



VIREB

VANCOUVER ISLAND REAL ESTATE BOARD

AN ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

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VIREB REALTORS® release annual Buyer Profile



<Photo outline: RaeWyn Hewitt (left), regional mortgage specialist with ScotiaBank, recently moved to Nanaimo from Kelowna with her husband and young daughter. Cell 250-755-9988 for media contact>

NANAIMO, BC - The Vancouver Island Real Estate Board (VIREB) has released its annual 2006 Buyer Profile, tracking where people are coming from, what they're buying and why.

Statistics provided are for the overall Board area and for each Zone (Duncan/Cowichan Valley, Nanaimo, Port Alberni/West Coast, Parksville/Qualicum, Comox Valley, and Campbell River, as well as the North Island and Islands areas).

8,500 surveys were sent to residential buyers obtained from the MLS® database for 2006. There were just over 2,100 completed responses from Buyers. The report also contains a 3-year comparative section as a snap-shot of current trends.

“When added together, more than 57 percent of buyers originate on Vancouver Island and almost 43 percent originate from the rest of BC and outside of the province,” VIREB President Jennifer Lynch says.

“The influx of buyers originating from outside our market boundaries is fueled by baby boomers, and recreational/lifestyle seekers as well our strong provincial economy.”

Broken down, the Vancouver Island numbers show 35 percent of buyers from within the same area, 15 percent from elsewhere on Vancouver Island, 5.2 percent from Victoria and 1.9 percent from the Gulf Islands.

From the rest of BC and outside of the province: 10 percent of Buyers originated from Alberta, 9 percent from Vancouver, 7 percent from elsewhere in BC, 5.5 percent from Ontario, 3.3 percent from the rest of the world, 3 percent from the Fraser Valley, 2.5 percent from the rest of Canada, 2.5 percent from Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Lynch says the 3-year comparison is very useful for all types of infrastructure planning. It shows an increase in buyers from within the same area, while the number of Alberta buyers has remained steady at between 10 and 11 percent.

BCREA Chief Economist **Cameron Muir** says the VIREB geography appears to be a preferred destination for retirees.

“The impact of retirees is significant at 37 percent Board wide, ranging from 28 percent in the Nanaimo Area to 58 percent in the Parksville/Qualicum Zone,” he says, noting retirees bring their money into the marketplace.

“They add to the economy by creating demand for higher paid health care and financial services, as well as adding to the local tax base. Retirees bring financial resources earned elsewhere and spend it in the local community, increasing local demand for labour.”

Other Buyer Profile statistics: 94 percent of Buyers were acquiring a principal residence and 55 percent had been in the community less than one year. First time homebuyers accounted for 15 percent of purchases made in the Board Area and 11 percent of first-time homebuyers used RRSPs.

The Buyer Profile also showed the home characteristics from the MLS® database with the highest frequency. The most popular was a 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom, double garage home with vinyl exterior with an ocean or mountain view.

The most popular price range across VIREB was in \$200,000 to \$250,000, and then a very close 2nd in the range of \$250,000 to \$300,000.

Buyer use of the Internet increased to 27 percent, up from 19.5 percent in 2004.

Regional differences are also highlighted in the Buyer Profile.

Past President Darrell Paysen, in the Cowichan Valley says identifying future infrastructure needs is one of the key messages in the Buyer Profile. “In our Zone, we’re seeing more and more people who work in Victoria, choose to live in the Cowichan Valley because of affordability. As a result there is an increasing call for safer commuting routes into Victoria, such as developing a commuter rail corridor,” he says.

Marty Douglas, VIREB Director in the Comox Valley, prepared a chart comparing prices in his Zone with Calgary. “To this chart we added passenger numbers by year traveling through the Comox Airport. You can clearly see the impact of the addition of Westjet direct flights to Calgary and then Edmonton,” he says.

“As those passenger numbers have expanded rapidly over the last 4 years, the growth of average housing prices in the Comox Valley and Calgary have steadily followed.”

Campbell River has seen strong growth from out of the area for the last three years, according to VIREB Director Karol Power. “People can fly into Campbell River via Vancouver and then don’t mind the 30 minute

drive to or from Comox. Buyers are quite amazed with the way Campbell River is geographically built all around the water.”

In the Alberni Valley, VIREB Director Lyle Price says buyers are continuing to come in from Alberta and other parts of Vancouver Island.

“We actually have a pair of new doctors at West Coast General Hospital from Alberta. This region continues to attract many retirees but also lots of young families because of affordability and access to amenities,” Price explains.

VIREB represents approximately 1,154 licensed REALTOR® members in more than 80 member offices on Vancouver Island (north of Victoria). The Buyer Profile is available to all members, and it is provided to relevant organizations such as fellow Boards, economic development groups, chambers of commerce, and municipal, provincial, and federal government representatives.

VIREB REALTORS®, in line with the REALTOR® Code of Ethics of the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA), are committed to keeping informed of local trends in their industry, and the Buyer Profile is one of many resources provided by the Board that enables them to do so.

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