

# Life & Times

NOVEMBER 2024

## THE SWEET SPOT HOMEBUYERS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR

After months of sitting on the sidelines, many homebuyers who were priced out by high mortgage rates and affordability challenges finally have an opportunity to make their move. With rates trending down, today's market is a sweet spot for buyers—and it's one that may not last long.

So, if you've put your own move on the back burner, here's why maybe you

shouldn't delay your plans any longer.

As you weigh your options and decide if you should buy now or wait, ask yourself this: *What do you think everyone else is going to do?*



buyer sweet spot. Why? Because a lot of other buyers are waiting – which means not as many people are actively looking for homes so less competition for you.

At the same time, affordability has already improved quite a bit. Recent easing in mortgage rates has made homeownership more accessible. As Mike Simonsen, Founder of *Altos Research*, says: *"Mortgage payments on the typical-price home are 7% lower than last year and are 13% lower than the peak in May 2024."*

And while the supply of homes for sale is still low, it's also higher than it's been in years. According to Ralph McLaughlin, Senior Economist at *Realtor.com*: *"The number of homes actively for sale continues to be elevated compared with last year, growing by 35.8%, a 10th straight month of growth, and now sits at the highest since May 2020."*

This means you now have more options to choose from than you've had in quite a while. With fewer buyers in the market, improving affordability, and more homes to choose from, you have the chance to find the right one before competition heats up.

### Why Waiting Could Cost You

If you're waiting for the perfect time to buy, it's important to understand that timing the market is nearly impossible. The longer you wait, the higher the risk that market conditions will shift—and not necessarily in your favor. As Greg McBride, Chief Financial Analyst at *Bankrate*, says: *"It's one of those things where you should be careful what you wish for. A further drop in mortgage rates could bring a surge of demand that makes it tougher to actually buy a house."*

### Bottom Line

Don't wait until you have to deal with more competition and higher prices – you already have the chance to buy a home while we're in the sweet spot today. Connect with an agent to make sure you're taking advantage of it.

Source: Keeping Current Matters

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The truth is, if mortgage rates continue to ease, as experts project, more buyers will jump back into the market. A survey from *Bankrate* shows over half of homeowners would be motivated to buy this year if rates drop below 6%.

With rates already in the low 6% range, we're not terribly far off from hitting that threshold. The bottom line is, that when they drop into the 5s, the number of buyers in the market is going to go up – and that means more competition for you.

That increased demand will likely push home prices up, which could potentially take away from some of the benefits you'd gain from a slightly lower interest rate. As Nadia Evangelou, Senior Economist and Director of Real Estate Research at the *National Association of Realtors (NAR)*, explains: *"The downside of increased demand is that it puts upward pressure on home prices as multiple buyers compete for a limited number of homes. In markets with ongoing housing shortages, this price increase can offset some of the affordability gains from lower mortgage rates."*

So, while waiting to buy may seem like a smart move, it could backfire if rising prices outpace your savings from slightly lower rates.

### What This Means for You

Right now, you've got the chance to get ahead of all of that. Today's market is a

## THE GOOD - AND NOT SO GOOD - OF AI

At its heart, technology exists to solve problems and enrich our lives, but its journey is rarely straightforward. The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into everyday tools—like search engines, smart speakers, and virtual assistants—perfectly illustrates the challenges that come with disruptive innovation. Here's a quick look at how AI is improving our lives, but where we also need to take a step back to be more cautious.

### The upside of AI: Empowering efficiency

- **Has instant access.** Unlike humans who are prone to distractions, emotions, or getting tired, AI can operate without any such issues. Since it's powered by algorithms, human-related points of failure such as stress-induced errors are virtually eliminated.
- **Accelerates data processing.** AI can quickly sift through vast amounts of data, pinpointing inconsistencies, outliers, and trends in seconds. Tasks that would take a human hours, if not days, are reduced to mere moments, allowing us to focus on higher-level analysis and decision-making.

**Always available for automated tasks.** AI automates repetitive tasks, cutting down on administrative busy work and freeing up our time for more complicated tasks. It's also always available – wherever you have an internet connection.

### The downside of AI: Tread carefully

- **Plagiarism is likely to occur.** AI doesn't care if the information it creates is owned by someone else. This plagiarism can happen when creating music, text, voiceovers, and other forms of creative expression.
- **AI blends truth AND fiction.** While AI excels at many things, fact-checking and



proper citations aren't among them. Like Wikipedia, AI can be a useful starting point but shouldn't be trusted as a sole authority. AI's outputs may include inaccuracies, making it unreliable for in-depth research or professional use.

- **Lacks true creativity.** AI may do a great job to organize and repackage information, but it still falls short when it comes to true innovation. Creativity, by nature, is abstract and requires out-of-the-box thinking that AI has yet to master. Its outputs are rooted in existing data, meaning that groundbreaking ideas remain out of reach.
- **Reduces critical thinking skills.** While technology often makes life easier, it can also make us mentally lazier. Think about how difficult navigating a new city would be without GPS! Similarly, if we become overly reliant on AI for decision-making, our critical thinking skills may weaken over time, leading to a decline in actual human intelligence.
- **Can lead to serious legal and tax issues.** Relying on AI for legal, tax, or other professional advice can leave you in hot water. While AI may be appropriate for initial research on a particular issue, remember that AI itself isn't a registered attorney or tax preparer. You should still rely on the knowledge and experience of professionals when advice is needed.

### The verdict: Use AI as a tool, not a crutch

AI has the potential to be a powerful tool to complement our own human ideas and capabilities. It's far from ready, though, to be the sole source of truth. Like any emerging technology, it should be approached with both curiosity and caution.

Source: J.K. Services, Inc.

## BEWARE OF DISTRACTION THEFT

Holiday time is upon us and once again, we'd like to remind shoppers to not leave your personal belongings unattended in your cart as you shop. Pick-pocket distraction thefts continue to occur.

How it happens: a victim is shopping with their belongings in the cart basket and while their attention is distracted, the thief uses it as an opportunity to steal the victim's wallet, cellphone, or other items. The thief then leaves the store and immediately travels to a separate location, usually a big box store, to use the victim's credit cards to make large purchases. The victim may be unaware their property is missing until checkout or when they begin to receive fraud notices on their cellphone from their bank.

We ask you to keep your belongings secure while you shop. NEVER leave your items, especially a wallet, purse, or cellular phone in your cart unattended. BE AWARE WHILE YOU SHOP and be cautious if someone tries to divert your attention away from your personal property.

Source: Rocklin Police Department



## WATCH OUT FOR THESE TAX MYTHS

**MYTH:** /miTH/ (noun) – a widely held but false belief or idea

Many myths about the IRS and the tax code have been amplified online in recent years. Here are several myths that if you believe them, could leave you with an expensive tax surprise.

**Myth #1: Retirement money is always tax free.**

You have retired and withdraw from a 401(k) fully expecting that you won't owe income taxes. Unfortunately, money withdrawn at any age from a 401(k) – or your traditional IRA – incurs income taxes at your current tax rate.

**Lesson Learned:** Understand how money in each of your retirement accounts is taxed when withdrawn. Some will have income taxes, some could incur early withdrawal penalties, while some incur no tax at all!

**Myth #2: The government won't find out about a big gambling win.**

Gambling winnings are considered taxable income to the feds and most states. The IRS generally wants about a quarter of your winnings from sweepstakes, casinos, bingo, keno, online sports betting, and the like. Casinos and other betting entities also inform the IRS of your winnings over certain thresholds. So it is always best to keep track of your winnings.

**Lesson Learned:** Gambling winnings fall under tax rules just like other forms of income. Deducting gambling losses is possible, but it has limits that are subject to strict rules. For example, you must itemize deductions on your tax return if you don't declare yourself a self-employed professional gambler.



**Myth #3: Government benefits like unemployment and Social Security aren't taxable.**

Unfortunately, unemployment and Social Security benefits are usually taxable. Unemployment benefits are taxed at your normal tax rate as income at the federal level and in some states. Social Security is taxed, but in a much more confusing way. Supplemental Security Income payments, on the other hand, are not taxable.

**Lesson Learned:** Plan ahead to mitigate the tax shock. You can have taxes withheld from your unemployment benefits so you don't have to pay a lump sum when you file your return. With Social Security benefits, understand when and how they can be taxed, since up to 80% of these benefits could be subject to income tax by the federal government.

**Myth #4: I work from home and can write off my office expenses.**

You can only deduct home office expenses if you operate a business out of your home. If you're an employee, you're out of luck. If you do run a business exclusively out of your home, there are still hurdles to clear before you qualify to use the home office deduction.

**Lesson Learned:** Tax rules can be complicated, even for something that seems as simple as a home office deduction.

If there's one common theme here, it's that tax laws can be complex even when they seem simple on the surface. When in doubt ask for help.

Source: J.K. Services, Inc.

## MILITARY: PURPLE HEART BENEFITS

Gen. George Washington established America's oldest military decoration as the Badge of Military Merit in 1782. Redesignated the Purple Heart in 1932, it has been known as such ever since.

Military service members receive the Purple Heart for being wounded or killed in any military action against an enemy. Recipients receive many special federal and state benefits.

**Automatic Upgrade of Medical Priority Group**

The Department of Veterans Affairs has eight different priority groups for veterans seeking medical treatment. Those in Priority Group 1 have a disability of 50% or greater or are unemployable and get all their medical care free from the VA. Those in Priority Group 8 usually aren't eligible for medical care because their disabilities aren't service-connected or their income is too high.

Purple Heart recipients are automatically upgraded to Priority Group 3 regardless of the severity of their injuries or their income. This gives them higher-priority access to medical care and relieves them from paying any copays for VA medical treatment or hospitalization.

**Home Loan Benefits**

Purple Heart recipients who are active-duty members or veterans receiving disability compensation may be exempt from the VA Home Loan funding fee.



**GI Bill Benefits**

Purple Heart recipients are automatically granted full Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits regardless of the amount of time they spent on active duty, and they are eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program to help cover the cost of private institutions. Normally for the maximum Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility, a veteran must have served at least 36 months of active duty.

**Commissary and Exchange Privileges**

Purple Heart recipients may shop at commissaries and exchanges. Check with your location for the required documentation.

**Hiring Preference**

Purple Heart recipients with an honorable discharge are granted a 10-point preference for federal hiring.

**State Benefits**

Most states offer several benefits to Purple Heart recipients. These can range from free college for them and their family members to special license plates. Check your state benefit page for details.

Source: Amanda Miller, Military.com



## SNOWMOBILE THE SAFE WAY

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that approximately 10 people die while riding snowmobiles each year and about 13,400 receive emergency medical treatment from snowmobile injuries each year.

Are you getting ready to go snowmobiling? If you are, remember these safety tips:

- **Slow down** — Speed is a contributing factor in many fatal snowmobiling accidents. Be sure you have enough time to react should you need to change speed or direction quickly and drive defensively particularly after sunset. In poor weather conditions, reduce speed below the posted limit.
- **Be sure you have a first-aid kit** — In addition to typical items such as bandages, flashlight and cotton gauze, be sure to include a knife, compass, map & means of communication such as a cell phone or CB radio.
- **Avoid traveling across lakes, streams and rivers** — It's very difficult to accurately judge ice coverage or depth of frozen water. Snow cover can act as a blanket that prevents safe ice from forming.
- **Dress for the weather** — Layer clothing and wear a durable waterproof outer shell and footwear. Wear a helmet, eye protection and other safety gear. Wear reflective clothing at night.
- **Stay on marked trails** — Ride



single file, keep to the right and pass on the left only when the trail is clear. Keep an eye out for fences, tree stumps and obstacles that may be concealed by snow. And, of course, stay off private property.

- **Never travel alone** — Snowmobile accidents may result in personal injury so try to have someone ride along with you so you can help each other in case of accident or breakdown. If you must travel alone, tell someone your destination, planned route, and when you expect to return.
- **Know the rules of the road** — Learn the applicable snowmobile traffic laws and regulations for the state and area where you'll be traveling. They serve to keep you and others on the trails safe.
- **Never drink while driving your snowmobile** — Drinking and driving can be a deadly combination. Practice zero-tolerance!
- **Be sure the snowmobile is in good operating condition** — Conduct a safety check before each ride.

Double check gas levels, brake lines, and lights before heading out. Also, carry a small toolkit with you for emergency repairs.

How safe is snowmobiling? Only as safe as the person operating the snowmobile. That's why it's important that you know how to operate it safely and that you always exercise good judgment.

Source: John Hughes, Farmers Insurance

## COFFEE MAY REALLY BE GOOD FOR YOU

A lot of us depend on a cup of coffee or two to get going in the morning. But coffee may have even more significant health benefits. Here's a quick look at what it may do to improve your life:

- **Melanoma.** A study by the National Institutes of Health and the AARP found that the more coffee people drink during the day, the lower their chances of developing melanoma over a 10-year period. Four cups of coffee a day was associated to a 20% drop in melanoma risk.
- **Multiple sclerosis.** An analysis of two studies of people diagnosed with MS (one in the U.S. and one in Sweden) found that consuming at least four cups of coffee a day appears to delay the onset of symptoms. The caffeine, researchers say, seems to have neuroprotective properties that inhibit MS development.
- **Liver cancer.** Drinkers of three or more alcoholic beverages a day may be able to cut their risk of liver cancer by drinking coffee, according to a recent World Cancer Research Fund report. Coffee and coffee extracts appear to have a preventative effect on the expression of genes involved with inflammation—an effect that's most prevalent in the liver.

Source: Cheryl Bower, SF Realtor





# HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

## Today's Laugh

MY MIND IS LIKE MY  
INTERNET BROWSER.  
I HAVE 19 TABS OPEN,  
3 ARE FROZEN,  
AND I HAVE NO IDEA  
WHERE THE MUSIC IS  
COMING FROM

### Cranberry Christmas Cake

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 3 large eggs room temp
- 2 C sugar
- 3/4 C unsalted butter softened
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp almond extract
- 2 C all-purpose flour
- 12 oz fresh cranberries
- Powdered sugar for garnish



**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Prep 9 x13 pan with non-stick baking spray.
3. Beat the eggs and sugar together with an electric mixer until slightly thickened and light in color. This mixture should form peaks when you lift the beaters out of the bowl.
4. Add the butter and vanilla to the egg mixture and continue to mix. Mix for two minutes.
5. Slowly add in the flour but just until combined.
6. Add the fresh cranberries. Stir the cranberries to mix throughout.
7. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-50 minutes.
8. Allow the cake to cool completely before cutting into slices. Garnish with powder sugar.
9. Makes 16 servings.

Source: Kitchen Fun with My 3 Sons

# Nutty Boats

**NEEDED**

- Walnut Shells
- Leaf
- Clay
- Twigs

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. For each, you'll need an intact half of a walnut shell (see our tip below).
2. Thread a leaf onto a twig for a mast and a sail. Secure the mast to the inside of the shell with a small ball of clay.

TIP: To open a walnut without breaking the shell (an adult's job), hold it steady on a cutting board, insert the tip of a flathead screwdriver or a butter knife into the flat end of the seam, and carefully pry the halves apart.



Source: Disney Family Fun

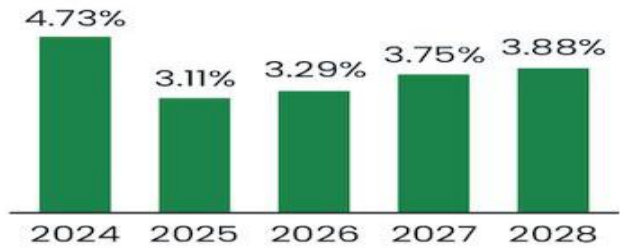
You may be torn between buying a home now or waiting. But don't forget to factor in the equity you'll gain as prices rise.

### Experts Forecast Home Prices Will Climb over the Next 5 Years

Even this more moderate home price growth can add up fast.

### Estimated Home Price Performance

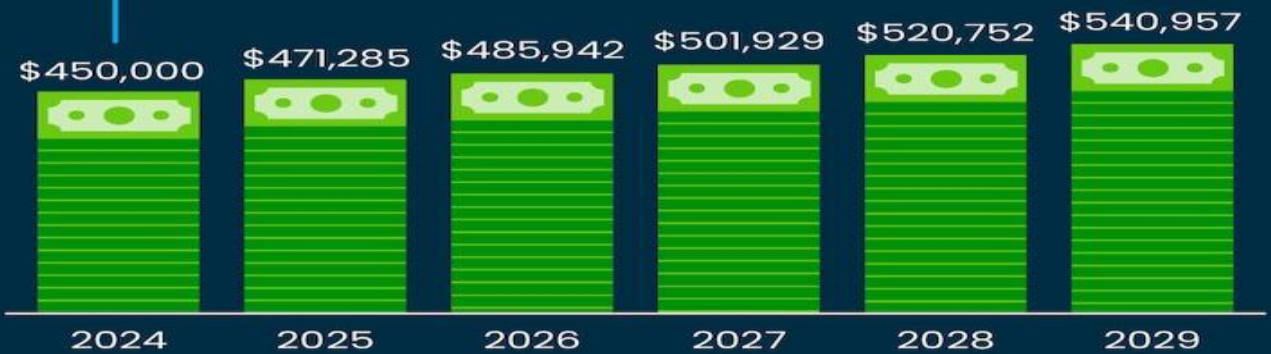
December-December, as Forecast in Q3 2024



### The Equity You Could Gain (or Stand To Lose)

Based on this forecast, if you bought a \$450,000 house this year, experts say you could gain

**more than \$90,000 in equity** over the next 5 years.



Based on price appreciation projected by the Home Price Expectations Survey

You could wait, but you'll miss out on a lot of equity if you do. If you're ready and able to buy, connect with an agent so you can start growing your wealth now.



# CALIFORNIA HOME SALES: SEPTEMBER 2024

State/Region/County	Sept. 2024	August 2024	MTM% Chg	State/Region/County	Sept. 2024	August 2024	MTM% Chg
Calif. State Average	\$868,150	\$888,740	-2.3%	Solano	\$611,000	\$600,000	+1.8%
Calif. Condo Average	\$660,000	\$665,000	-0.8%	Contra-Costa	\$863,750	\$841,950	+2.6%
Sacramento	\$560,000	\$559,000	+0.2%	San Francisco	\$1,625,000	\$1,528,500	+6.3%
Placer	\$660,000	\$675,000	-2.2%	Fresno	\$430,000	\$434,940	-1.1%
El Dorado	\$689,000	\$650,000	+6.0%	Santa Clara	\$1,927,500	\$1,851,830	+4.1%
Yolo	\$610,000	\$620,960	-1.8%	Orange County	\$1,397,450	\$1,400,000	-0.2%
Stanislaus	\$480,000	\$475,000	+1.1%	Los Angeles	\$960,370	\$919,890	+4.4%
San Joaquin	\$583,550	\$560,000	+4.2%	San Diego	\$1,000,000	\$1,010,000	-1.0%
Nevada	\$570,000	\$560,000	+1.8%	Butte	\$465,580	\$458,000	+1.7%
				Yuba	\$440,000	\$448,000	-1.8%

For Complete Report & All California Counties: <http://www.givingback4homes.com/newsletter.html> \*revised

## HVAC Tune-Up Reminders:

Between February 1 and April 30:  
Time to schedule your spring tune-up.

Between September 1 and November 30:  
Time to schedule your fall tune-up.



ROCKLIN, CA

## CONGRATULATIONS

AMBER & BRANDON E.

ON THE PURCHASE OF YOUR HOME!

AND FOR RECEIVING \$1,614.00 FROM

Gretchen Bradley @



## NOVEMBER



WISHING A HAPPY BIRTHDAY & HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO THE FOLLOWING:

DARYL L.  
ROBERT D.  
HARSIMRAN K.  
ALEX & BRYNNE C.

ANDRE C.  
JOSE A.  
LAURA A.  
JULI & CARL B.  
ERIC E.

KELLY C.  
ALLY H.  
BRANDON E.  
ANTHONY & SEREA L.  
STEPHANIE T.

HEATHER M.  
JULI B.  
KATE S.  
CHARITY & JUSTIN R.

# MONTHLY DRAWING

Enter Online at: [www.givingback4homes.com/free-drawing.html](http://www.givingback4homes.com/free-drawing.html)  
 Already receiving GB4H News? You are automatically entered each month!

**NOVEMBER PRIZES**

**1st Prize** \$50 Red Robin Gift Card  
**2nd Prize** \$25 Amazon Gift Card  
**3rd Prize** \$10 Subway Gift Card

**OCTOBER WINNERS**

**1st Prize** \$50 Lands End Gift Card-Tom M.  
**2nd Prize** \$25 Domino's Card-Katie P.  
**3rd Prize** \$10 Starbucks Gift Card-Lisa B.

Drawing Disclaimer Available Online.



## FREE Home Value Report

Find out how much your home may be worth.  
 You may be surprised!  
 Contact me today for a FREE Home Value Report

**Gretchen Bradley**  
 (916) 769-0184  
[Gretchen@GB4Homes.com](mailto:Gretchen@GB4Homes.com)  
[www.GivingBack4Homes.com](http://www.GivingBack4Homes.com)



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## Giving Back 4 Homes Program

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**Gretchen Bradley**  
**Giving Back 4 Homes Program Founder**  
**Top Producer & PCAR Masters Club**  
 NAR, CAR, PCAR Realtor® - Lic#01894275  
 30+ Yrs Experience-Real Estate Sales/Lending  
 Nationwide Relocation Specialist  
 Sacramento Area Military Relocation Liaison  
 Proud Wife of a Soldier & CHP Officer

**Phone** (916) 769-0184  
**Email** [Gretchen@GB4Homes.com](mailto:Gretchen@GB4Homes.com)  
**Email** [GB4Homes@Gmail.com](mailto:GB4Homes@Gmail.com)  
**Web** [www.GivingBack4Homes.com](http://www.GivingBack4Homes.com)  
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