

# HOMES

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## House sales up 10 per cent over last year

*It's taking a little longer to sell them, but the overall picture is bright*

by PAUL STRICKLAND  
Citizen Staff

Sales of houses and condominium units continue to be brisk, but sales of other kinds of properties present a mixed picture.

Year-to-date figures show house sales are up 10 per cent in 1996 compared to the same period a year earlier, says Laurie Creak, a director of the Cariboo Real Estate Association.

So far this year 564 homes have been sold in Prince George, compared to 510 between Jan. 1 and July 31, 1995, he said this week.

Sales of condominiums are up 45 per cent, he added.

"Last year there were 60 sales of condominiums by this time," Creak said. "This year, it's 87."

Sales of duplexes and triplexes are also up. This year 45 homes have been sold in this category. That's up a good 25 per cent from the 36 sold last year.

However, it is taking a little longer to sell each home. It took 49 days to sell a house around this time last year. Now the average house stays on the market 53 days before being sold.

Undeveloped lots and acreages seem harder to sell now.

Last year by this time real estate agents sold 23 acreages of one to five acres. In 1996 the year-to-date figure is only 13.

"Raw land acreage sales are down," Creak said.

Up to now this year, 42 undeveloped lots under one acre have been sold, down from 56 last year.

The picture is better for acreages with a home on them. They are down only slightly.

This year 25 have been sold, down slightly from 25 by this time last year.

"It's taking slightly longer to sell them," Creak continued. "Last year the average sale time was 50 days. This year it's 63."

Only 71 mobile homes have been sold so far this year, down from 106 sales to the end of July last year.

"The good news is that they are selling faster," he noted. "The average trailer took 51 days to sell last year, only 44 days to sell this year."

The overall picture is bright. The total of properties of all kinds sold here year to date is 880, up a respectable three per cent over last year.

As of the end of July, listings were down six per cent from last year.

"We're not getting a flood of listings," Creak said. "Some categories are up, and some are down."

For example, the number of condominiums listed is up, but duplex listings are down. The number of listings for undeveloped acreages is about the same.



Citizen photo by Dave Milne

House for sale on Douglas Street. So far this year, 564 homes have been sold in the city.



Citizen photos by Chuck Nisbett

Left, back-filling the foundation of a home in Vista Ridge are Ruben Da Costa, front, and Shane Naeth of Fortwood Homes. Right: Don Nicholson of Lorne's Insulation works on a home under construction in Vista Ridge.

## Home construction healthy

by PAUL STRICKLAND  
Citizen Staff

Home construction continues at a good pace in Prince George, indicating a healthy economy, says the city's manager of permits and licences.

In July the city issued 28 permits for new single-family houses, Richard Bergey said this week. That's up significantly from 18 for the same month last year.

Year-to-date builders have taken out 162 permits for single detached houses, up from 137 in July 1995. "That's a marked increase over last year," Bergey said.

"Construction activity, after a slow start, has picked up pretty well."

A heavy winter slowed down any construction during the first three months of 1996.

"Now there's quite a bit of activity, especially in single-family houses," Bergey continued. "The total for the year could be 250 or higher."

Homebuilders are also busy in the multi-family sector of the housing market.

For example, a permit was issued last month for the multi-million-dollar 96-unit condominium project at Ingledew Street and 20th Avenue called Magnolia Gardens on the Park.

Another project on the way is the Westgate Development, which Hayer Homes is planning for Highway 16 West near Peden Hill. It will start off with 40 units of adult-oriented row housing.

"Everything seems to be pretty busy," Bergey said. "This isn't a boom, but just pretty steadily busy."

## Dianthus among 'easy perennials'

by ALICE WOLCZUK

Some of the "easy" perennials to grow from seed are from the family of Dianthus. It is a very large group, encompassing annuals, biennials and perennials. It is also familiar to us by the name of Garden Pinks.

Biennials are hardy plants that grow their foliage the first year and produce flowers the next season, thereby completing their life cycle after producing a fair amount of seed.

This producing a fair amount of seed. This year's biennial we know as Sweet William, (D. barbatus) is usually grown in a mixture of colors. The centers are marked and laced with a wide range of patterns fascinating to see but there is one or two that are a solid color (red and pink) that comes true from seed.

The Sweet Williams grow to about 18 inches (46 cm) and bloom profusely for 3-4 weeks but there is also a dwarf one only 6 inches (15 cm) high that is excellent in beds or rockeries. Although they have short foliage, the flowers are the same, clusters of dime sized florets with similar markings.

The sweet-scented Garden Pinks come in a number of cultivars, sizes and shapes. The flowers can be single or double, fringed, in solid colors, white, pinks, reds and a bluish tint, or picotee.

One rare species is a soft yellow (D. knappii) with clusters of bloom in the style of Sweet William, not showy but interesting. The height of these is similar to that of the Sweet William, ranging from 6-18 inches (15-46 cm).

## GARDENING

Of these, D. Sonata, an improved Spring Beauty is one of the most double with a strong fragrance. It grows to a bushy plant, 15 inches (38 cm) tall and is excellent for cut flowers. It resembles a Carnation (D. Chabaud Giant or Enfant de Nice) which is not hardy for us.

Another unique flowered one is D. Rainbow Loveliness. It bears single flowers that are so laciniated and frilled, they give the impression of great delicacy. The variety of D. Allwoodii alpinus, is a dwarf 6 inches (15 cm) but spreads to a handsome 12 inches (31 cm) wide bears colorful single flowers in great profusion. These are just some of the varieties available.

Another useful group of Dianthus are the Maiden Pinks (D. deltoides). These are low-growing mats of dark green leaves with a multitude of dime-sized florets that literally hide the dark green foliage. They spread freely by seed but can be controlled easily enough.

They come in red and pink.

Although all of these are easy to grow, you will have better germination if you put the seeds into the freezer compartment for at least 14 days before seeding.

If you have any questions, please call 563-3497.

## Peel-and-stick floor tiles inexpensive, easy to apply

by KAREN TURNER  
Southam Newspapers

OTTAWA — Tired of the chocolate-colored linoleum in the kitchen? Fed up with vacuuming stairs? Have the tiles in the front foyer started to crack and curl?

The solution is simple: peel-and-stick floor tiles. Inexpensive and easy to apply, these no-wax vinyl squares are a quick, effective way to add function and beauty to your home.

Ideal for high-traffic areas such as kitchens, entrances and stairways, they're easy to clean and durable. For longer lasting results, avoid high moisture areas such as bathrooms and laundry rooms.

1 Remove old tiles by pulling back curled corners or bent edges. You may need to use a hair dryer or heat gun first to soften the adhesive on the back of the tiles.

2 Use a scraper or putty knife to loosen any hard-to-remove tiles or glue residue. Sand surface smooth and vacuum. The floor must be clean, dry and smooth before laying any new tiles; otherwise you'll have bumps or ripples and the tiles won't set properly.

3. For best results, use a straight edge and sharp utility knife to score the tiles, rather than trying to cut through the heavy vinyl. The scored edge will snap easily to give a clean, even break.

4 Do not remove the adhesive backing until after you've cut the tile. Starting at one corner, peel off the paper sheeting to uncover the tacky glue.

5 Lay the tile down and press firmly in place. If you want to change the position, lift the tile immediately and relay it or carefully slide it into place. If edges or corners curl, either remove the tile and reglue the back or replace with a new tile.

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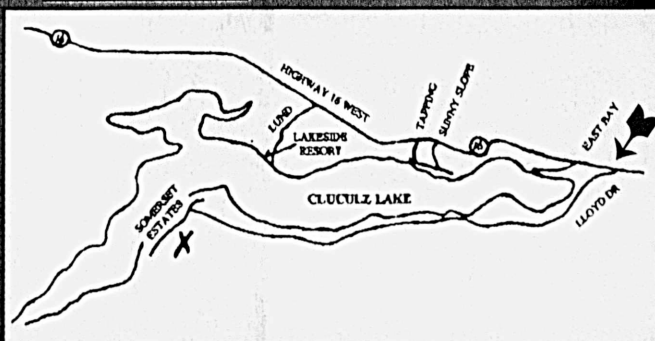
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