

# REAL ESTATE

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## St. Charles County: Making a move

Like you, I feel very fortunate to call St. Charles County “home.”

We live in an area that continues to grow and prosper. In fact, property values keep rising, job growth remains strong, and unemployment rates are low. Now, more than ever, St. Charles County is a great place to buy a home.

We have an outstanding story to tell in St. Charles County. That’s why the St. Charles County Association of Realtors is launching a new and innovative “St. Charles County: Making a Move” campaign.

The association has contracted with AMP Creative Company Inc. to spearhead this comprehensive public relations and marketing effort. We will utilize all types of local media to let the public know the real estate market remains strong and that “2008 Is the Right Time for Real Estate.”

We are taking this extraordinary step because these are extraordinary times. The national news sources would have you believe that the end is near

and it is time to head for the storm shelters to ride out the housing crisis. However, they have completely missed the point about the real estate market.

Everyone knew the huge housing boom of the last few years would not continue forever. However, things are far from dismal. The real estate market and the general economy have been going up and down for centuries and will always do so. The recent changes in the market just represent a return to normal. When you look back to 2002, the last normal time in real estate history, you will find that St. Charles County home buying in 2007 outpaced that year by 26 percent.

With that in mind, our “Making a Move” message is a simple one. A normal market means a real estate market with steady and sustainable growth in home values. A normal market means buyers have a great selection of homes in their price range. A normal market means home financing is available at extremely attractive rates.

The families of St. Charles County can continue to count on their homes as the best source for building family wealth and prosperity. If you have owned your home in St. Charles County for five years, on the average it is worth \$54,000 more than you paid for it. That is about a 7 percent return per year on your investment. Plus, for almost all of us, that is a tax-free return. As you can see from these statistics, property values in St. Charles County continue to appreciate, and all signs point to that trend continuing well into the future.

One of the reasons that our county has been able to sustain such outstanding property values and appreciation is that we share the sound conservative values of the heartland. We didn’t go crazy with real estate speculation as did some parts of the nation. In addition, we are fortunate to be one of the main economic engines of our state in terms of employment. We rank fourth in the nation in terms of percentage of owner-

occupied homes. When you add these statistics to the beautiful neighborhoods, excellent schools, wonderful parks and libraries, potential homebuyers discover what we all know — that St. Charles County is a great place to live.

Sadly, however, some potential homebuyers in St. Charles County and across our region are sitting on the sidelines, having been scared out of the real estate market by those in the media who cite national numbers to justify their opinion that “the sky is falling” and that it is a terrible time to buy a home. These media are doing a tragic disservice to families not only in St. Charles County but across the country, because they ignore the fact that families do not buy homes based on national trends.

Instead, the families served by Realtors in St. Charles County and throughout the nation buy homes based on their individual needs. It is the condition of the local market and their per-



### YOUR PLACE TO CALL HOME

**Keith McCulloh** is the 2008 president of the St. Charles County Association of Realtors. E-mail him at [comments@StCharlesREALTORS.com](mailto:comments@StCharlesREALTORS.com) if you have any real estate-related questions or comments you would like to see addressed in this column.

sonal desires that drive their decision to buy or sell their home.

In short, all real estate is local, and the St. Charles County market remains very strong. National statistics are a far cry from the outstanding values, steady sales and appreciating prices in our county. Our association’s “St. Charles County: Making a Move” campaign is our contribution to let the families we serve know that there is no reason to wait, and that indeed, “2008 Is the Right Time for Real Estate.”

## REAL ESTATE BRIEFS

### Mark Ottinger receives specialist designation

MARK OTTINGER, a broker with Alexander Realty in St. Charles, has been awarded the designation of CREO (certified real estate owned) specialist.

This is the only designation in the entire real estate industry for REO professionals. Ottinger is one of two who have been awarded this designation in Missouri, according to a news release from Alexander Realty.



Ottinger

### Home buyer training class offered March 1

HOME St. Charles Inc. of St. Charles County and Beyond Housing have scheduled a home buyer training class from 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. March 1 at the Economic Development Center of St. Charles County, 5988 Mid Rivers Mall Drive in St. Peters.

The program, presented by Beyond Housing, includes a working lunch. Anyone interested in utilizing the HOME St. Charles down payment assistance program should attend the training class, according to a news release.

HOME St. Charles offers down payment assistance to qualified buyers in unincorporated St. Charles County (\$10,000) and the Saratoga development in Lake Saint Louis (\$7,500). Qualified

applicants must complete home buyer training and receive certification.

The training class is called Catch the Dream-Keep the Dream — Steps to Successful Home Ownership. Cost is \$75. To register, e-mail to [larnet@edc-scc.com](mailto:larnet@edc-scc.com) or call Linda Arnet of HOME St. Charles at 636-441-6880, extension 254.

For more information about the HOME St. Charles down payment assistance program, visit [www.home-stcharles.org](http://www.home-stcharles.org) or call 636-441-6880.

### Incentives offered at Boulders at Katy Trail

Mills Properties is offering an incentive package at The Boulders at Katy Trail in St. Charles.

Through February, The Boulders at

Katy Trail will offer new buyers up to \$3,000 off closing costs, \$2,000 in free upgrades and one year of free condo fees.

“The significant out-of-pocket savings our ‘3-2-1’ incentive provides makes it all the easier for those thinking about a move to make that move now,” sales manager Brenda Browne, with Coldwell Banker Gundaker, said in a news release.

The Boulders at Katy Trail features one-, two- and three-bedroom garden-style, townhouse and loft plans with up to 1,305 square feet. Seven floor plans with attached garages, freestanding garages or carports are available for immediate move-in.

All homes have upscale, high-design interior finishes and postcard views of landscaped grounds marked by massive boulders of Arkansas limestone and laced with five lakes linked by mean-

dering creeks. Standard features include 42-inch custom kitchen cabinets, granite counters, 9-foot ceilings, built-in surround sound and high-speed Internet access. Several designs feature fireplaces and coffered ceilings.

Recreational amenities include indoor and outdoor swimming pools, massage therapy room, private screening room with 100-inch monitor, free mountain bike rental, practice putting green, billiards and a full-service 24-hour fitness facility.

To view displays and move-in homes priced from \$123,065, take Highway 364 to the Arena Parkway north exit, then an immediate left at Hemsath Road to the clubhouse. Hours are 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Sunday, or by appointment. For more information, visit [www.thebouldersatkatytrail.com](http://www.thebouldersatkatytrail.com) or call 636-947-7777.