



R.I. REAL ESTATE Sales up 18% as prices rise, too May also marked 18th straight hike in year-over-year sales

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By Christine Dunn Journal Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE - Real estate sales remained strong in Rhode Island this May, with single-family house sales up 18 percent compared with May 2015, as the median sales price rose by 5 percent, to \$239,000.

"May marked the 18th consecutive month of increased year-over-year sales," the Rhode Island Association of Realtors noted in its May sales report released on Wednesday.

The association said 986 single-family homes were sold in Rhode Island in May, up 150 from May 2015. In addition, there were 1,835 "pending transactions in the contract phase of the process, an increase of 5 percent from a year ago.

"Realtors are busy. It's been a while since we've seen this level of sustained activity," association president Arthur Yatsko said.

"Areas that have both great school systems and are commutable to work areas" in the Providence metro area "are stronger markets," said Sally Lapidés, president and CEO of Residential Properties Ltd.

Also in high demand is "everything that is in the first-time home buyer category, and in some of the locations, like East Greenwich, the East Side, Barrington, Cumberland, you're going to see demand up to \$750,000."

"It's just not first-time buyers that are buying," Lapidés added, "and what is in particular demand is houses that have been done, that don't need a lot of work. They are selling faster than a speeding bullet. They really are."

A lack of inventory appears to be the only factor that could slow sales in the coming months. Listings were down by 11 percent in May, the Realtors' group reported.

"We still don't have enough inventory, and things are selling within a day or two of hitting the market if they are priced right," Lapides said.

"There is just over a five-month supply of single-family homes for sale, giving sellers a slight edge, though that varies by area," the association reported. "Industry experts refer to a six-month supply as a balanced market."

Barbara Fields, executive director of Rhode Island Housing, agreed that a lack of supply is hampering housing affordability, especially rental prices, and the economy in general. She said that's why passage of the \$50-million housing bond that will be on the November ballot this year "is critical."

At \$239,000, the median sales price is still below the peaks of the housing bubble, \$282,900 in 2005 and \$282,500 in 2006.

Fields said the lower prices have allowed more people to buy their first homes.

Rhode Island Housing's Ocean State Grad Grant, which offers up to \$7,000 in down payment assistance for qualified first-time buyers, is a case in point.

Fields said the agency expected to close about 50 of the Grad Grants a year, but completed 69 in 2015 and has closed 160 so far this year.

She said Warwick has had the most Grad Grant houses, with many in the \$200,000 to \$230,000 price range.

And with interest rates at historic lows, "it's a good time to borrow," Fields said.

Loan volume is up at Rhode Island Housing, according to Peter Pagonis, director of home ownership.

"May 2016 was our best [loan] origination month since July 2007," he said.

	2016 Sales	2015 Sales	Change	% Change	Median Price 2016	Median Price 2015	Median % Change	Avg. Dom '16	Avg. Dom '15	Dom % Change
Rhode Island	986	836	150	17.94%	\$239,000	\$227,500	5.05%	78	85	-8.24%
Newport County										
Tiverton	17	20	-3	-15.00%	\$215,000	\$214,500	0.23%	144	147	-2.04%
Little Compton	4	3	1	33.33%	\$580,000	\$500,000	16.00%	128	110	16.36%
Portsmouth	25	16	9	56.25%	\$340,000	\$274,000	24.09%	149	129	15.50%
Middletown	13	13	0	0.00%	\$352,500	\$380,000	-7.24%	102	126	-19.05%
Newport	21	24	-3	-12.50%	\$417,500	\$427,500	-2.34%	103	135	-23.70%
Jamestown	10	5	5	100.00%	\$572,500	\$395,000	44.94%	175	188	-6.91%
Metro And East Bay										
Barrington	39	31	8	25.81%	\$404,000	\$467,000	-13.49%	92	108	-14.81%
Warren	6	4	2	50.00%	\$222,000	\$303,750	-26.91%	60	93	-35.48%
Bristol	12	22	-10	-45.45%	\$315,500	\$317,700	-0.69%	67	100	-33.00%
East Providence	49	39	10	25.64%	\$199,900	\$194,000	3.04%	88	69	27.54%
Providence	53	33	20	60.61%	\$150,000	\$150,000	0.00%	77	63	22.22%
East Side Of Prov.	19	17	2	11.76%	\$412,000	\$486,000	-15.23%	72	66	9.09%
North Providence	31	26	5	19.23%	\$220,000	\$181,000	21.55%	74	67	10.45%
Johnston	40	23	17	73.91%	\$211,000	\$220,000	-4.09%	55	65	-15.38%
Cranston	85	92	-7	-7.61%	\$200,000	\$197,750	1.14%	60	81	-25.93%
North										
Lincoln	13	27	-14	-51.85%	\$325,000	\$265,000	22.64%	112	49	128.57%
Cumberland	32	30	2	6.67%	\$296,250	\$263,500	12.43%	47	100	-53.00%
Woonsocket	18	21	-3	-14.29%	\$146,500	\$140,000	4.64%	70	78	-10.26%
Pawtucket	49	41	8	19.51%	\$167,450	\$159,000	5.31%	53	70	-24.29%
Central Falls	1	1	0	0.00%	\$139,000	\$74,199	87.33%	22	22	0.00%
North Smithfield	12	6	6	100.00%	\$281,250	\$250,500	12.28%	43	117	-63.25%
Smithfield	17	20	-3	-15.00%	\$292,000	\$267,500	9.16%	71	44	61.36%
Burrillville	9	12	-3	-25.00%	\$230,000	\$182,450	26.06%	36	70	-48.57%
Glocester	13	9	4	44.44%	\$299,900	\$265,000	13.17%	50	45	11.11%
Foster	9	3	6	200.00%	\$190,000	\$249,900	-23.97%	74	61	21.31%
Scituate	4	7	-3	-42.86%	\$237,500	\$233,500	1.71%	114	40	185.00%
South County										
Exeter	8	5	3	60.00%	\$313,314	\$272,400	15.02%	106	116	-8.62%
Hopkinton	10	13	-3	-23.08%	\$263,000	\$225,500	16.63%	29	96	-69.79%
Richmond	9	13	-4	-30.77%	\$237,500	\$255,000	-6.86%	103	101	1.98%
Charlestown	12	12	0	0.00%	\$370,000	\$299,200	23.66%	78	123	-36.59%
Westerly	22	24	-2	-8.33%	\$284,750	\$311,000	-8.44%	87	90	-3.33%
Block Island	3	0	3	0.00%	\$900,000	-	0.00%	272	-	0.00%
South Kingstown	43	26	17	65.38%	\$327,000	\$282,000	15.96%	98	104	-5.77%
Narragansett	15	17	-2	-11.76%	\$395,000	\$410,000	-3.66%	87	150	-42.00%
North Kingstown	36	23	13	56.52%	\$378,200	\$270,000	40.07%	81	96	-15.63%
Kent County										
East Greenwich	25	12	13	108.33%	\$440,000	\$357,500	23.08%	115	71	61.97%
West Warwick	26	18	8	44.44%	\$211,950	\$156,000	35.87%	67	48	39.58%
Warwick	121	93	28	30.11%	\$190,000	\$175,522	8.25%	67	74	-9.46%
Coventry	50	29	21	72.41%	\$217,450	\$255,000	-14.73%	49	80	-38.75%
West Greenwich	5	6	-1	-16.67%	\$315,000	\$368,500	-14.52%	78	54	44.44%