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Housing Inventory Issues Stifle Pending Sales

Pending home sales were **unable to sustain** the slight upward tick experienced in July and resumed their downward trend in August, declining by 2.4 percent. It was the third time in four months that pending sales have failed to exceed the previous month's numbers.

The National Association of Realtors said its Pending Home Sales Index (PHSI), a forward-looking indicator based on home purchase contracts signed, was 108.5 in August compared to 111.2 in July and at the **lowest level** since a reading of 105.4 in January 2016. August's pending sales were also slightly (0.2 percent) lower than in August 2015.

The PHSI had been reported to have a gain of 1.3 percent in July but that was revised down to 1.2 percent with today's report.

Lawrence Yun, **again blamed the tight supply** of available homes for "taking the wind out of the momentum of the housing market." He said, "Contract activity slackened throughout the country in August, except for in the Northeast where higher inventory totals are giving home shoppers greater options and better success signing a contract. In most other areas, an increased number of prospective buyers appear to be either wavering at the steeper home prices pushed up by inventory shortages or disheartened by the competition for the miniscule number of affordable listings."

Housing **inventory has declined year-over-year for 15 straight months** and Yun said evidence is piling up that without more new home construction the current housing recovery could stall. Properties in August typically sold 11 days quicker than in August 2015 and prices have risen year-over-year for 54 consecutive months increasing 5.1 percent in August. "There will be an expected seasonal decline in new listings in coming months," Yun said, "which could accelerate price appreciation and make finding an affordable home even more of a struggle for would-be buyers."

"Given the current conditions, there's not much room for sales to march again towards June's peak cyclical sales pace," said Yun. That month existing home sales were the highest since February 2007 at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5.57 million units.

After the August dip in pending sales Yun expects existing-home sales in 2016 to be around **5.36 million**, a 2.1 percent increase from 2015 and the highest annual pace since 2006 (6.48 million). The national median existing-

National Average Mortgage Rates



	Rate	Change	Points
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Mortgage News Daily

30 Yr. Fixed	6.89%	0.00	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.33%	+0.01	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	6.33%	+0.01	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.05%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	6.58%	0.00	0.00

Freddie Mac

30 Yr. Fixed	6.77%	-0.09	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.05%	-0.11	0.00

Mortgage Bankers Assoc.

30 Yr. Fixed	7.00%	-0.03	0.60
15 Yr. Fixed	6.63%	+0.07	0.61
30 Yr. FHA	6.87%	-0.03	0.92
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.13%	+0.02	0.38
5/1 ARM	6.22%	-0.16	0.60

Rates as of: 7/22

Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Jul 10	206.1	-0.19%
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%

Housing News Update

home price growth is forecast this year to rise around 4 percent.

As Yun said, the **only bright spot** in the report was for the **Northeast** where the PHSI rose 1.3 percent to 98.1 in August, and is now 5.9 percent higher than a year earlier. In the **Midwest** the index decreased 0.9 percent to 104.7 in August, and is now 1.7 percent lower than August 2015.

	Value	Change
Builder Confidence	Mar 51	+6.25%

Pending home sales in the **South** declined 3.2 percent to an index of 119.8 in August which is 1.5 percent lower than in August 2015. The **West** saw a fall-off of 5.3 percent from July to 102.8, 0.6 percent below the previous August.

Earlier this month, NAR released a study showing that single-family home construction is **falling behind job creation** in 80 percent of the metro areas the organization tracks. When combined with the scant supply levels for existing homes, these tight inventory conditions continue to hamper affordability in many of the largest cities in the country - especially those in the West.

The Pending Home Sales Index is a forward-looking indicator of existing home sales and is based on a large national sample typically representing about 20 percent those sales. A signed contract is generally expected to become a closed sale within one to two months. An index of 100 is equal to the average level of contract activity during 2001, which was the first year to be examined.

Update: Buyer Broker Agreement

After requests from real estate companies, a nonprofit consumer watchdog group the Consumer Federation of America has developed a list of factors to consider when creating a buyer contract in preparation for upcoming practice changes in the industry.

CFA released its "Proposed Criteria for Evaluating Home Buyer Contract Forms" on Tuesday. The 15 criteria focus on the contracts' form – whether the documents are readable and understandable – and content – whether they are fair to homebuyers.

- the document's expiration date (CFA recommends buyers asks for a three-month contract and never sign one longer than six months)
- the right to terminate the contract
- the disclosure that compensation is negotiable
- the broker's compensation clearly stated and that the buyer broker can't receive additional compensation for facilitating a sale
- that any additional fees, such as for showing a home, will be deducted from the broker's commission if there is a successful sale
- that the commission is due only if there is a successful closing
- that buyers have an obligation – for no longer than 60 days, CFA recommends – to pay a broker who earlier showed them a home they purchased after the contract ended
- seller concessions paid directly to buyers
- dual agency not pre-approved by the contract
- an explanation of how a broker treats different buyer clients interested in the same property
- that buyers should not be required to first go through mediation or arbitration if they have a complaint

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