



1255 Lake Plaza Drive, Suite 155, Colorado Springs, CO 80906  
Office: 527-4200 Direct: 540-9424  
[Barbara@BarbaraRogers.net](mailto:Barbara@BarbaraRogers.net)  
[www.TheRealEstate-Network.com](http://www.TheRealEstate-Network.com)



**Spring 2016**

## The Weather's Not the Only Thing Heating Up

You can always tell spring is right around the corner when Lady Liberty starts showing up on the street corners, waving 'her' sign and dancing a jig. I was really quite startled, however, one cold spring morning when 'she' was wearing a black ski mask - scared me to death! As my Dad used to say: "Two things you can always count on - death and taxes!"

It's in all the news. The housing market is hot! Multiple offers are more common than you know but we are finding them mostly on lower priced homes - \$150,000 to \$350,000. The high-end market is still sluggish but then there are usually fewer buyers in that price range. This is definitely a good time to put your house on the market if you are ready to move. It's not uncommon for us to see homes receiving offer(s) to purchase in only a couple of days. The catch is, unless you are moving out of the area, you also have to find another place to live. It's a trade off and a decision only you can make. Whether now is a time to sell or not, you can never go wrong with continued maintenance and/or updates. If I can ever be of any assistance in your decision, do not hesitate to call me.

## How's the Market?

The lack of inventory is causing problems for first-time buyers according to the National Association of Realtors. "A minimal selection and the potential for faster price appreciation could offset the demand from buyers encouraged by a stronger economy and sub-4% interest rates," says Lawrence Yun, NAR Chief Economist. "Housing costs -- both rents and home prices -- continue to outpace wages and are burdensome for potential buyers trying to save for a down payment while looking for available homes in their price range."

Still, the outlook for first-time homebuyers is encouraging. A reduction in FHA mortgage insurance premiums that went into effect Jan. 26, 2015, helps make home buying more affordable for first-timers, says NAR President Chris Polychron. "The move to lower premiums enables more buyers to enter the market while continuing to protect taxpayers from the risky lending practices that led to the housing crash," he says.

Young adults' presence in the housing market has been largely predicted for years, but 2016 may finally be the year they make a move in a larger way. Millennials (birthdates from early 1980s to early 2000s) represented nearly 2 billion sales in 2015 -- one-third of home buyers. They are expected to continue to be a major buying pool in 2016 with the majority of buyers between ages 25 and 34 expected to be first-time home buyers next year. But two other generations will also have a big presence in 2016: financially recovering GenXers (birthdates in early 1960s to early 1980s) and older baby boomers who are entering retirement. Since most of these people are already homeowners, they'll play a double role, boosting the market as both sellers and buyers.

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## That Awesome Baking Soda

**Wow! What a difference a small box of baking soda can make.** How many of those hanging car air fresheners would it take to get rid of the olfactory assault from last night's fish dish? So many. Too many! Before you dress up your kitchen like a cardboard pine forest, take a deep breath -- preferably through your mouth -- and open your cupboard. Odds are

you already have what you need to get rid of those food odors in one inexpensive little box. That's right. That unassuming baking soda is a walk-on-water miracle for your kitchen as well as elsewhere in your home. It's a natural odor eliminator.

Baking soda, unlike most commercial air fresheners, doesn't mask odors, "it absorbs them," Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate in a convenient box) neutralizes stubborn acidic odors -- like those from sour milk -- as well as other funky smells lurking in your home.

Ready to be wowed by all the ways baking soda can transform your kitchen? Buckle up and get sprinkling.

- If you don't run your dishwasher every day, stop the stink from rotten foods by dumping a cup of baking soda in and run it through the rinse cycle.
- Clean a greasy range hood with a mixture of 1/4 cup baking soda, a good squirt of degreasing dish soap, and the hottest water you can stand.
- Try dumping a mixture of 1/4 cup baking soda, 1/4 cup vinegar, and some kosher salt in drains and disposals to neutralize the smell and give it a slightly abrasive scrubbing. Follow up with boiling water.
- Clean and deodorize a microwave with a solution of 2 tablespoons of baking soda mixed with 1 cup water. Put the solution into an uncovered, microwave-safe container and zap on high for three minutes. Then simply wipe down the interior.

The best thing about the cheap, odor-zapping wonder of baking soda is you can use it guilt-free. "You're not going to harm humans or animals or ruin anything using baking soda," says Mary Marlowe Leverette, a home economist and blogger. "Plus, after you're done deodorizing, mix it up with vinegar or lemon juice and some red dye, and make a cool volcano. The kids'll love it."

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## Design Trends to Watch in 2016

Home decor ideas are always evolving and one could go broke trying to keep up. However, sometimes it's fun to see what's new, especially if you do need to change something in your home.

**Appliance colors** - The more popular appliance colors seem to change every few years. Remember the days of pastel ovens? Now it looks like polished stainless steel is on its way out and sleek black stainless steel is the trend of the future.

**Formal dining rooms** - We are ready for the sit-down family meals to make a comeback so more families are looking to keep their formal dining rooms.

**Mismatched cabinets** - While there's nothing wrong with the all white kitchen, there's something special about adding a little extra color or style by incorporating different cabinet colors or styles.

**Statement bathroom mirrors** - A plain rectangular mirror certainly gets the job done but 2016 may be the year of the statement mirror. This singular change can add spice to an oft-overlooked bland bathroom

**Tech-less living rooms** - Tech-filled homes certainly aren't going anywhere but more and more families are opting to keep their family rooms unplugged to facilitate more family time.

**Fireplaces** - These charming home accents - even non-working ones - are once again becoming the focal point of rooms. Instead of placing a large TV above the fireplace or ignoring it all together, people are now arranging their furniture to place the fireplace center stage.

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*He that sows thistles shall reap prickles.*



*Barbara*

