

LOCAL

Florida real estate: Home prices and inventory up as home sales declined and took longer



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There were more houses for sale on the Treasure Coast in October than in September, but they cost more, took longer to sell and fewer sold, according to data Florida Realtors released Nov. 21.

The lack of affordable homes and increasing mortgage rates continued to hamper sales, according to the National Association of Realtors.

The market remains stable and continues to normalize after the pandemic years.

Closed sales

The number of homes that sold in October increased in Martin County, but decreased in St. Lucie and Indian River counties compared to September:

- **Martin County:** 160, up from 144
- **St. Lucie County:** 469, down from 474
- **Indian River County:** 175, down from 224

Despite the decline in closed sales, the market remains stable due to high demand, which may increase as interest rates decrease in the future, said Kyle Von Kohorn, president of the Realtor's Association of Indian River County.

"Interest rates are keeping some buyers on the sideline; however, that demand is waiting for the first signs of easing rates. When this occurs, they will reenter the market, likely putting additional pressure on the already limited supply," he said.

Across the South, closed sales declined 4.1% over the past month and 14.6% over the past year, reflecting the effects of low inventory and the highest mortgage rates in a generation, National Association of Realtors Chief Economist Lawrence Yun said in a news release in late November.

The 30-year fixed mortgage rate ranged from 6.81% to 7.31%.

The monthly mortgage payment for a typical single-family home with a 20% down payment in October was \$2,192, a 19.2% increase from last year when it was \$1,838, the report states. This has especially affected first-time homebuyers.

Median sale price

Home prices increased over the past year in over 80% of U.S. metro markets, according to the National Association of Realtors quarterly report released in November. Homes cost more in St. Lucie and Indian River counties in October compared to September, but less in Martin County:

- **St. Lucie County:** \$398,165, up from \$394,500
- **Indian River County:** \$391,150, up from \$370,000
- **Martin County:** \$572,000, down from \$577,645

Despite price increases, the market "remains much more stable now than it was during the pandemic years," Von Kohorn said. Prices reflect the high demand for quality homes, he added.

Active listings

There were more homes for sale in October compared to September:

- **St. Lucie County:** 1,555, up from 1,408
- **Indian River County:** 817, up from 746
- **Martin County:** 536, up from 461

Active listings were at early pandemic levels, between May-September 2020, suggesting a slow normalization of listings on the market.

"Mortgage rates have fallen for the third straight week, stirring up buying interest," Yun said in the November news release. "Though limited now, expect housing inventory to improve after this winter and heading into the spring. More inventory will result in more home sales."

New listings

More new homes came on the market in October compared to September:

- **St. Lucie County:** 665, up from 623
- **Indian River County:** 272, up from 238
- **Martin County:** 239, up from 205

Median time to contract

The number of days it took for homes to sell increased in October compared to September:

- **Indian River County:** 38 days, up from 37
- **St. Lucie County:** 29 days, up from 24
- **Martin County:** 29 days, up from 25

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