Home Sales in the Capital Region: Five Municipalities Average Over $300,000

Home sales prices and the number of homes sold in the Capital Region continued to rise last year. Five of the Region’s municipalities had median home sales prices greater than $300,000, up from just one in 2004 and none in prior years. This is just one of the findings of the recently completed Connecticut Capitol Region Home Sales Price Report, FY 2005.

The study, which CRCOG has conducted annually since the early 1980s, collects sales prices for single-family, two-family, three-family, and condominium homes from assessors in each of the Region’s 29 municipalities. Over the past year, the median sales price for all types of homes across the Region increased by 12.6%, slightly lower than Connecticut’s overall increase of 13.6% and New England’s increase of 13.0%. After adjusting for inflation, the Region’s home sales price increase was 9.8%.

The report also addresses issues of the relative affordability of home ownership in the Capital Region. In fiscal year 2005, only 21% of sales within the region were considered affordable to moderate-income households, as compared to 40% in FY 2001. Further, the study found that nearly half of the Region’s affordable home sales are found in just four (Hartford, East Hartford, and Vernon), while four municipalities (Andover, Marlborough, and had fewer than ten sales each.)
**Star Shuttle Downtown Circulator Launches**

The **Star Shuttle**, Hartford’s new downtown circulator, began operation September 6, one day before the first major convention at the new Connecticut Convention Center. CT Transit staff did a fantastic job getting the buses ready, temporary bus stop signs installed, and route maps out to potential riders, all with about a week’s notice. The newly wrapped buses, one of which is shown here with CRCOG and CT Transit staff climbing on board, operate over the 2.6 mile circular route, providing FREE service throughout downtown Hartford, every 10 minutes during peak weekday hours and every 12 minutes during off peak hours.

Service is provided from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Monday - Friday and from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on Saturdays. The shuttle route has been designed, with help in part by CRCOG staff, to connect the new CT Convention Center, the Riverfront, the Arts and Entertainment District, various restaurants, and downtown hotels, and it is available for use by all downtown residents, employees and visitors. Even without a significant marketing campaign, which will come after the trial period and final operating decisions have been made, average daily ridership is over 200. More than 700 passenger trips were made on Friday, September 19 with conventioneers in town who were eager to see what downtown Hartford had to offer.

Ride the Star Shuttle yourself, next time you are in downtown Hartford. It’s free, it’s convenient and it’s fun!

**Bike and Pedestrian Committee Hears Needs of Vision Impaired**

At the September 13th meeting of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, two representatives of the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) gave a presentation on How to Design Crossings to Accommodate Pedestrians with Low
**Vision or Who Are Blind.** The informative presentation explained how blind individuals are taught to travel independently and what kinds of cues they use to cross streets and roadways safely. Here are some of the important facts that were shared:

- Persons considered legally blind may still have some sight but are unable to pick up all the visual cues at an intersection that a fully sighted person might use.
- In deciding when it is safe to cross an intersection, individuals are taught to listen to a couple of cycles of the light to determine how the signal operates. Modern signals, with timings that vary by time of day and day of year, and with all pedestrian phases, make this difficult.
- It is very important for a blind individual to cross a street in a straight line; curb cuts that are on the diagonal make it very difficult to maintain a straight line through an intersection.
- Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) with audible indications that pedestrians may cross are very helpful to blind individuals. Newer APS systems can provide useful information without sending excessive noise into a neighborhood.

The representatives of the BESB have offered to work with any towns that would like assistance in designing pedestrian crossings that accommodate sighted and unsighted pedestrians. Contact Sandy Fry (522-2217, X20, sfry@crco.org) if you would like to contact BESB or if you need more information.

**Region Selected for Project Public Health Ready**

On behalf of the region, the West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District has been selected to be a round three regional pilot site for Project Public Health Ready. Out of 115 applications received, only 20 were selected by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to participate in the pilot.

This project works to prepare staff of local governmental public health agencies to respond to emergencies and to protect the public's health through a competency-based training and recognition program. The project’s kick-off meeting will take place in San Diego on October 18-19, 2005.

**CERT Weekend**

Many of the Capitol Region Civilian Emergency Response Teams (CERT) participated in Connecticut’s CERT Weekend, held on September 24-25th at the Connecticut Fire Academy in Windsor Locks. The weekend included numerous activities and demonstrations that enabled teams to practice skills and prepare for any type of emergency.
**CRCOG Launches Online Training Course: Motivating Employees**

Eleven town employees signed up for the first CRCOG combined online and face-to-face training program. The course is entitled *Motivating Employees* and has six modules and involves three face-to-face meetings. Barry Feldman, West Hartford Town Manager, was the kick-off speaker for the course. For more information, please contact Hedy Ayers at hayers@crcog.org.

**Upcoming CRCOG Meetings**

Executive Committee, Wednesday, October 12, 2005, 12 Noon  
Housing Committee, Monday, October 17, 2005, 12 Noon  
Municipal Services Committee, Tuesday, October 18, 2005, 12 Noon  
Regional Planning Commission, Thursday, October 20, 2005, 7:00 p.m.  
Transportation Committee, Monday, November 7, 2005, 12 Noon  
New CRCOG Board Member Welcome, Wednesday November 16, 10:30 a.m. – noon  
**New Date: Policy Board, Wednesday, November 16, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.**  
Public Safety Council, Thursday, December 8, 2005, 12 Noon

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