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## *Prices Hold Firm as Home Buyers and Sellers Conclude 2012 From the Sidelines*

The Greater Vancouver housing market experienced below average home sale totals, typical home listing activity and modest declines in home prices in 2012.

The Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver (REBGV) reports that total sales of detached, attached and apartment properties in 2012 reached 25,032, a 22.7% decline from the 32,387 sales recorded in 2011, and an 18.2% decrease from the 30,595 residential sales in 2010. Last year's home sale total was 25.7% below the ten-year average for annual *Multiple Listing Service® (MLS®)* sales in the region.

The number of residential properties listed for sale on the MLS® in Greater Vancouver declined 2% in 2012 to 58,379 compared to the 59,539 properties listed in 2011. Looking back further, last year's total represents a 0.6% increase compared to the 58,009 residential properties listed in 2010. Last year's listing total was 6.1% above the ten-year average for annual MLS® property listings in the region.

*"For much of 2012 we saw a collective hesitation on the part of buyers and sellers in the Greater Vancouver housing market. This behaviour was reflected in lower than average home sale activity and modest fluctuations in home prices,"* Eugen Klein, REBGV president said.

Residential property sales in Greater Vancouver totalled 1,142 in December 2012, a decrease of 31.1% from the 1,658 sales recorded in December 2011 and a 32.3% decline compared to November 2012 when 1,686 home sales occurred.

December sales were 38.4% below the 10-year December sales average of 1,855.

Since reaching a peak in May of \$625,100, the MLS® Home Price Index composite benchmark price for all residential properties in Greater Vancouver has declined 5.8% to \$590,800. This represents a 2.3% decline when compared to this time last year.

*"We saw home prices come down a bit during the latter half of the year. During the same period, we saw fewer home sales and listings,"* Klein said.

New listings for detached, attached and apartment properties in Greater Vancouver totalled 1,380 in December 2012. This represents a 15.3% decline compared to the 1,629 units listed in December 2011 and a 50% decline compared to November 2012 when 2,758 properties were listed.

Sales of detached properties in December 2012 reached 425, a decrease of 32.5% from the 630 detached sales recorded in December 2011, and a 44.7% decrease from the 769 units sold in December 2010. The benchmark price for detached properties decreased 2.7% from December 2011 to \$904,200. Since reaching a peak in May, the benchmark price of a detached property has declined 6.5%.

Sales of apartment properties reached 504 in December 2012, a decline of 34.9% compared to the 774 sales in December 2011, and a decrease of 37.9% compared to the 811 sales in December 2010. The benchmark price of an apartment property decreased 1.9% from December 2011 to \$361,200. Since reaching a peak in May, the benchmark price of an apartment property has declined 12.8%.

Attached property sales in December 2012 totalled 213, a decline of 16.1% compared to the 254 sales in December 2011, and a 33.2% decrease from the 319 attached properties sold in December 2010. The benchmark price of an attached unit decreased 2.6% between December 2011 and 2012 to \$450,900. Since reaching a peak in April, the benchmark price of an attached property has declined 4.4%.

*"Activity continues to vary depending on area so it's important to work with your REALTOR® and other professionals to understand the trends in your area of interest,"* Klein said.

Source: REBGV. *"Prices Hold Firm as Home Buyers and Sellers Conclude 2012 From the Sidelines."* www.rebgv.org



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# What Were the Top iPhone and iPad Apps of 2012?

Top iPhone Free	Top iPhone Paid	Top iPad Free	Top iPad Paid
1. YouTube	1. Angry Birds Space	1. Skype	1. Angry Birds Space HD
2. Instagram	2. WhatsApp Messenger	2. Temple Run	2. Where's My Water?
3. Draw Something Free	3. Draw Something	3. Facebook	3. Pages
4. Flashlight	4. Camera+	4. Netflix	4. Draw Something
5. Facebook	5. Where's My Water?	5. The Weather Channel	5. Notability
6. Pandora	6. Angry Birds Star Wars	6. Draw Something Free	6. Angry Birds Star Wars HD
7. Temple Run	7. Fruit Ninja	7. Kindle	7. iPhoto
8. Pinterest	8. Angry Birds	8. Pandora	8. Minecraft- Pocket Edition
9. Twitter	9. Bejewelled	9. Angry Birds HD Free	9. Where's My Perry
10. Skype	10. Tetris	10. Calculators Pro Free	10. Words With Friends HD

Source: Ivan, Tom. Computer and Video Games "Apple Details Top Apps of 2012." <http://www.computerandvideogames.com/383647/apple-details-top-apps-of-2012/>

## 10 Ways to Reverse Holiday Weight Gain - Fast!

You may have spent a month stuffing yourself silly and bingeing on cookies, cocktails and quiches, but by following the following experts' advice, you'll be back in your skinny jeans in no time!

### 1. DON'T beat yourself up.

We all know that a big part of the holidays is catching up with family and friends, and eating comfort food like Mom's stuffing. And that's OK, says Michelle May, M.D., author of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat*. "Enjoying the holidays and being too busy to work out comes with the territory, and it's nothing to shame yourself about." Accept that and move forward.

### 2. DO keep eating

After binge eating for the past month, you may feel like skipping meals entirely. But that will only make you hungrier, which will make it harder to stick with a healthy eating program. The day after a calorie blowout, make sure to have protein in your breakfast - eggs, cottage cheese or yogurt - to satisfy your appetite through the day.

### 3. DO get moving

The extent of your movement during the holidays may have been limited to raising your fork, but it's important to get moving now. Exercise not only burns calories but also puts you in a positive mind-set, which can help you make smarter food choices.

### 4. DON'T eat the white stuff

Cut out white bread, crackers and bagels from your diet. When your body isn't used to the extra salt and sugar, it holds on to a lot of water. Once you get rid of that water weight, your energy levels come back up. Even better news: you'll start to feel a difference in less than 48 hours!

### 5. DO put your goals on paper

Give yourself a specific goal, and write it down. Once you write it down, it becomes real and verifiable. Just saying you want to lose five or 10 pounds isn't specific enough; saying you want to lose five pounds by February 1st is. And as long as you're in the writing mode, make sure you write down all your workouts and what you eat. You'll be surprised by how much a commitment to logging your meals reduces mindless eating.

### 6. DON'T forget your vegetables

Vegetables are natural appetite suppressants. Bread, on the other hand, is an appetite stimulant, which is why you'll usually find it on the table in restaurants.

### 7. DO plan, plan, plan

Deviating from your get-healthy goals

is harder when you plan out your workouts and meals. If you know you're going to be on the go, bring your own food. Carry some fruit or an energy bar when you're running errands, so you don't hit the drive-through. If you know you get hungry later in the evening, plan for a small post dinner snack, then brush your teeth and "close" your kitchen.

### 8. DON'T keep holiday leftovers

After the holidays, get rid of all the holiday food. If you're going to lose weight, you have to get rid of the temptation. Replace the cookies and fruitcake with fruit and healthy snacks.

### 9. DO hit the bottle

The *water* bottle, that is. Most of the time we think we're hungry, we're actually thirsty. In addition to helping you feel fuller, water also helps flush out the "bad" stuff you've been eating as you transition back to a healthier lifestyle.

### 10. DO be patient

Changing your diet also changes your body's weight regulating mechanisms. This makes you hungrier, and it makes it more difficult to stick to your healthy diet.



Source: Blanchfield, Theodora. Glamour "10 Ways to Reverse Holiday Weight Gain - Fast!" <http://www.glamour.com/health-fitness/2009/12/10-ways-to-reverse-holiday-weight-gain-fast>

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# Cold Weather's Coming! Be Prepared!

Winter months can be hard on your home. Freezing temperatures can damage outside pipes, sliding decks, and gutters. Snow and ice can make it difficult to make repairs and could cause even the smallest problem to snowball into a significant expense. By acting on many of these tips, you can safeguard your home and reduce energy bills. Start by going online or checking the TV news or weather channel to learn when the first frost typically arrives. This will help you prepare well ahead of time.

## OUTDOOR PROJECTS

- Drain gas from lawn mowers. Scour and lubricate garden tools. Store tools on hooks or shelves to keep them away from melted snow.
- Prepare winter tools, including snow shovels and blowers. Test, clean, sharpen, and make any necessary repairs.
- Drain and store water hoses.
- Shut off in-ground sprinkler systems and have water blown from pipes to avoid freezing.
- Purchase ice and snow melting products before the rush.
- Add weather stripping and new sealant to doors and windows as necessary. Many sealants work best when applied in moderate temperatures, so timing is important.
- Seal driveway and sidewalk cracks to prevent snow and ice seeping in, which can cause significant damage later on.
- Inspect the roof and gutters and make necessary repairs. Clean gutters of leaves and flush downspouts.

- Touch up paint or stain on wood surfaces. Caulk seams and openings as necessary.
- Contact a garden center to learn the best time to trim trees and shrubs.

## INDOOR PROJECTS

- Have your furnace inspected before the first cold snap. Getting this done early will keep your family warm and safe, and save you from having to wait (sometimes weeks) for a service professional when everyone else is scrambling to fix the same problem.
- Move flammable items away from the furnace.
- Stock up on furnace filters.
- Check attic insulation levels and add new insulation where necessary.
- Seal openings around doors, windows, and exposed pipes.
- Consider purchasing a water heater blanket and wrapping pipes in special insulating tubes. These can be obtained from a home improvement store.
- To maximize energy efficiency, purchase insulating drapes, curtains,

or blinds.

- Change screens on storm doors if necessary.
- Test portable space heaters and discard any not in top working order (malfunctioning space heaters are one of the leading causes of residential fires during winter).
- Test carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and install new ones if necessary. Consider changing the batteries.
- Have the fireplace and chimney inspected and cleaned.

## FINAL HINTS

- Assemble an emergency kit with candles, matches, and new batteries for flashlights. Compile phone numbers of emergency services and utility companies.
- Have a supply of blankets, bottled water, first aid kit, and easily prepared non-perishable food in a central location in case of a power outage. Have a battery powered radio on hand.

Source: RE/MAX Design Center. "Cold Weather's Coming Be Prepared." [www.remax.net](http://www.remax.net)

# How Long Do Home Components Last?

## ROOFING

The life of a roof is largely dependent on weather conditions, proper design and construction, material quality, and adequate maintenance. Slate, copper, and clay/concrete roofs have the longest life expectancy, 50 years or more. Wood shake roofs go for years, fibre cement shingles last 25 years, asphalt shingles give up to 20 years.

## FLOORING

Natural wood flooring has a life expectancy of 100 years or more with proper care. Marble, slate, and granite, likewise - but again only with proper maintenance. Vinyl floors wear out in 50 years, linoleum about 25 years, and carpet between 8-10 years tops.

## ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

Copper-plated wiring, copper-clad aluminum and bare copper wiring are expected to last a lifetime, whereas electrical accessories and lighting

controls are expected to fail after not much longer than 10 years.

## FOUNDATION

Poured concrete block footings and slab foundations should last a lifetime, 80-100 years or more, provided they were built well. The foundation termite proofing should last 12 years, provided the chemical barriers remain intact. Properly installed waterproofing with bituminous coating should last 10 years.

## OUTSIDE MATERIALS

These typically last a lifetime. Brick, vinyl, engineered wood, stone (both natural and manufactured) and fibre cement typically last as long as the house exists. Exterior wood shutters are good for 20 years, well maintained gutters 50 years if they are copper, 20 years if they are aluminum. Copper downspouts last longest - 100 years or more - while aluminum ones give out after 30 years.

## DOORS

Exterior fibreglass, steel, and wood doors will last as long as the house exists, while vinyl and screen doors have a life expectancy of 20 and 40 years, respectively. Closet doors are expected to last a lifetime, and French doors have an average life of 30-50 years.

## HVAC Systems

Heating, ventilation, and AC systems require a religious regimen or maintenance. Still, most components give up within 25 years. Furnaces break down in 15-20 years, heat pumps 16 years, and AC units 10-15 years. Tankless water heaters can go for 20 years or more, but electric/gas water heaters only 10 years. Thermostats have a 35-year lifespan, but are often replaced for more efficient models.

Source: RE/MAX Design Center. "How Long Do Home Components Last?" [www.remax.net](http://www.remax.net)

# Beyond Rates: What the Banks Won't Tell You About Choosing the Best Mortgage

Choosing the best mortgage from all the available lenders out there can be complicated. There are so many terms, features, restrictions and potential penalties to keep in mind. But at least mortgage rates are easy to compare - all you have to do is choose the lowest one, right?

Think again! Choosing the lowest rate is only straightforward if all the rates are stated the same way and include the same things. Fortunately, lenders are required to use the Annual Percentage Rate (APR) as their posted rate. So on lender websites, ads and window posters, the rate that's quoted should be APR.

The Annual Percentage Rate is a compound rate, so it's applied to original principal plus accumulated interest. This gives you a more accurate picture of the actual cost of the loan. To make the APR even more realistic, it not only includes all the interest costs of your loan, it also includes non-interest costs that lenders charge. Depending on the lender, this can include appraisal fees, closing costs, loan fees, loan origination fees, mortgage default insurance, creditor life insurance, legal fees and more. It's that "depending on the lender" part you have to watch. The only way to accurately compare APRs is to look into each lender's fine print and see what's included in the rate it's quoting.

Or, you could take the easier, faster, less frustrating route, and simply call me! As your local independent mortgage consultant, I have access to more lenders than you could possibly find on your own, and I fully understand all their products, terms and rates. I'd be happy to do a no-charge analysis of your needs, and then discuss which options work best for you. And I'll make sure you don't get fooled by a really low mortgage rate that could actually cost you more in the long run because of all the restrictions and penalties it includes. Let me help simplify your life - **call us today at 604.788.1788!**

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## What's Happening Around the City?

*Events, Festivals, and Performances*

### Jan 3-13 Medicine

TJ Dawe shares his experiences with Dr. Gabor Maté about the Amazonian psychotropic plant medicine ayahuasca.

Firehall Arts Centre  
604.689.0926 | firehallartscentre.ca

### Jan 4-Feb 9 Rhinoceros

What do you do when everyone around you is turning into a rhinoceros? Telus Studio Theatre, UBC  
604.822.2678 | theatre.ubc.ca

### Jan 16-Feb 16 Ride the Cyclone

A musical thrill ride.  
Granville Island Stage  
604.687.1644 | artsclub.com

### Jan 24- 26 Encore

Live ballet performances.  
Queen Elizabeth Theatre  
604.732.5003 | balletbc.com

### Jan 24-Feb 24 Boeing-Boeing

A mile-high romantic comedy.  
Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage.  
Granville Island  
604.687.1644 | artsclub.com

### Feb 7-10 Dialogues des Carmélites

A moving French opera based on historical events that took place at a monastery of Carmelite nuns during the French Revolution.  
Old Auditorium, UBC  
604.822.2678 | theatre.ubc.ca

### Feb 14-Sept 2 Sex Talk in the City

A multifaceted exhibition that explores the evolution of "sex talk" in Vancouver.  
Museum of Vancouver  
604.736.4431 | museumofvancouver.ca

### Feb 16 Tango Meets Jazz

Pablo Ziegler Quartet with Regina Carter.  
Chan Shun Concert Hall, UBC  
604.822.9197 | chancentre.com

### Feb 27-28/March 1-2 Swan Lake

By the National Ballet of China.  
Queen Elizabeth Theatre  
604.732.5003 | balletbc.com

*Source: Visitor's Choice Vancouver Fall/Winter 2012/2013.*

Working with a realtor who understands and appreciates your needs is crucial in today's market. As a life member of the Real Estate Medallion Club, I have been recognized as one out of a small handful of successful realtors with over 20 years of outstanding performance. By choosing me to represent you, I guarantee my professionalism, experience, loyalty and expertise. Putting my clients' needs first is not just expected, it is my commitment to you.



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