", or are they the beginning of a real turn around? What do you think?

States that these experts think have been hit the hardest, and thus have already hit bottom, with prices already dropping as much as 50% are: California, Nevada, Arizona, and Florida. For these "sand states" as they're called, the bust may be over.

On the other hand, states like New York whose price-to-rent ratios are still well above historical norms, the housing crash may still be alive and well in the near term.

So what does this all mean?

Well, as you can see, there are many opinions, and many logical reasons to back up those opinions.

We do know one thing. And that is there's no way to know for sure. No way to come up with a magic crystal ball and see the future.

It is uncertain, but we think that the safest position to take is that prices are somewhere *near* a bottom and that if you want to buy or upgrade, you are probably going to be buying in the vicinity of the bottom.

We don't even try to guess when any market tops or bottoms are going to happen or switch.

Trying to pick exact highs and lows in a market is a sure bet for trouble.

But, using some logic and thought, you can say that you're *near* a top or bottom, and possibly be able to take action with that in mind can be a sound way to manage your assets!

So, now more than ever is the time to start making your plans, and getting professional help in making your decisions on paper BEFORE you take any action!

You don't want to do planning after something has happened.

We can and want to help you decide what you should be doing in the context of your financial planning for 2010 and beyond!

So please give us a call NOW, before you take any actions. Let's get your numbers crunched, and squeeze every dollar we can help you put into your pocket!

Remember, we HATE hearing about what you just did with your money. We want to hear, "*Here's what we're thinking about doing...*" not that you've already done it! We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Financial Tip of the Month...

Want To Sell Your Life Insurance?

Life settlement deals are increasingly popular, not always wise.

The idea of selling your whole life insurance for a nice chunk of cash can sound appealing. Here's how it works.

* A broker will offer you a settlement worth a certain fraction of your policy's face value, which is generally more than the cash value amount.

* The broker then sells your policy to a buyer who will pay the premiums on the policy. When you die, the policy buyer gets the face amount.



One example given by Smart Money: A 75-year-old man with \$1 million in life insurance might get \$250,000 now from a life settlement. The investors would get \$1 million when he dies.

* For some people, the life settlement is a great choice. If they are struggling to make their insurance payments, if their beneficiary or spouse has died, or if they really need the money, it can be a good move.

The life settlement business is growing rapidly. It rose from \$2 billion in 2002 to an estimated \$18-19 billion through June 2009, according to The Economist. Of life settlements made in 2008, more than half of the policies were less than four years old.

* The business is not regulated by the federal government or most state governments. Life settlement companies don't have to disclose how they value policies, what fees they charge or what commissions they pay.

Caution: After a life settlement, you may owe capital gains taxes on the proceeds, and you might not be able to get more life insurance if you need it.

Please keep in mind that this tip is designed to be of help for you, but is not to be relied upon as advice. It is merely a reminder that there are many choices you have available to you, and that planning is the only way to find the right answers for your situation! As with any financial issues, make sure you get the right information before making a decision! If you have any questions, we'll be glad to help you!

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