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Looking At The New Market

2015 is shaping up to be the time to buy a home or rent a great apartment

By Alex Costello



2015 is well underway, it's time to start looking forward to the new selling season, even through the lens of a stark winter. Coming off of a strong year in 2014, realtors are expecting more of the same, spread through a diverse mix of buyers and renters. Last year was a good time to both buy and sell real estate: housing continued a steady climb, with prices at the end of the year up 1.4 percent from 2013.

Also, interest rates stayed very low, enabling many buyers to get mortgages with rates less than 3 percent. "Buyers seemed to have shed some of the trepidation of 2012-13 and are realizing that our historically low interest rates will not be able to be sustained indefinitely and felt confident going forward," said Maggie Keats, an associate broker for Douglas Elliman Real Estate in Port Washington. "The confluence of affordable financing, reasonable prices in the suburbs and the unaffordability of New York City drove buyers out to Long Island which presents value at all price points."

Many of the same neighborhoods that were popular last year will continue to be in 2015. Towns on the North Fork are set to explode this year due to lots of positive press last year, including being named one of the best wine regions in the country. "The secret is out: the North Fork has

been discovered,” said Victoria Germaise, a realtor with Douglas Elliman in Mattituck. “The early adopters were out in droves this summer, dipping their toes in the water and sipping the vino. We expect many will return, looking for a place to hang their hats.”

Buyers are always looking for good schools and easy commutes to work, with close proximity to a reliable train station being an extra draw. “Port Washington and Manhasset saw very strong sales for 2014,” said Keats. “I continue to be bullish on both of those towns and the communities of the North Shore of Long Island in general. It is hard to replicate what we have to offer here.” Both towns have high-achieving school districts and short connections to midtown via the LIRR. And their main streets are walkable areas offering a selection of restaurants, shops and galleries.

Homes sales aren’t the only things expected to grow this year. Rental housing on the Island continues to expand, with more developments being approved. In Rockville Centre, AvalonBay is hoping to break ground on the second-phase of its successful, 359-unit development. The expansion, which would add more than 200 additional apartments, is the first true increase of an apartment complex on Long Island. AvalonBay is just a short walk to Rockville Centre’s train station and the village’s vibrant downtown.

TRITEC Real Estate, a development company with offices in East Setauket, is also looking to start a new development this year. The first phase of the company’s Ronkonkoma Hub project should begin in the middle of 2015. The project will redesign the area and create a real downtown complete with housing and shops. It will span 50 acres right near the Ronkonkoma train station, connecting residents to one of the biggest LIRR lines. “We think the market for multi-family on Long Island is strong and will continue to be so in 2015,” said Rob Loscalzo, chief operating officer for TRITEC. “Long Island is a supply-constrained market and between that shortage and the age of existing product, we foresee the market to be strong well into the future.”

With more people looking to invest in homes in 2015, the year might take some of the power away from buyers. More people looking to purchase means inventory leaving the market faster. It will be in buyers’ best interests to make an offer sooner rather than later. “I think sellers will benefit from savvy buyers coming into the market and understanding that making a 30-year commitment will likely never again be as affordable in our lifetimes,” Keats said.