

CAPE HAZE CORRIDOR REPORT

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Special points of interest:

- If you're selling, you may be able to use a home inspection to your benefit. More information inside.
- Rotonda West prices increased for the first half of 2006 compared to 1H05, while the volume of sales was much lower.
- A new state program will help some residents with the cost of hurricane mitigation projects.
- Storm damage in your yard can be minimized by the types and locations of the trees you plant.

If your property is currently listed with another Broker, please do not consider this a solicitation.

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BUYERS' PARADISE

Along with the rest of Florida and the U.S., real estate sales in the Cape Haze corridor slowed significantly in the first half of 2006. In most neighborhoods, year-to-date 2006 sales volume decreased sharply compared to recent years while the inventory of homes on the market increased by 2½ to 3 times. The large increase in supply relative to demand has put pressure on prices and slowed the pattern of rapid price increases that we have seen over the past few years. - You'll find more details inside this issue of the *Corridor Report*.

For buyers, this is a wonderful time to purchase real estate. In Rotonda West, as an example, there are currently 260 homes listed for sale in the Englewood Multiple Listing Service (MLS), and a recent average of 11 home sales per month. Along the waterfront between New Point Comfort and Placida, there are 31 homes currently for sale and sales are averaging 2 per month. These high ratios of available properties to sales represent a common pattern across neighborhoods, property types, and price points. So, buyers have excellent options to choose from and strong leverage in contract negotiations.

If you are a seller in today's market, it's important to recognize that the environment is now highly competitive. Setting a reasonable price for your property is essential, but it is only the starting point for a successful sale. How will you make your property stand out from the competition? Options to consider include using "staging" techniques to prepare your property for sale (as we discussed in last October's *Corridor Report*), offering a home warranty (described in the January *Corridor Report*), and completing a home inspection prior to the sale (a topic covered inside this edition of the *Corridor Report*).¹

A comprehensive marketing plan is another key element for selling your property. Seek a real estate professional who will advertise in a variety of media, will effectively use the internet to attract buyers, will keep you updated on local market trends and pricing, and will leverage the strength of their brokerage firm to help bring in buyers.

As always, I hope everyone will find this issue of the *Cape Haze Corridor Report* informative. And, if you are looking for a Realtor who knows our local neighborhoods and will help you negotiate all the intricacies of today's marketplace, please give me a call to discuss your requirements!

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¹ See the October 2005 issue of the *Cape Haze Corridor Report* for checklists you can use in preparing your home for sale and for a full discussion on the benefits of "staging". See the January 2006 issue for a discussion on home warranties. Copies of the *Corridor Report* are available on my website, PamNeerRealEstate.com.

MATCHING GRANTS FOR STORM PROTECTION

Beginning in August, the State of Florida will offer matching grants up to \$5,000 to help Florida residents pay for wind-resistance improvements on single-family homes and residential buildings of up to four units. The program is restricted to primary residences with a valid homestead exemption and an insured value of less than \$500,000. And, not all eligible properties will receive grants. The new law requires focus on areas with high hurricane exposure and on reducing exposure for Citizens Property Insurance Corp. Home improvements that may be eligible for matching grants include strengthening roofs and roof decks, reinforcing roof-to-wall connections, improving exterior window protection, and upgrading exterior doors.

(Continued on page 3)

Cape Haze Corridor Shorts:

Land preparation has begun for the new 300 acre **West County Regional Park** on San Casa Drive. The new park will include a variety of sports fields, a swimming pool, a paw park, and nature trails through preserve areas near Oyster Creek.

Redfish Sports Grill, complete with dart boards, pool tables and electronic games, has opened at 2440 S. McCall. They offer light meals daily and live entertainment on weekends.

On Boca Grande, **Boca Bistro** and **The Other Place** are new restaurants near the north end of the island, at 5800 Gasparilla Rd. The Other Place offers a casual dining environment, while Boca Bistro features an upscale ambience and cuisine. Boca Bistro's menu and ownership are linked to the highly-acclaimed Beach Bistro on Anna Maria island.

Interested in a cup of coffee or in improving your golf swing? In an unusual combination, **Kinard's Golf and Coffee** offers both. The shop is located at 1720 So. McCall Rd.

New retail developments are being proposed near Wilmington Blvd. and State Rd. 776. Early reports indicate Home Depot and Target may be among the businesses coming to our area.

Cape Haze Corridor Quiz:

When the railroad ran through Placida to Boca Grande, what was the primary cargo?

(See page 4 for the answer.)

ABOUT HOME INSPECTIONS

If you are buying or selling a house or condominium, a home inspection is often required as part of the purchase contract. The purpose of a home inspection is to identify any malfunctioning systems or defects associated with the building and property. A home inspector will conduct a visual inspection of the property, including the interior, exterior, roof, and accessible attic and crawl space areas. A written report of inspection results will be completed. Home inspections typically include:

- ◆ heating and air conditioning systems
- ◆ electrical systems and circuits
- ◆ built-in appliances
- ◆ bathrooms, water heaters, and plumbing systems
- ◆ roof covering, flashing, gutters, skylights, and vents
- ◆ foundation, windows, doors, and structure
- ◆ interior walls, ceilings, and floors
- ◆ fireplaces
- ◆ exterior patios, decks, sidewalks, driveways, and fencing

Optional inspection areas can include pools, spas, and sprinklers. The home inspection does not usually include septic systems, water quality testing, termite inspection, seawall and boat lift inspections, mold testing or radon testing (although additional inspections for these and other items may be specified in the purchase contract.) Also, note that a home inspection is generally limited to areas that can be visually inspected, so the inspector may not be able to identify problems that are hidden from view.

Traditionally, a home inspection is scheduled (and paid for) by the prospective property buyer shortly after the purchase contract is signed. However, in today's challenging real estate market, some sellers are scheduling home inspections when they place their homes on the market.

For the seller, completing a home inspection early provides a measure of control and a potential marketing advantage. The early inspection identifies problems and gives you time to either repair issues or get estimates for the cost of repairs, putting you in a better position to set and negotiate a purchase price. It also allows you to represent the status of your home with confidence to prospective buyers. And, it limits your exposure to unexpected repair costs or price renegotiation issues during the contract contingency period.

The cost of home inspections varies, with prices generally in the \$300 to \$400 range. Inspections for larger properties and optional inspection areas carry additional charges. When selecting a home inspector, you'll want to choose one who is certified and experienced. Most of our local inspectors are certified by the American Society of Home Inspectors. Please give me a call or send me an e-mail if you would like a list of inspectors working in our Cape Haze and Englewood communities.

CONDOMINIUM & TOWNHOME NEWS

Construction is continuing for several large developments around our area, including The Hammocks, Hacienda del Mar, Cape Haze Resort, The Townhomes at Cape Haze, and The Landings on Coral Creek. And, developers continue to submit plans for other Cape Haze peninsula sites.

Earlier this year, county commissioners rejected a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) change for the Wildwood Golf Course property. The development company has submitted a new FLUM request for a project that would include 331 residential units and 50,000 square feet of commercial space.

In Grove City, developers are requesting zoning changes to allow development of a 58 residence condominium project off Waterside Drive adjacent to Lemon Bay and for a condominium development on part of the Marine Dynamics property. The county Development Review Committee (DRC) has approved an 8 unit mixed-use residential and commercial condominium complex on Placida Road and is reviewing the proposed 60 unit Sandy Lane Condominiums project to be located east of Placida Road and south of Oyster Creek.

According to published reports, an auction will be held in early August for The Preserve at Windward development, which has been in bankruptcy proceedings for some time. Two of the planned seven buildings in the development have been completed. In a separate case, court proceedings are underway involving ownership of the proposed site for the Windwalker development near Cape Haze Marina.

If you are interested in buying or selling a townhouse or condominium in our rapidly evolving area, please give me a call to discuss your requirements and the latest market developments.

1H06: PRICE INCREASES ON LOW SALES VOLUME

For the first half of 2006, based on data from the Englewood Area MLS, average home sale prices in Rotonda West rose 12% compared to the first half of 2005 and lot prices rose 16%. However, when we compare sales for the first half of 2006 to the second half of 2005, overall prices are down slightly, with prices dropping -3% for homes and -2% for lots. In most Rotonda neighborhoods, average prices peaked in the fourth quarter of 2005 or the first quarter of 2006.

The volume of Rotonda West sales activity is also down dramatically. 68 home sales were reported for 1H06, a decrease of 43% compared to 1H05 and a decrease of 61% compared to 1H04. For lots, 62 sales have been reported for 1H06, compared to over 300 lot sales in 1H05, and down 84% from the peak sales volumes recorded in 1H04.

If you bought your property in 2004 or earlier, it could take a long time to find a buyer in today's market, but you can most likely earn a significant profit. Comparing 1H06 prices to 1H04 prices, Rotonda West homes are up 62% and lots are up 130%.

In other local neighborhoods, the small volumes of sales activity make year-to-year comparisons difficult. While some sellers have taken properties off the market, the inventory of available properties remains very high. Significant numbers of new homes and condominiums are also competing with existing properties for buyer dollars. According to analysis of MLS data by Trendgraphix, Inc., the average asking price for properties in our area is trending downward. The ratio of sales price to asking price is also lower than in recent years. In the absence of an unexpected influx of buyers, it is likely that prices in some neighborhoods may dip during the second half of this year.

Neighborhood Sales - 1H06	# of Sales	Avg. Sales Price	% of List Price	Avg. Days on Mkt	Low Sales Price	Median Sales Price	High Sales Price
Homes							
Cape Haze (West)	2	\$1,737,500	85%	16	\$1,275,000	\$1,737,500	\$2,200,000
Grove City - Waterfront	6	\$630,833	94%	92	\$400,000	\$605,000	\$950,000
Windward	3	\$410,833	93%	103	\$325,000	\$345,000	\$562,500
Oakland Hills	17	\$212,988	92%	97	\$172,400	\$206,700	\$286,000
Pebble Beach	9	\$289,611	93%	71	\$220,000	\$292,500	\$416,500
Pinehurst	9	\$283,756	95%	99	\$205,400	\$299,900	\$321,000
Broadmoor	10	\$354,941	97%	106	\$300,000	\$358,500	\$385,000
Long Meadow	11	\$380,545	95%	117	\$243,000	\$380,000	\$560,000
White Marsh	11	\$386,764	95%	64	\$275,000	\$365,000	\$505,000
Pine Valley	1	\$355,000	96%	147	\$355,000	\$355,000	\$355,000
Lots							
Cape Haze (West)	5	\$377,600	88%	131	\$180,000	\$273,000	\$840,000
Windward	2	\$143,900	85%	248	\$137,900	\$143,900	\$149,900
Oakland Hills	4	\$65,975	95%	156	\$56,000	\$64,950	\$78,000
Pebble Beach	2	\$97,000	94%	20	\$87,000	\$97,000	\$107,000
Pinehurst	8	\$90,500	95%	29	\$83,500	\$85,000	\$115,000
Broadmoor	10	\$104,580	94%	81	\$79,900	\$107,500	\$128,900
Long Meadow	10	\$101,930	95%	66	\$77,500	\$97,000	\$134,900
White Marsh	4	\$120,625	94%	72	\$98,000	\$123,500	\$137,500
Pine Valley	24	\$103,100	93%	94	\$65,000	\$107,500	\$124,000
Condos							
Cape Haze Marina	6	\$776,667	90%	202	\$585,000	\$688,750	\$1,150,000

Note: Data from Englewood Area MLS, with adjustments. If your neighborhood is not listed, please call for additional detail.

MATCHING GRANTS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

To receive a matching grant, the required first step is a free hurricane mitigation inspection by a designated state inspector. The inspection report will identify eligible improvements for the home. The next step is to apply to the state Dept. of Financial Services for a matching grant for the upgrades you decide to implement. If your grant is approved, the state will provide a list of eligible providers to complete the projects. The application form for a free hurricane mitigation inspection should be available by August at www.mysafefloridahome.com or by calling 1-800-342-2762.

"We were very satisfied with Pam Neer handling our sale. She was very professional, but beyond that she was just plain nice.

She kept us informed every step of the way."

- Arthur & Dorothy Leigh

PamNeerRealEstate.com

is the website to visit for useful information on:

Properties:

- ◆ Real estate for sale by neighborhood (MLS listings).
- ◆ Featured local properties.
- ◆ Condominium and townhome developments.
- ◆ Recent Property Sales Reports.
- ◆ Loan amounts you may qualify for on your next real estate purchase.

Communities:

- ◆ Overviews of our major neighborhoods.

Area Links:

- ◆ Useful local websites for government, newspapers, golf courses, restaurants, attractions, and more.

Cape Haze Corridor Report:

- ◆ View online copies of current and past issues.

The material in this newsletter comes from multiple sources and is deemed accurate, but not guaranteed.

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If you'd prefer, you (and your friends and neighbors) can receive the *Cape Haze Corridor Report* electronically.

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Or, from my website, PamNeerRealEstate.com, click "Subscribe" under the *Cape Haze Corridor Report* on the left side of the home page and send me your address information.

Your suggestions for articles in future additions of the *Corridor Report* are invited.

Answer for the Corridor Quiz:

Phosphate

Cape Haze Corridor Report

PREPARING YOUR YARD FOR HIGH WINDS

Pamela Crawford, a well-known landscape designer and author, has published an informative book titled [Stormscaping: Landscaping to Minimize Wind Damage in Florida](#). This 168-page volume is filled with information that you may find useful both for your existing yard and in deciding on new plants for your property.

Here are a few of the key findings from the book, drawn from data and observations collected across Florida after the 2004 hurricane season:

- ♦ The three worst trees for causing damage in strong winds are Australian Pines, Ficus benjamina, and Laurel Oaks.
- ♦ Other tree species with low wind tolerance include Queen Palm, Redbud, Cherry Laurel, Drake Elm, Sand Pine, Tabebuia, Water Oak, and Jacaranda.
- ♦ Some of the strongest trees for wind in our area of Florida are Bald Cypress, Crepe Myrtle, Live Oak, Southern Magnolia, Gumbo Limbo, Ironwood, Canary Island Date Palms, Date Palms, Pygmy Date Palms, Pindo Palms, Red Bay, Sand Live Oak, Seagrape, Sabal Palm, Saw Palmetto Palm, Spanish Stopper, and White Stopper.
- ♦ As a group, palms do better than other trees in high winds. However, some popular palms, including the Queen Palm and Washingtonia Palm do not fare well.
- ♦ Proper pruning can greatly increase the chance that your trees will hold up well in high winds.
- ♦ Trees planted in clusters withstand wind damage better than single trees.
- ♦ A variety of factors can decrease a tree's wind tolerance, including: planting in a small space, planting too close to a building, wet soil, and trees growing with two main trunks.
- ♦ Homes with clusters of properly planted trees in the yard may sustain less wind damage than homes with minimal landscaping.

Refer to the book for much more useful information on shrub and tree wind tolerance considerations for your yard.