

CENTRAL FLORIDA REAL ESTATE NEWS

Keeping You Up To Date On Housing Trends
& The Local Real Estate Market

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September Edition

The Property Insurance & HOA Assessment Squeeze: What Central Florida Homeowners Need to Know

For years, Central Florida homeowners have enjoyed strong demand, rising property values, and an attractive lifestyle. But today, there is another factor affecting the cost of owning a home or condominium: the growing squeeze from property insurance premiums, HOA costs, and special assessments. For both homeowners and prospective buyers, understanding these expenses has become just as important as looking at the purchase price.

Insurance Costs Are Changing the Equation

Homeowners across Florida have seen significant increases in property insurance premiums. Even when a home's market value has remained relatively stable, the cost of insuring it can have a meaningful impact on the owner's monthly budget.

One way homeowners may be able to reduce insurance costs is through a **wind mitigation inspection**. Depending on the property's construction features and the insurance company's underwriting guidelines, documented wind-resistant features may qualify the homeowner for discounts.

It is also worth shopping your policy periodically rather than automatically renewing with the same carrier. An independent insurance professional can help compare coverage, deductibles, exclusions, and available discounts.

Keep in mind: **the cheapest policy isn't necessarily the best policy**. Understanding what is—and isn't—covered is critical, particularly in Florida.

Buyers: Don't Look Only at the HOA Fee

If you're purchasing a condominium, townhome, or home within an HOA, the monthly assessment is only part of the financial picture.

Before submitting an offer, buyers should ask questions such as:

- How much money does the association currently have in reserves?
- Are there any pending or recently approved special assessments?
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- Have HOA fees increased significantly in recent years?
- What major repairs or capital projects are anticipated?
- Are there outstanding insurance claims or coverage issues?
- What does the association's master insurance policy cover?
- How much is the association's insurance premium?

- Have required inspections identified structural or other significant issues?
- Are there any upcoming projects that could result in additional owner expenses?

These questions can reveal potential costs that aren't obvious from the listing information.

Special Assessments Can Change the Cost of Ownership

A property may look like a great deal based on its asking price and monthly HOA fee, but a significant special assessment can quickly change the financial equation.

For condominium buyers especially, reviewing the association's financial documents, budgets, reserve information, meeting minutes, insurance information, inspection reports, and disclosures can provide valuable insight into the property's financial health.

This is where having an experienced real estate professional can make a difference. **The goal isn't simply to find a property you love—it is to understand the complete cost of owning it.**

What Homeowners Can Do Now

If you already own a home or condominium, don't wait until renewal time to review your expenses.

Consider:

Reviewing your insurance policy. Make sure your coverage still reflects your property and needs.

Getting a wind mitigation inspection. Ask your insurance professional whether your property may qualify for discounts.

Comparing insurance options. Rates and underwriting requirements can vary considerably.

Reviewing your HOA's financial health. Pay attention to reserve funding, insurance costs, upcoming projects, and proposed assessments.

Planning for increases. Even if your HOA is financially healthy today, rising insurance and maintenance costs can affect future assessments.

The Bottom Line

In today's Central Florida real estate market, the purchase price is only one part of the affordability equation.

Insurance + HOA fees + property taxes + maintenance + potential assessments = the true cost of ownership.

For buyers, doing the homework before making an offer can help prevent unpleasant financial surprises later. For sellers, being prepared with accurate HOA, insurance, and assessment information can make the transaction smoother and help buyers understand the value of the property.

A Shift Toward a Buyer's Market: What Rising Inventory Means for Central Florida Homeowners

For several years, Central Florida's real estate market was defined by limited inventory, intense buyer competition and rapidly rising prices. Today, the landscape is changing.

Across the Greater Orlando and Tampa Bay regions, buyers are seeing more homes available than they have in recent years. That growing inventory is giving buyers something they haven't had much of in the past: **options—and time to make decisions.** For sellers, however, the market is becoming less forgiving. Homes that are overpriced or don't stand out from the competition may sit longer, experience price reductions or require additional incentives to attract a buyer.

More Inventory Means More Choices for Buyers

When inventory increases, buyers generally gain negotiating power.

Instead of feeling pressured to make an offer immediately because another buyer may purchase the home tomorrow, buyers can take more time to compare properties, evaluate neighborhoods and negotiate terms.

That can translate into opportunities such as:

- Negotiating a lower purchase price
- Requesting seller-paid closing costs
- Asking for repairs or credits following an inspection
- Negotiating a mortgage rate buydown
- Requesting assistance with prepaid expenses or other allowable costs
- Taking additional time to evaluate competing properties

The key is that not every home will offer the same opportunity.

Well-priced, desirable properties can still attract strong interest, while homes that are overpriced may provide significantly more negotiating room.

Sellers Need to Price Strategically

For homeowners thinking about selling, today's market requires a different approach than the frenzy we experienced several years ago.

Pricing a home based on what a neighbor received during the peak of the market can be a costly mistake. Buyers have more alternatives, and they are increasingly comparing homes based on value—not simply availability.

A strategic seller should look closely at:

Current competition: What similar properties are available right now?

Recent sales: What have buyers actually been willing to pay?

Days on market: How quickly are comparable properties selling?

Condition: Does the property compete effectively with newer or recently renovated homes?

Total buyer cost: How will the mortgage payment, insurance, HOA fees and property taxes affect affordability?

In this environment, the goal isn't necessarily to be the cheapest home on the market. The goal is to be one of the best values in your price range.

Concessions Are Becoming More Important

One of the most useful tools for sellers today may be offering concessions rather than simply reducing the asking price.

For example, a seller might consider contributing toward a buyer's closing costs or a mortgage **interest-rate buydown**, subject to the terms of the buyer's loan and applicable lender and transaction rules. A rate buydown can make a property more affordable by reducing the buyer's mortgage rate for a period of time—or potentially for the life of the loan, depending on the structure.

For some buyers, a concession that lowers their monthly payment can be more attractive than a modest reduction in the purchase price.

This is why sellers should look beyond the question, "What price should I list at?"

The better question may be:

"What combination of price, terms and incentives will make my home the most compelling choice for today's buyer?"

Buyers Shouldn't Assume Every Seller Will Negotiate

More inventory doesn't mean buyers automatically have the upper hand on every property.

A desirable home that is priced correctly can still attract multiple offers. Location, condition, school zones, amenities, lot size and overall value continue to matter.

Buyers should therefore avoid making low offers simply because they believe the market has shifted in their favor.

Instead, work with your Realtor to determine the property's actual market value and identify **where there may be legitimate negotiating leverage.**

The Market Is Becoming More Balanced

Perhaps the biggest change we're seeing is psychological.

Buyers are becoming less concerned about "missing out," while sellers are becoming more aware that simply putting a home on the market doesn't guarantee multiple offers.

That creates a healthier environment for the overall market.

For buyers, it can mean more choices and greater negotiating opportunities.

For sellers, it means preparation, pricing and marketing matter more than ever.

And for both sides, understanding the numbers behind the transaction—including mortgage rates, insurance costs, HOA fees, taxes and closing expenses—is increasingly important.

What Should You Do Next?

If you're a buyer: Don't wait for the "perfect" market. Get financially prepared, understand your monthly payment and work with your Realtor to identify properties where you have genuine negotiating leverage.

If you're a seller: Don't rely on yesterday's market. Have your home evaluated based on today's competition and consider whether strategic concessions could produce a better result than simply lowering the price.

Central Florida real estate isn't necessarily moving from a "seller's market" to a "buyer's market" overnight. Instead, we're seeing a gradual shift toward a market where **pricing, preparation and negotiation matter more than they did during the boom years.**

Infrastructure Expansion Is Creating Central Florida's Next Suburban Hotspots

If you're looking for the next great place to live in Central Florida, don't just look at today's home prices—look at where the roads, rail lines and infrastructure are headed.

Across Central Florida, major transportation investments are reshaping commuting patterns and helping transform once-overlooked communities into some of the region's emerging residential hotspots. From the continued expansion of Brightline to improvements along I-4 and major road projects throughout Polk, Osceola and Lake Counties, infrastructure is increasingly influencing where buyers choose to live.

For buyers willing to look beyond the traditional Orlando suburbs, these changes can create opportunities to find more home for the money while positioning themselves near future growth.

1. Haines City & Northeast Polk County

Polk County continues to attract attention from buyers looking for a more affordable alternative to some of the established Orlando-area communities.

Haines City and surrounding areas benefit from their location between Orlando and Tampa, with access to major transportation routes including I-4 and US 27. As Central Florida continues to grow, improvements to roads and transportation infrastructure are making communities throughout Polk County increasingly attractive to commuters and families.

The appeal is relatively straightforward: buyers may find newer homes, larger lots and more attainable prices than they would in many established areas closer to Orlando.

For buyers who don't need to be in downtown Orlando every day, Northeast Polk County deserves a closer look.

2. St. Cloud & Eastern Osceola County

Osceola County has become one of the most dynamic growth areas in Central Florida, and St. Cloud is benefiting from that expansion.

The region's continued residential development, road improvements and proximity to major employment centers have helped turn St. Cloud from a distant Orlando suburb into a community with its own growing identity.

Eastern Osceola County also offers something many buyers are looking for: newer construction and master-planned communities without necessarily paying the premium associated with some of Orlando's more established neighborhoods.

With continued population growth and infrastructure investment, today's outer suburb could become tomorrow's major residential hub.

3. Clermont & Southwest Lake County

Clermont has already established itself as one of Central Florida's most desirable suburban communities, but continued growth throughout Lake County is creating additional opportunities farther west.

Improvements to major transportation corridors are making it easier for residents to connect with Orlando and surrounding employment centers. At the same time, communities around Clermont, Minneola and other parts of southwest Lake County continue to attract new construction.

For buyers priced out of some of the more established western



Orlando communities, this area can offer a compelling combination of newer homes, amenities, space and access to major roadways.

Infrastructure Can Be a Real Estate Crystal Ball

One of the most important lessons in real estate is that today's convenient suburb isn't always tomorrow's convenient suburb.

Transportation projects can change that equation.

When new roads are widened, interchanges are improved or rail service expands, communities that once seemed "too far away" can suddenly become much more practical for commuters. That can lead to increased demand for housing, new retail and restaurants, additional employment opportunities and continued residential development.

Of course, infrastructure investment doesn't automatically guarantee that home values will rise. Buyers should still evaluate taxes, insurance costs, HOA or CDD fees, schools, commute times and the overall supply of homes in the area.

But infrastructure is an important piece of the puzzle.

The Bottom Line for Central Florida Buyers

The biggest opportunities aren't always in the neighborhoods receiving the most attention today. Sometimes they're in the communities positioned just outside the current spotlight.

If you're willing to look at where Central Florida is going rather than simply where it is today, Polk, Osceola and Lake Counties offer several communities worth watching.

For buyers, the strategy is simple: follow the infrastructure, study the growth, and then evaluate the real estate opportunity.

The right combination of transportation improvements, new development and reasonable housing costs could make today's emerging suburb one of tomorrow's most desirable communities.



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Agent Spotlight

Phil Holliday is a dedicated real estate professional with Preferred Real Estate Brokers, specializing in helping clients buy and sell homes in both Central Florida and Las Vegas. With years of experience in the industry, Phil combines local market knowledge, cutting-edge technology, and a client-focused approach to make every real estate transaction smooth and successful. One of Phil's unique offerings is his Perfect Home Finder program, a personalized service that goes beyond the standard MLS listings. By working closely with clients to identify their precise needs and preferences, Phil uses advanced target marketing to identify pre-listed and off-market properties that perfectly match each client's criteria. This program is especially valuable for buyers who want exclusive access to homes that aren't widely available. Whether you're a first-time homebuyer, a seasoned investor, or looking to relocate, Phil is committed to helping you find your dream home with ease and expertise. Reach out today to experience a superior level of service in Central Florida or Las Vegas real estate.

Recommended Service Professionals

As a real estate professional, I work with many local professionals and want to recommend those that found to give exceptional service. Here are a few of my top choices, please be sure to tell them I referred them to you

Vince Gaudio
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