

Realtors: Local housing market stuck on shaky

Home sales and prices slide in 2011

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SENECA — The housing markets in Oconee and Pickens counties remain fragile following weak sales and sliding prices in 2011 and continued uncertainty in the new year. According to the South

Carolina Realtors' annual report released this week, the Western Upstate MLS market that includes Oconee, Pickens and Anderson underperformed again last year.

The Western Upstate recorded 2,753 sales in 2011, a decline of 1.4 percent over the previous year.

Home prices continued their downward spiral as well.

The 2011 median price in the Western Upstate slipped 2 percent from 2010 to \$123,000. Since 2007 when the market was still at its apex, prices have fallen almost 10 percent.

On average, homes for sale in the local area remain on the market approximately 5.6 months before a deal is made. By comparison, homes stay on

the market 3.8 months in the greater Greenville MLS (the fastest in the state) and several months in the Southern Midlands area (the slowest).

The 169 days on the market for homes in the Western Upstate in 2011 marked an increase of 6.5 percent from the previous year.

"The housing sector did not see the recovery it should have," the SCR market report

ground

noted. "It was another transition year in what has become a more drawn-out bottoming process than most would like."

There are a few signs that perhaps the market might turn around in 2012, according to the recently released Western Upstate Monthly Indicator Report.

"Sellers are seeing multiple-

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offer situations; buyers are seeing sub-4.0 percent loans; supply-demand trends are more balanced," the report states. "Ultimately, the upcoming spring market should be a major tell about the future direction of housing."

University of South Carolina economist Joseph Von Nessen said job growth in 2012 would be vital for housing and

construction to prosper.

"Household formation is significantly below historical averages because unemployment is high," Von Nessen said. "As job growth rises, this will help spur demand in the housing industry, which is very important to the recovery because construction and housing services make up more than 15 percent of overall economic activity."

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