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Top Realtor Views Sales Uptick as a Seller's Market

Houses \$160K to \$250K Moving Well, Often Get Multiple Offers - All Price Ranges Affected

By Gerald Scott

Mainstream news reports on the subject, much less popular wisdom via word of mouth, all suggest that the Southeast Michigan real estate market is stuck in an endless quagmire of distressed properties.

But somebody close to the ground, so to speak, takes an entirely different view.

John MacLeod of John MacLeod Partners in Howell does business across South-

eastern Michigan, including home sales in Livingston and Oakland counties and he sees something else brewing entirely.

What he sees, in a phrase, is that in spite of Southeastern Michigan's public reputation for distressed properties, MacLeod describes a recently new environment where it is now a seller's market again for the first time in years.

Said MacLeod, "The mid-year statistics that break it out by township, if you look at

the numbers on it, the prices went up 7.7 percent over last year. The only one that really went down was the city of Detroit.

"But, for instance, Genessee County is up almost 15 percent, Huron is up 59 percent, Livingston is up 8, Macomb's up 14, St. Clair's up 27 - these are numbers (that suggest) people don't understand the market has shifted.

"The median prices of the homes have gone up dramatically, as well as the selling

prices."

MacLeod's on-the-ground experience is that, other than the city of Detroit being an outlier, the Southeast Michigan real estate market that he works in on a daily basis is experiencing a rather dramatic positive uptick.

"The numbers have gone up dramatically, and the un-

believable thing is inventory has gone down dramatically of homes available," MacLeod added.

"If you look at the other numbers . . . we're down about 60 to 70 percent on the number of homes we have to sell. Some people can't sell because they owe more than it's worth.

"But the nice thing is when you put a home on the market in today's market, you might get five offers on it. It's a seller's market again and it's changed dramatically in the last four to six months.

"Even the bank-owned properties, they've usually

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RenCen Tenants Drive GM Cars

By Gerald Scott

Hard to believe it, but this year marks 15 years now that GM has actually occupied the Renaissance Center. Although it purchased the complex in 1996, it didn't start filling it up with internal GM car division employees until 1997.

Now, for the first time just last week, GM opened one of its all-vehicle ride-and-drives to non-GM, RenCen tenants, so the "other" employees who work there got to drive Corvettes and Volts during an all-day program.

Indeed, ride-and-drives for its own employees, for special guests, for management, for media, are all pretty common in the GM auto marketing and testing environment.

Last week, July 17, was believed to be the first time in 15 years at the RenCen that



Urban Science employee Ryan Charlton.

GM was able to host a ride-and-drive just for those fellow tenants at the towers.

Wendy Stachowicz, program manager, GM Vehicle Advocate Program, explained the evolution of this activity.

"This is the first time we've opened it up to all the tenants today - normally we do just the employees that are here, but now that Blue Cross and

other groups have moved in, we've opened it up for all tenants today," Stachowicz said.

"They can come down and not only test-drive our new products, but also meet our employees who are the face of GM at all of our events, so they're able to talk to our employees.

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West side car cruise organizer Don Nicholson.

Mich. Ave. Cruise Kicks Off at Auto Hall of Fame

By Jim Stickford

For Don Nicholson, a man who has had many jobs, the journey to being a man who puts on car cruises professionally has been an interesting one.

The 57-year-old recently held the fifth annual Michigan Avenue Car Cruise. The event, held on Friday, July 13, began at a very appropriate spot - the Automotive Hall of Fame.

The Michigan Avenue Cruise raised money for the Hall of Fame by selling food, holding a raffle and even having face painters.

"We're trying to have a family atmosphere," Nicholson said. "And it's working. We have a lot of female cruisers. It's not just a male thing anymore."

The Michigan Avenue Cruise runs via Michigan Avenue from Dearborn to Wayne, Nicholson said. He said it's now a yearly event, similar to the Woodward Avenue Cruise, but obviously not as large.

He said the event is one of two charity cruises, along with the Hines Drive Cruise, that he puts on. But he wants to emphasize that his business, Don Nicholson Enterprises, is a for-profit operation.

"I do things for charity," Nicholson said, "but I don't go around saying I am a charity. We do work for many charities and I am proud to do so, but I am a for-profit business and I say that up front. Last year, I helped charities raise \$300,000."

Nicholson said he enjoys setting up cruises, and observed that they seem to be a Detroit thing. Before getting the promotion business, Nicholson actually worked for 3M as vice president of quality control for the com-

Chrysler Staffers Make a Special Effort for United Way

AUBURN HILLS - Chrysler Group LLC and United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) are teaming up to fight against the epidemic of childhood hunger that has plagued the region in recent years.

Chrysler Group is calling on its more than 57,000 employees to tap their energy and the company's spirit of volunteerism to help the hungry and to spread understanding and utilization of UWSEM's programs.

"We are in a unique position - as a company that has been to hell and back - to provide a beacon of hope," said Sergio Marchionne, Chrysler Group chairman and CEO.

"We can choose to make a

positive difference in the world. It's time for us to help generate a turning point within our community for people in need."

Marchionne is serving as this year's UWSEM campaign chair.

In this role, his primary responsibility is to promote growth, fundraising and educational efforts for the campaign throughout the community.

Ending child hunger is one of the biggest areas of concern for UWSEM.

The organization's Michigan No Kid Hungry program provides free meals to children in need throughout the summer and school year across the various communi-

ties in Southeastern Michigan.

Chrysler is rallying its employees to pledge to do their part to end childhood hunger by increasing awareness about the United Way's Summer Meals Programs, volunteering in food-related community service activities and by gathering food donations at the automaker's facilities throughout Southeastern Michigan.

To sign the pledge and get involved, employees and the public can go to the United Way web site (<http://www.liveunitedsem.org/ChryslerPledges>).

To enable and encourage these types of activities, Chrysler recently announced a new corporate policy that

allows employees to use up to 18 hours per year of their normal working hours to take part in company-sponsored charitable or public-service activities.

"Building awareness of the United Way's school and summer food programs is the key to reducing child hunger," said Michael Brennan, president and CEO of United Way for Southeastern Michigan.

"The most basic need for all people is food and nutrition. As more families are faced with dwindling resources, they often do not have enough money to purchase the food they need and are unaware that assistance is as easy as dialing 2-1-1.

"That's why it is important

for major corporations such as Chrysler to use their energy and resources to spread the message."

In 2011, through the generosity of Chrysler Group employee pledges, including UAW- and CAW-represented employees, more than \$4.6 million was donated to United Way campaigns in the U.S. and in Canada.

In addition, during the year, hundreds of Chrysler Group employees volunteered thousands of hours to support United Way agencies and activities - from Pontiac to Detroit, Warren, Fraser and more communities in the state where their time and resources were needed to help others.



John McHugh, Secretary of the U.S. Army.

Army Boss Kicks TACOM's 'Tracks and Treads'

By Jim Stickford

United States Secretary of the Army John McHugh visited the TACOM Army offices at the Detroit Arsenal in Warren last Thursday.

It is believed that this was the first time an Army Secretary visited the legendary local center of military equipment development, which got its start back in 1940, when it was known as the Detroit Arsenal.

"This is my first trip to metro Detroit," McHugh said. "I get briefs every day about what's going on, but there is no substitute to getting out and seeing what's going on. This is a great facility and you don't need me to inform you of the importance of the work that goes on here."

McHugh said people come to work every day to work on things that affect every soldier, whether it's food, equipment or uniforms.

After completing a tour of the Army base, McHugh took a few questions from the press, and he was asked about possible mandatory budget cuts should Congress be unable to come to an

agreement in sequestration.

McHugh said if there are mandatory budget cuts - \$1.2 trillion over 10 years with the military being responsible for about that much of the overall national budget - the Army will know how much that has to be cut, but there hasn't been time to try to manage the cuts.

McHugh called the whole process complicated. He spent 17 years in Congress before being appointed Secretary of the Army and said that he "has faith in his former colleagues."

He added that members of the military have been meeting with people from Capitol Hill constantly.

"It's still too soon to see how cuts would specifically affect this facility," McHugh said.

McHugh concluded by saying that TACOM and its sister facilities in Warren were impressive.

As a political science major who doesn't have a lot of technical expertise, seeing civilians and military personnel working together is amazing, he said, further noting that these people will be play-

ing an important role in determining where the Army is going for the next 10 years.

Meanwhile, according to a TACOM release, newly installed Maj. Gen. Michael Terry began the day by leading a briefing about the organization that manages nearly 60 percent of the equipment in a Brigade Combat Team.

Terry and other TACOM leaders talked about the Command's talented workforce and how they work every day to support the U.S. military's soldiers in the field.

During McHugh's visit, he toured facilities and met with leaders from across the TACOM LifeCycle Management Command (LCMC).

"It's an amazing place with amazing people," McHugh said after his tour of the Army installation.

"These people come to work every day thinking about aspects of things that probably aren't readily apparent to most people, it's really breathtaking."

He further talked about how the Detroit Arsenal workforce has been an important part of the nation's military operations over the past 10

years, then added that, "they are already thinking about how they are going to do the things that are necessary to field the best, safest and most effective Soldier of Tomorrow."

McHugh added that his priorities include ensuring a highly capable force within those aforementioned evolving budgetary constraints, funding reset and modernization and developing energy solutions. Work at the Detroit Arsenal aligns exactly with the challenges those priorities pose, he said.

As if all of the above isn't enough, the Pentagon is under further pressure to reduce its annual fuel consumption use, which, during times of war, understandably skyrockets.

That's why TACOM has the new GSPeL transportation energy lab built and opened at the Arsenal recently, all so Army researchers can reduce weight and increase fuel efficiency across their tracked and wheeled vehicle fleet worldwide - but to do it without reducing the vehicles' lethality on behalf of U.S. soldiers in the battlefield.