



Tom Payne

Senior Loan Consultant, loanDepot
 NMLS# 1017004 #174457 Licensed in all 50 States
 2835 St. Rose Parkway, Suite 120 Henderson, NV 89052

Office: 702-303-0243
 Mobile: 702-303-0243
tompaynemortgage@gmail.com
[View My Website](#)

Rates Plummet as The Market Buys Into The Big Shift

The events of this past week serve as an exclamation point in one of the many sentences that tells the story of the big shift away from the generationally high rates seen at the end of 2023. The story has had its ups and down since then, but it had been going fairly well for fans of low rates over the past 3 months.

In fact, the last 3 months mark the first successful defeat of what had looked like yet another "false start" in the road toward lower rates. Measured in terms of 10yr Treasury yields, long term rates have only made 3 attempts to drop more than half a percent since they began skyrocketing in 2022. The first two attempts ultimately gave way to new highs. If rates had moved just a bit higher a few months ago, it would have happened again.



Zooming in on the past year, here's a general breakdown of the key motivations for these swings:

National Average Mortgage Rates



	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.44%	-0.04	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	5.97%	-0.03	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	5.90%	-0.04	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	6.66%	-0.02	0.00
5/1 ARM	6.32%	-0.06	0.00
Freddie Mac			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.46%	-0.40	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	5.62%	-0.54	0.00

Rates as of: 8/23

Market Data

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.5	100.93	+0.26
MBS GNMA 5.5	100.83	+0.22
10 YR Treasury	3.7999	-0.0531
30 YR Treasury	4.0908	-0.0309

Pricing as of: 8/23 5:59PM EST

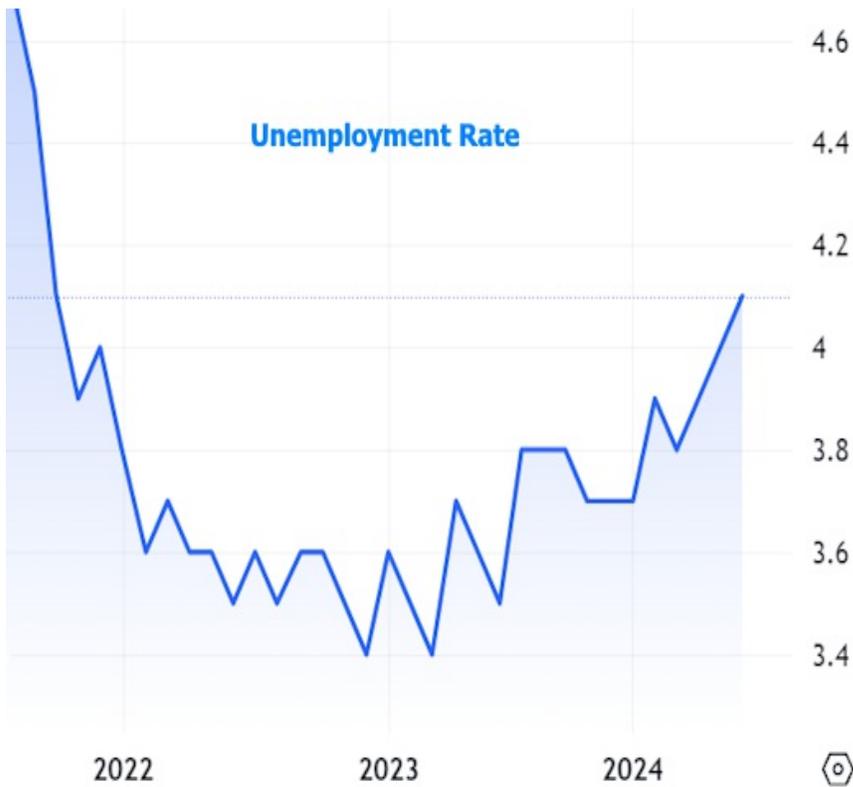
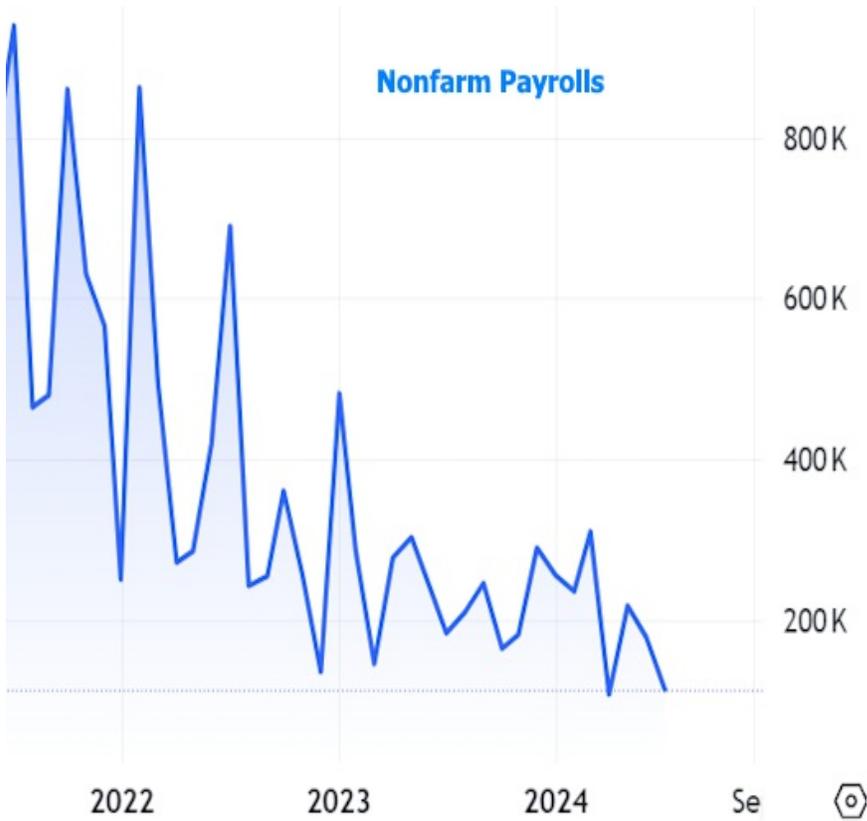
Recent Housing Data

	Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Aug 14 251.3	+16.83%
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%



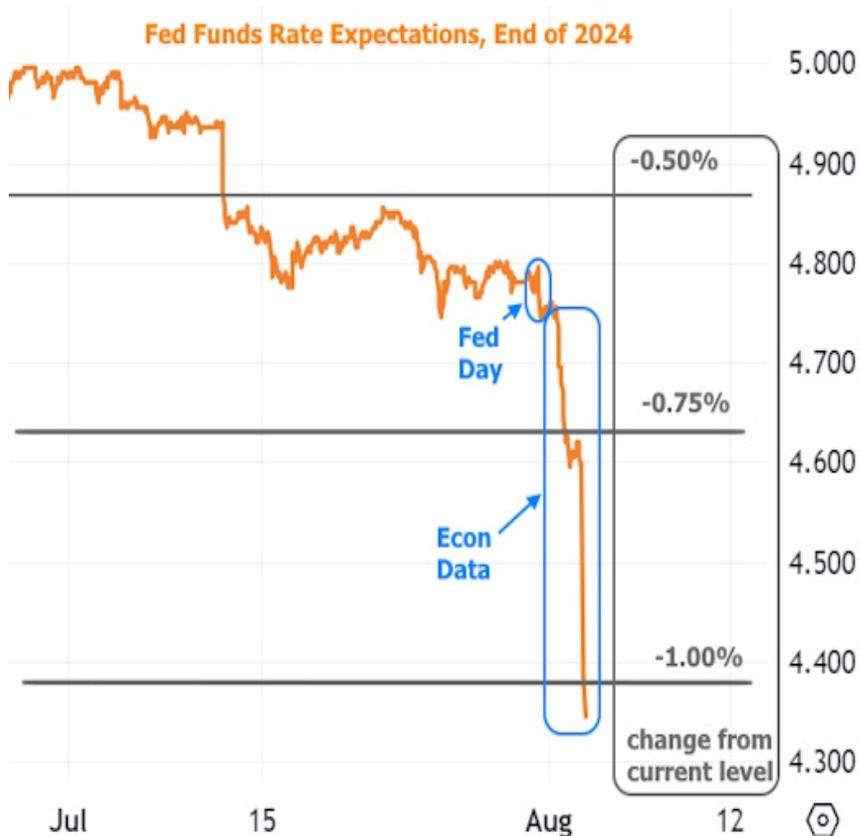
May through July could be described as cautiously optimistic due to well-received improvements in inflation data. During this time, the Fed said it was feeling more and more confident about cutting rates, but that it could be patient due to a labor market that was still rather strong. Similar sentiments were shared by the Fed as recently as this week, but that was before this week's jobs report came out.

Headline job creation (nonfarm payrolls) fell to 114k in July--well short of the forecast consensus of 175k. In addition, the unemployment rate ticked up to 4.3% from 4.1% and wage growth fell to 0.2% from 0.3% with annual growth hitting pre-pandemic levels for the first time since stabilizing at long-term highs.

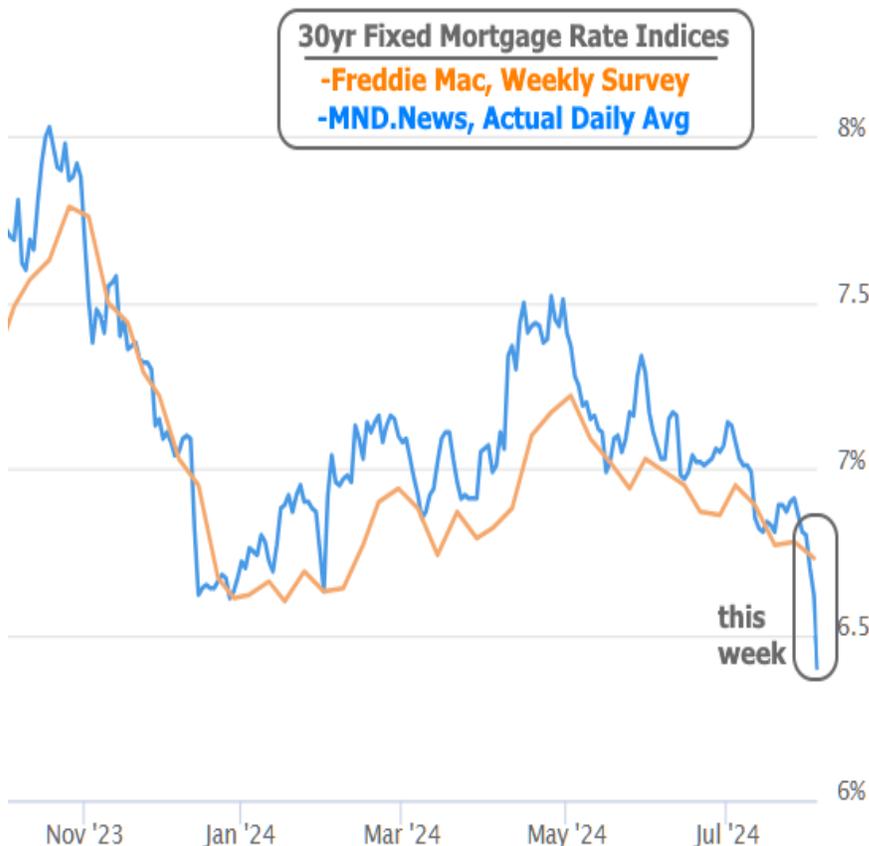




Bonds and rates were already in good spirits due to bad economic news on Thursday (higher Jobless Claims data and a weaker ISM Manufacturing Index), but the jobs report took the rally to the next level. Here's how it looked in terms of expectations for the Fed Funds Rate by the end of 2024 (notably, Wednesday's Fed announcement had very little impact on the outlook compared to Thu/Fri econ data):



In other words, traders were expecting the Fed to be able to cut rates by half a percent before this week, but now see at least a full point of cuts. At times like this, short term rates move much more than longer term rates like mortgages. Even so, Friday was one of only a few days in the past 2 decades with as big of a single day drop in average mortgage rates.



It's very fair to ask where we go from here. There is never a crystal ball and the lessons of early 2024 should be kept in mind. Additional improvement in rates will require a fresh supply of downbeat economic data and there aren't many big ticket reports on the horizon. Apart from Monday's ISM Services Index, we'll be waiting until the following week for the next installment of the Consumer Price Index (CPI)--the only other report that's as big of a deal as the jobs report these days.

Beyond the next 2 weeks, the next month and a half could be particularly volatile. As it stands, the market is second-guessing the Fed's decision to hold steady this week, and wondering if they'll be playing catch-up in mid September in the event econ data keeps trending weaker.

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Recent Economic Data

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Tuesday, Jul 30				
9:00AM	May FHFA Home Price Index m/m (%)	0%	0.2%	0.2%
9:00AM	May CaseShiller 20 mm nsa (%)	1%		1.4%
10:00AM	Jun USA JOLTS Job Openings	8.184M	8M	8.14M
Wednesday, Jul 31				
7:00AM	Jul/26 MBA Purchase Index	132.8		134.8

Event Importance:

- No Stars = Insignificant
- ☆ Low
- ★ Moderate
- ★★ Important
- ★★★ Very Important

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
7:00AM	Jul/26 MBA Refi Index	570.7		614.9
8:15AM	Jul ADP jobs (k)	122K	150K	150K
8:30AM	Treasury Refunding Announcement (%)			
8:30AM	Q2 Employment costs (%)	0.9%	1%	1.2%
9:45AM	Jul Chicago PMI	45.3	45	47.4
10:00AM	Jun Pending Home Sales (%)	4.8%	1.5%	-2.1%
2:00PM	Fed Interest Rate Decision	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%
2:30PM	Fed Press Conference			
Thursday, Aug 01				
8:30AM	Jul/27 Jobless Claims (k)	249K	236K	235K
10:00AM	Jul ISM Manufacturing PMI	46.8	48.8	48.5
Friday, Aug 02				
8:30AM	Jul Non Farm Payrolls	114K	175K	206K
8:30AM	Jul Unemployment rate mm (%)	4.3%	4.1%	4.1%
Monday, Aug 05				
9:45AM	Jul S&P Global Services PMI	55.0	56	55.3
10:00AM	Jul ISM N-Mfg PMI	51.4	51	48.8
Thursday, Aug 08				
8:30AM	Aug/03 Jobless Claims (k)	233K	240K	249K

National Association of Realtors - New Rules & Open Houses

New rules stemming from the National Association of Realtors' commission lawsuit settlement went into effect Saturday following years of litigation, potentially upending the industry, including how agents get paid.

This week, I have been hearing from agents, brokers, MLS executives, portals and other insiders as the rules roll out.

COMMISSION QUESTIONS: In the wake of NAR's new settlement rules, many buyer's agents are suddenly confronting a new question: What commission should they ask for in their buyers' broker representation agreements?

Here are a few responses found in a real estate master-mind group:

"I'm asking the buyer to pay my rate but advising them the seller may be offering something towards that," one agent responded. "If that's the case they only have to pay what's left."

"Sit down with your buyer and a trusted loan officer" another suggested. "Have the loan officer complete the various costs including your compensation and without any compensation (seller contributes). Once the buyer sees how much they have to come up with, they can make a decision. Then you make yours."

Some commenters also said that their brokers are making recommendations.

"This thread is illegal," one commenter argued, echoing a number of other remarks. "It is price fixing and the whole reason the U.S. Department of Justice got involved. Commission/Concessions should only be discussed between the agent and his/her client, never among agents."

The debate highlights the fact that many practical issues stemming from the settlement are yet to be worked out – and that additional litigation is top of mind for many real estate professionals,

OPEN HOUSE, OPEN QUESTION: Among the real estate professionals watching how the settlement changes unfolded this weekend was Randy Bell of Life Realty – The District in Henderson, NV who told me that "Buyers appear to be leery about signing short-term agreements and may favor open houses over individual tours until they're at ease with the rule." He went on to state "It'll be very interesting to see whether open house traffic increases, which I expect it will once buyers understand they don't have the same friction with agreements by going directly to open houses,"

One stat I'm going to be looking at is the number of open houses relative to active listings. I'll have numbers for you in the weeks to come. ...More to follow in future Newsletters.

Contact me for more information. 702-303-0243 or TPayne@loandepot.com

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