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Highest Rates in Years Raise Questions About Housing in 2017

Just this week, Freddie Mac referred to 2016 as the **best year for housing in a decade** before going on to say that 2017 is up in the air. With rates having risen rapidly to the highest levels in more than 2 years, "up in the air" is an understatement. In fact, forget housing... 2017 is up in the air across the board.

The apex of the financial crisis was the last time the political and economic climate of the country was so fraught with uncertainty. Love him or hate him, market movement suggests **high hopes** for Trump's fiscal policies. Whether or not those policies can possibly justify the growth and inflation suddenly predicted by financial markets will be the **biggest story** of the coming year.

If financial markets could actually be certain of a best-case scenario, rates would already be rising at the **fastest pace in history**. As it stands, the rate spike is merely "one of the fastest" in history. Reason being: the only certainty so far is that 2017's fiscal environment will generally be less friendly for bonds (read: higher rates) and more friendly for stocks. Investors have responded to that certainty as you'd expect them to:

National Average Mortgage Rates

	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	7.07%	+0.02	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.45%	0.00	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	6.51%	+0.02	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.26%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	7.02%	-0.01	0.00
Freddie Mac			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.86%	-0.01	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.16%	+0.03	0.00

Rates as of: 6/28

Market Data

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 6.0	100.11	-0.07
MBS GNMA 6.0	100.24	-0.09
10 YR Treasury	4.4395	+0.0415
30 YR Treasury	4.5981	+0.0341

Pricing as of: 7/1 8:50AM EST

Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Jun 12	208.5	+15.58%
Building Permits	Mar	1.46M	-3.95%
Housing Starts	Mar	1.32M	-13.15%
New Home Sales	Mar	693K	+4.68%
Pending Home Sales	Feb	75.6	+1.75%
Existing Home Sales	Feb	3.97M	-0.75%
Builder Confidence	Mar	51	+6.25%

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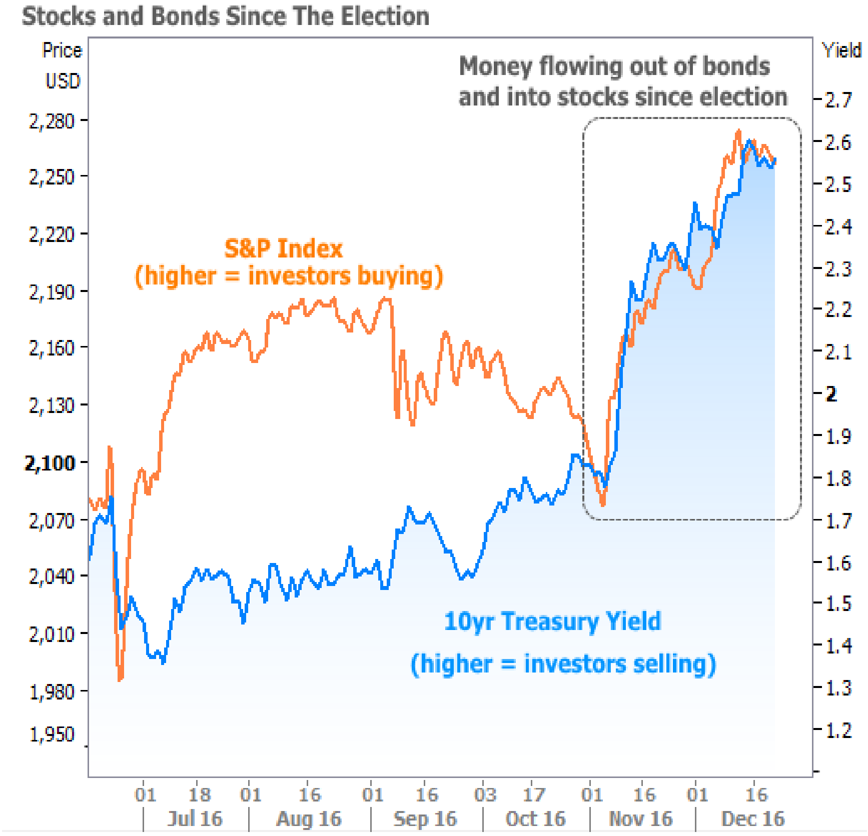

The quick, post-election reallocation between stocks and bonds now looks to have **run its course**. At the very least, it's calming down heading into the end of the year. The net effect for rates is similar to 2013, but with slightly lower outright levels. (NOTE: 10yr Treasury yields are the favored benchmark for longer-term rates like mortgages.)

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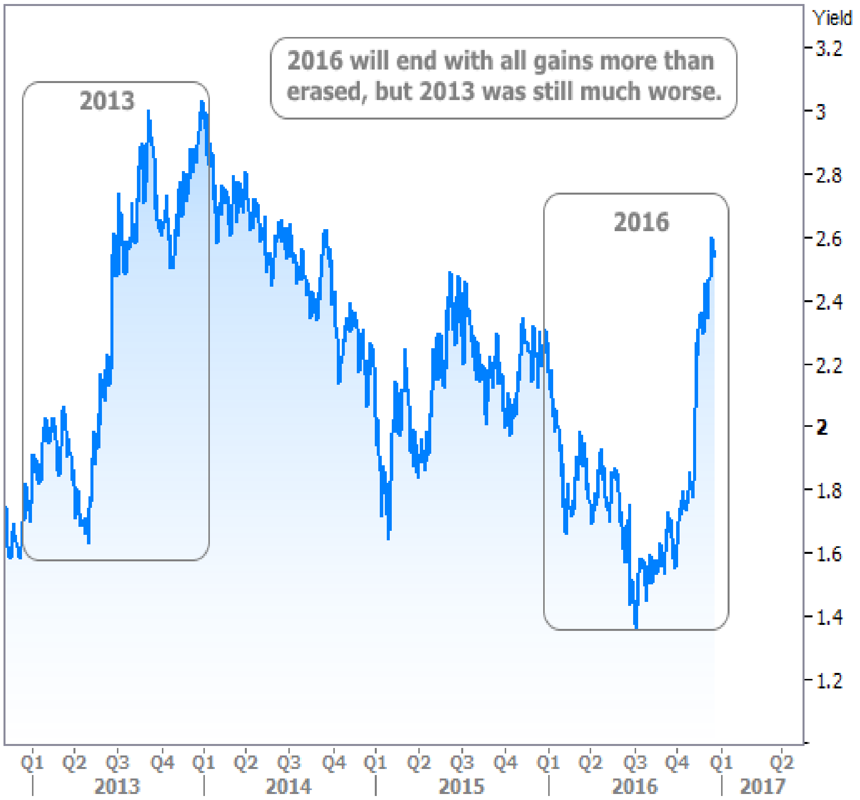

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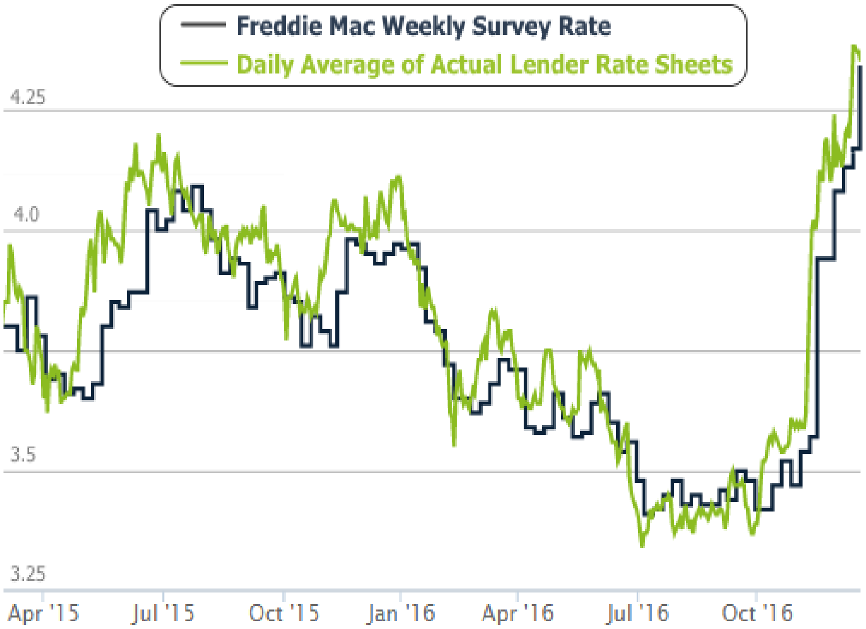
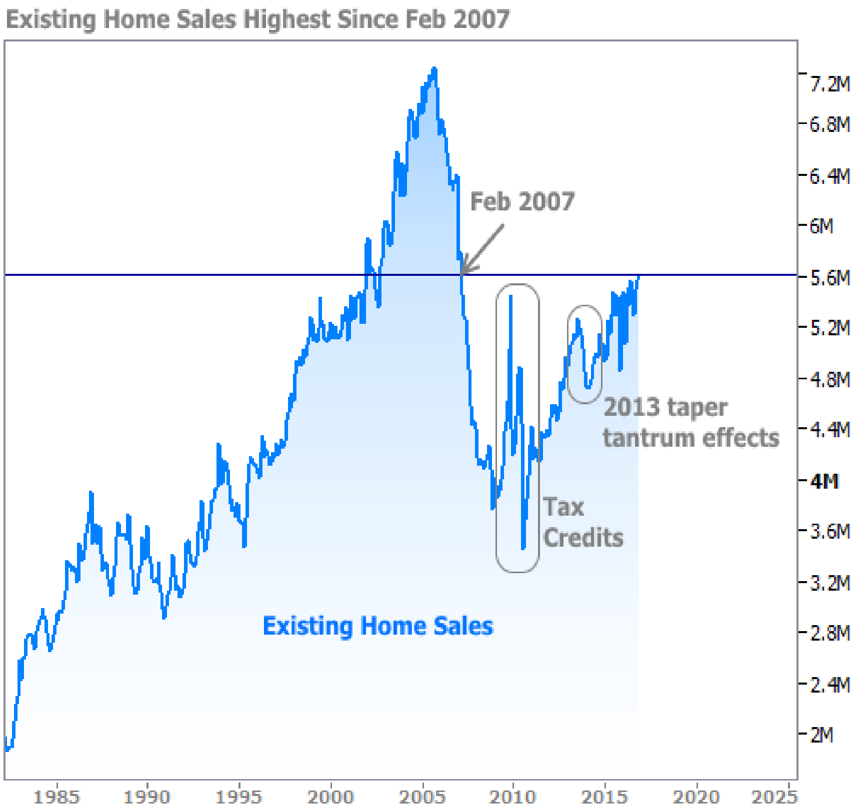
It will take a while for the effects of this rate spike to be widely understood. Case in point, just this week, the nation's most widely-cited source of mortgage rate movement (Freddie Mac's Primary Mortgage Market Survey) finally caught up to reality. This isn't a knock on Freddie--simply evidence that **it takes time** for big developments on the front lines to be reflected in higher-level data.



The scary thing is that Freddie's weekly rate survey is in an **EARLY indicator** compared to the housing data that will ultimately speak to the effects of rising rates. For example, this week's Existing Home Sales data--which covered November--was unfazed, rising to the highest levels **in nearly a decade**.



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At the very least, it would be fair to expect some deterioration in housing based on 2013's example. By the time we consider that sales were only ever higher during **history's greatest housing bubble** (not to mention more esoteric considerations like the maturity of the economic cycle or waning central bank stimulus), we'd be well within our right to wonder if things will be even worse this time around.

It's **not all doom and gloom** though. Cases could be made that the current labor market leaves the average American in a better position to weather a storm of rising rates than they were in 2013. The point is that until we see how the higher-level data evolves in the coming months, uncertainty over the housing/mortgage market outlook will be a major theme in 2017.

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Recent Economic Data

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Wednesday, Dec 21				
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Market Index	407.3		397.5
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Refinance Index	1449.4		1407.0
7:00AM	w/e MBA Purchase Index	232.9		226.7
10:00AM	Nov Existing home sales (ml)	5.61	5.50	5.60
Thursday, Dec 22				
8:30AM	Nov Nondefense ex-air (%)	+0.9	0.3	0.2
8:30AM	Nov Durable goods (%)	-4.6	-4.7	4.6
8:30AM	Q3 GDP Final (%)	+3.5	3.3	3.2
8:30AM	w/e Initial Jobless Claims (k)	275	265	254
8:30AM	w/e Continued jobless claims (ml)	2.036	2.035	2.018
9:00AM	Oct Monthly Home Price yy (%)	+6.2		6.1
10:00AM	Nov Consumption, adjusted mm (%)	+0.2	0.3	0.3
10:00AM	Nov Personal income mm (%)	0.0	0.3	0.6
10:00AM	Nov Core PCE price index yy (%)	+1.6		1.7
Friday, Dec 23				
10:00AM	Nov New home sales-units mm (ml)	0.592	0.575	0.563
Tuesday, Dec 27				
9:00AM	Oct CaseShiller 20 mm SA (%)	+0.6	0.5	0.4
10:00AM	Dec Consumer confidence	113.7	109.0	107.1
Wednesday, Dec 28				
10:00AM	Nov Pending homes index	107.3		110.0
Friday, Dec 30				
9:45AM	Dec Chicago PMI	54.6	57.0	57.6

Event Importance:

No Stars = Insignificant
Low
Moderate
Important
Very Important

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Real Talk

At The Rate Shop, we're not your average mortgage banker. We specialize in bringing you ridiculously low interest rates that will make you wonder what the other guys are doing. In fact the ONLY objection we ever hear is “your rates sound too good to be true”. Well they’re not, and here is why…

After 15 years in the retail banking world I was frustrated with the high interest rates that came from that business model. As I looked around at all the bloated layers of management and their expensive salaries and the overhead of running a larger company (think rent costs, employee health and benefit costs, payroll taxes, and on and on) it dawned on me that I was a part of the problem, and the solution, for me at least, was so easy to see.

Start my own mortgage brokerage shop. No expensive executive salaries, no expensive building to pay rent at, no unnecessary employees and all the costs that are associated with that. What happens when you cut out all the fat? You can provide lower rates and lower closing costs. It’s simple. Now here is the best part, you still get great service from a local Kansas City Lender. My mission is to let everyone know that low rates and great customer service are NOT mutually exclusive.

Thanks for coming along on this journey where Low Rates meet Great Service. The two do NOT have to be mutually exclusive. It’s just a lie that the big box mortgage companies have been telling you for years. Don’t believe me? Give me a call or shoot me a text on my personal cell phone today and compare my rates and costs up against any other lender in the country, and be prepared to be blown away.

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