



For Immediate Release

Sarasota Association of Realtors

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### ***Local real estate market enjoys September rise in pending sales***

Pending sales rose in September 2008 and overall sales stood almost identical to August 2008 in the Sarasota MLS. In fact, overall sales in September 2008 were 29 percent higher than overall sales in September 2007 – a statistic that flies in the face of the recent negativity in the media.

Overall sales came in at 438 in September, just under the 440 reported in August, and only slightly lower than the 454 in July. But the sales figure in September 2008 was much higher than the 338 sales reported in September 2007 for single family homes and condos.

The local market fared even better than the overall state of Florida, which saw a 24 percent jump in single family home sales and an 11 percent jump in condo sales over September 2007 numbers.

Single family home sales soared comparing September 2008 to September 2007. There were 360 sales reported this year, compared to only 234 last year, for a jump of almost 54 percent. The number of sales was roughly the same as last month, when 356 single family homes changed hands. While there were fewer condominium sales reported in September 2008 by SAR members (78 total), the overall numbers were strong.

The September 2008 report also continued to show strength in pending sales, which stood at 584, almost 9 percent higher than last month's total of 536. Higher pending sales, which are contracts executed by buyers and sellers during the month, forecast a stronger market, as these properties close in the coming months.

The median sales price for single family homes decreased in September, falling to \$201,250 from last month's median of \$226,250. The condominium median sales price also dropped to \$190,000 from last month's \$295,000, but the August median showed an uncharacteristic spike. For example, in July 2008 the median stood at \$252,500. The general trend appears to one of local prices now coming more in line with drops statewide and nationally.

"We are closely watching the local real estate market and monitoring the results," said Helen Sosso, 2008 SAR President. "A 9 percent rise in pending sales is an indicator to us that people are looking to real estate as a safer place for their investments as opposed to

stocks or even banks. The decline in the median sales price seems to be attributable to the rise in bank owned and short sale properties, which are selling at terrific values. The Realtors® in Sarasota seem to be having an upswing in the number of showings on property, as well as new customers looking here as the season begins. All in all, we are encouraged by the results.”

Inventory levels in September 2008 dropped for the seventh consecutive month, and are the lowest they have been since late 2005. There were 4,253 single family homes on the market in September 2008, compared to 6,461 single family homes in August 2008. There were 2,098 condos, compared to 2,407 condos last month. These figures, in combination with sales figures, indicate that the absorption rate for single family homes is now at 12 months, compared to a 43 month figure last year at this time. The condominium absorption rate now stands at 27 months, compared to 53 months last September. Absorption rate is the number of months it would take to deplete the inventory at the current month’s rate of sales.

The Sarasota real estate market offers a tremendous selection of more affordably priced housing for buyers to visit and purchase. In addition, declining inventory levels normally indicate the market is returning to a more historical balance, which eventually leads to normal, long-term price appreciation.