



**OBSERVATIONS FROM THE DESK OF
ALICE OLDFORD**
(908) 310-1335 aoldford@yahoo.com
Www.alice.oldford.com



Need a referral? Please give me a call.



**We know that in September, we will wander through
the warm winds of summer's wreckage. We will
welcome summer's ghost.**

Henry Rollins

Are low interest rates a good or bad thing?

Bankrate.com recently asked “Could the Fed’s low interest rates come back to bite us?” Many economists applaud the decision as necessary to get the economy moving. However, some economists believe the low interest rates may pose a future problem in that people now believe the current levels of rates are normal. What will happen when the Fed begins to raise rates? Will 5% rates stall the economy as some contend?



Are you eligible for HARP refinancing?

Few homeowners took advantage of the Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP) when it was introduced because qualifying was so stringent. Provisions have evolved. The three major changes:

- The amount of upside down mortgage amount has been expanded —as much as 100%
- Overall qualifying standards are less stringent.
- Homeowners can refinance with a lender other than their original lender.

So if you’re current on your loan payments, now may be the time to apply for HARP refinancing. Deadline is currently Dec. 31.

Buying homes online?



In China they do? In the US an assortment of technologies make it easier to navigate the buying and selling process — from 3D virtual tours to video services to predictive analytics websites, but real estate agents are still the catalyst to consummate the transaction. There are observers who believe in the next 5 years US millennials will be inclined to online purchases when they are ready to get into the market.

Retirees choosing to ‘upsized’ homes

Typically Americans have chosen to downsize in retirement. The top reason was to have greater freedom from financial and maintenance issues. However, there is a wave of retirees who upsize in retirement to have a more prestigious home or to have a larger home to accommodate visiting friends or a returning child.



Rent-to-own

Although this concept has been going on informally for years, it has gained traction recently particularly with people who have lost homes due to foreclosure (7 year wait) or who have had a short sale (4 year wait). They are eager to get back to home ownership.

Home Partners of America <https://www.homepartners.com> has introduced a program to facilitate the process. Here's how it works:

- ◇ Residents qualify by proving they have sufficient income and no excessive debts. They select a real estate agent to help them find properties. Home Partners negotiates with the seller, paying cash.
- ◇ After the sale, the company may repaint or make other minor cosmetic changes. The tenant moves in and rents the home but is under no obligation to renew the lease or to buy the property.
- ◇ The rent increases annually at 3.75%. During the first year of the least, the resident can buy the home at any time by paying 5% above Home Partners' total acquisition costs, including renovations.

Worst case scenario the resident moves out after a year. Best case the program puts folks on the path to homeownership.

2015 a great year to sell

3 Reason why—

- Stronger demand from buyers.
- Home prices are on the upswing. According to Realty Trac VP Daren Bloomquist "So far in 2015, sellers are realizing the biggest gains in home price appreciation since 2007."
- Less competition. Inventories remain tight.



Tips to make moving easier

Moving ranks right up at the top of the list for life's greatest stresses. Here are some tips to make it a little smoother.

First steps:

- * Document all your cords, for all your media equipment that is.
- * Update your address. Consider using Updater.
- * Create a pet plan. Consider leaving pets with a friend or board while moving.
- * Schedule touch-up paint jobs. Don't wait till the last minute.
- * Recruit some help.

Packing 101:

- * Pack a "first night in the new house" box.
- * Suitcases are your friends. Use your large suitcases as easily transportable storage.
- * Remember important documents. Make to folder and carry it with you.

Unpacking:

- * Strategize your layout. Label items so they go to the right room.
- * Save all receipts. Moving expenses could be deductible from federal taxes.

Solar power in Florida

Good news!

Power by clean energy, especially solar, is gaining strength and popularity in a state where there is an abundance of sunshine. A planned "solar-powered" city is set to break ground at Babcock Ranch in Charlotte County. Cape Coral is looking into becoming its own electric utility and wants solar as a power source — at least for streetlights.

