

Merrimack Valley *housingreport*

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MIDDLESEX NORTH
REGISTRY OF DEEDS

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Housing Activity Varies in the Valley

By David Turcotte

Deeds (sales) recorded in both Haverhill and Lowell declined in August 2009 when compared with the same month in 2008. Haverhill saw the biggest decrease, as deeds filed last month declined 30% with 78 from the total of 111 in August 2008 (also 28% less than July 2009 figures of 109). Lowell recorded 118 deeds last month, a 15% decline from the August 2008 total of 139. However, as reported by Richard P. Howe Jr. in *Signs of a Revival in Area Towns* on page two, Middlesex North towns around Lowell saw a minor increase in deeds filed this summer when compared to 2008. In addition, Lawrence and Methuen saw a slight increase in August 2009, in comparison to the same month in 2008. Accordingly, many observers are surprised that we are not seeing more deed sales filed, considering that interest rates are at historic lows and first time home buyers can earn up to an \$8,000 tax

credit. Economic uncertainty and tighter underwriting standards, which require larger down payments, could be a contributing factor.

Methuen was the only major city in the Valley to experience an increase in mortgage filings (refinancing) last month when compared to August 2008. Methuen saw a jump in August 2009 of 21% with 148 mortgages filed compared to 122 in 2008. On the other hand, this represents a 33% decline from 223 in July 2009. Mortgages filed in Haverhill, Lawrence, and decreased 5-11% last month, compared to July 2009. However, last months mortgage filing numbers are also lower than July 2009 totals. Nevertheless, Greater Lowell towns experienced large increases in refinancing activity (see page 2 article).

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Deeds, Mortgages, Foreclosures and Orders Recorded

August 2008 and August 2009 Compared

	Haverhill		Lawrence		Lowell		Methuen	
	Aug-08	Aug-09	Aug-09	Aug-09	Aug08	Aug-09	Aug-08	Aug-09
Deeds	111	78	97	99	139	118	84	87
Mortgages	152	144	112	101	227	202	122	148
Foreclosure Deeds	15	11	36	10	31	16	6	6
Order of Notice	22	21	34	41	35	32	8	20

Signs of a Revival in Area Towns

By Richard P. Howe Jr

This summer's recording activity at the Middlesex North Registry of Deeds offers signs of a real estate revival in area towns. While the number of deeds recorded for these towns only rose 3% from last summer, the number of mortgages recorded jumped 55%, bringing that number back to pre-crash levels of activity. This leap in mortgage suggests that property values are holding and perhaps even recovering since declining property values have posed a major impediment to homeowners wishing to refinance.

Unfortunately, the statistics paint a different picture for Lowell. The number of deeds recorded for the city is down 18% from last summer and the number

of mortgages recorded has only risen by 1%. These statistics suggest that values in Lowell are still depressed, leaving the refinance market in the same trough it was in last summer.

The following tables show the number of deeds and mortgages recorded and the median sales price and mortgage amount for the last three summers (summer being June, July and August). The "Middlesex North Towns" section includes data for Billerica, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Tewksbury, Tygsborough, Westford and Wilmington. There are separate sections for Lowell, Chelmsford, Dracut and Tewksbury.

Middlesex North Registry of Deeds

Three years of summer recordings compared

Middlesex North Towns (excluding Lowell)

	2007	2008	% chg	2009	% chg
Deeds	1376	1102	-20%	1139	3%
Mortgages	3176	2040	-36%	3157	55%
Median Sales Price	\$334,900	\$314,500	-6%	\$302,500	-4%
Median Mtg Amnt	\$299,250	\$263,750	-12%	\$260,000	-1%

Lowell only

	2007	2008	% chg	2009	% chg
Deeds	536	466	-13%	384	-18%
Mortgages	1052	728	-31%	733	1%
Median Sales Price	\$229,950	\$180,000	-22%	\$181,300	1%
Median Mtg Amnt	\$142,000	\$125,300	-12%	\$150,000	20%

Chelmsford only

	2007	2008	% chg	2009	% chg
Deeds	270	199	-26%	191	-4%
Mortgages	568	343	-40%	546	59%
Median Sales Price	\$330,500	\$310,000	-6%	\$291,000	-6%
Median Mtg Amnt	\$150,000	\$186,079	24%	\$225,000	21%

Dracut only

	2007	2008	% chg	2009	% chg
Deeds	198	181	-9%	167	-8%
Mortgages	462	291	-37%	372	28%
Median Sales Price	\$245,000	\$226,450	-8%	\$231,000	2%
Median Mtg Amnt	125,000	\$146,000	17%	188,000	29%

Tewksbury only

	2007	2008	% chg	2009	% chg
Deeds	186	159	-15%	168	6%
Mortgages	460	291	-37%	450	55%
Median Sales Price	\$314,000	\$322,000	3%	\$310,500	-4%
Median Mtg Amnt	\$154,625	\$178,000	15%	\$209,600	18%

Entire District

	2007	2008	% chg	2009	% chg
Deeds	1912	1568	-18%	1523	-3%
Mortgages	4228	2768	-35%	3890	41%
Median Sales Price	\$299,250	\$263,750	-12%	\$260,800	-1%
Median Mtg Amnt	\$150,000	\$157,429	5%	\$208,000	32%

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Foreclosure deeds recorded last month in Haverhill, Lawrence, and Lowell declined when compared to August 2008. Conversely, the number of foreclosures recorded in Methuen remained unchanged from 2008. Yet, orders of notice numbers (foreclosure filings/petitions) for August 2009 were 2-4 times greater than foreclosure deeds recorded last month. This reflects a continued trend for 2009,

indicating that the numbers of foreclosure deeds filed are likely to increase in the fall and winter, as the foreclosure process usually averages over 300 days in Massachusetts before an actual foreclosure deed is recorded. It appears that the increasing unemployment rate and overall poor economy is contributing to the high order of notice filings numbers in the region.

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