

Your Neighborhood Newsletter



November



5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR CREDIT SCORE

How is my credit score determined?

35% is your payment history, 30% is the amounts owed, 15% is the length of your credit history, 10% is new credit opened and 10% is the type of credit used.

What are the benefits of a good credit score?

Your credit is a factor in determining whether or not you are approved for a loan or insurance. A higher credit score means lower interest rates on loans.

How do I improve a poor credit score?

The first step is making sure your credit report is accurate. Every year, pull a free credit report at <http://www.annualcreditreport.com>.

How long will negative items stay on my report?

Foreclosure stays on the record for 7 years and may negatively impact a score between 85-160 points. Chapter 13 bankruptcies stay on file for 7 years and Chapter 7 bankruptcies stay for 10 years. Both reduce your score by about 130-240 points. 30-day mortgage delinquencies reduce a credit score between 60-110 points, and the impact is higher for 60- and 90-day delinquencies.

What are some tips for maintaining a good credit score?

- Set up a periodic bill-paying schedule to ensure on-time payments.
- Develop a budget. Try free online budgeting software like Mint.com.
- If you're having trouble making ends meet, contact your creditors to try to modify your repayment.

Sweet Potato Casserole

- 5 sweet potatoes
 - ¼ tsp salt
 - ¼ cup butter
 - 2 eggs
 - 1 tsp vanilla extract
 - ½ tsp ground cinnamon
 - ½ cup white sugar
 - 2 tbs heavy cream
 - ¼ cup butter, softened
 - 3 tbs all-purpose flour
 - ¾ cup packed light brown sugar
 - ½ cup chopped pecans
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease a 9x13 inch baking dish.
 2. Bake sweet potatoes for 35 minutes, or until they begin to soften. Cool slightly, peel and mash.
 3. In a large bowl, mix the mashed sweet potatoes, salt, ¼ cup butter, eggs, vanilla extract, cinnamon, sugar, and heavy cream. Transfer to the prepared baking dish.
 4. In a medium bowl, combine ¼ cup butter, flour, brown sugar and chopped pecans. Mix with a pastry blender or your fingers until all are blended together. Sprinkle over the sweet potato mixture.
 5. Bake 30 minutes in the preheated oven until topping is crisp and lightly browned.

Your November Maintenance Tip

Improve wisely to get the best out of your renovations:

- Keep all buyers in mind. Make improvements that appeal to the largest number of buyers.
- Apply improvements you find in homes of similar value. Remember: home sale prices in your neighborhood influence the value of your home, making some pricey improvements unlikely to pay off.
- Evaluate the cost-to-value. Pick projects that offer an 85% return or better, like upgrading the garage door, replacing the entry door or converting the attic into a bedroom.
- Focus on the essentials. Choose projects that improve the home's basic function over aesthetics and expansion (i.e. fixing leaky faucets, repairing window seals and replacing torn window screens).
- The exterior of your home makes the first impression. Apply a fresh coat of paint, clean oil stains from the driveway, remove weeds from the lawn and repair walkways.
- Go right to the source. Rather than guess which improvements are likely to bolster your property value, seek the advice of a real estate agent.



TIME TO BUY INCOME PROPERTY

If you've considered investing in rental property, now is a great time to make plans. Low prices and low interest rates make conditions for investing in rental property the best we've had in 15 years.

Fundamental benefits of owning income property include:

- monthly cash-flow of spendable income;
- equity growth by loan principal reduction;
- price-value increase as an inflation hedge; and
- tax benefits of passive income and profits.

Remember to consider:

- **Financing** – Guidelines for financing income property are different from guidelines for financing a primary residence. How much do you qualify for and what down payment is required?
- **Property size** – Bite off only what you can chew. Will you be managing it yourself or do you intend to hire a property manager?
- **Location** – Look for property in familiar areas. Knowing the neighborhood or city you buy in makes it easier to rent and maintain the property for maximum benefit.

The window of opportunity is open. For a review on how to invest in income producing property today, please call me!