



Home buyers and sellers adjust their activities in March amid challenging circumstances

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Credit: Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver

Metro Vancouver's* housing market saw steady home buyer demand to begin March and a levelling off of activity as the month went on and concerns about the COVID-19 outbreak intensified.

The Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver (REBGV) reports that residential home sales in the region totalled 2,524 in March 2020, a 46.1 per cent increase from the 1,727 sales recorded in March 2019, and a 17.4 per cent increase from the 2,150 homes sold in February 2020.

Last month's sales were 19.9 per cent below the 10-year March sales average.

"The first two weeks of the month were the busiest days of the year for our region with heightened demand and multiple offers becoming more common," Ashley Smith, REBGV president said, "Like other aspects of our lives, this changed as concerns over the COVID-19 situation in our province grew."

Daily residential sales on the region's MLS® were 138 on average in the first ten business days of the month. In the final ten business days of the month, the daily average declined to 93 sales.

"Many of the sales recorded in March were in process before the provincial government declared a state of emergency. We'll need more time to pass to fully understand the impact that the pandemic is having on the housing market," Smith said.

"In recent weeks, REALTORS® have been working to help and guide their clients through this uncertain period. Many people have understandably chosen to put their home buying or selling plans on hold for now. Other people have more urgent housing needs and we're trying to work with them to address these needs in the safest and most responsible way possible."

There were 4,436 detached, attached and apartment properties newly listed for sale on the Multiple Listing Service® (MLS®) in Metro Vancouver in March 2020. This represents a 10.4 per cent decrease compared to the 4,949 homes listed in March 2019 and a 10.8 per cent increase compared to February 2020 when 4,002 homes were listed.

The total number of homes currently listed for sale on the MLS® system in Metro Vancouver is 9,606, a 24.8 per cent decrease compared to March 2019 (12,774) and a 4.5 per cent increase compared to February 2020 (9,195).

"Realtors were named among the province's list of essential services last week," Smith said. "This means that we have a responsibility to do what we can to help residents meet their housing and shelter needs while strictly following the most up-to-date public health orders and physical distancing requirements from our health officials and government agencies."

For all property types, the sales-to-active listings ratio for March 2020 is 26.3 per cent. By property type, the ratio is 21.1 per cent for detached homes, 33 per cent for townhomes, and 28.9 per cent for apartments.

Generally, analysts say downward pressure on home prices occurs when the ratio dips below 12 per cent for a sustained period, while home prices often experience upward pressure when it surpasses 20 per cent over several months.

The MLS® Home Price Index composite benchmark price for all residential properties in Metro Vancouver is currently \$1,033,700. This represents a 2.1 per cent increase over March 2019, and a 1.3 per cent increase compared to February 2020.

Sales of detached homes in March 2020 reached 852, a 61.1 per cent increase from the 529 detached sales recorded in March 2019. The benchmark price for detached properties is \$1,450,700. This represents a 0.7 per cent increase from March 2019, and a 1.2 per cent increase compared to February 2020.

Sales of apartment homes reached 1,179 in March 2020, a 35.1 per cent increase compared to the 873 sales in March 2019. The benchmark price of an apartment property is \$687,000. This represents a 2.9 per cent increase from March 2019, and a 1.4 per cent increase compared to February 2020.

Attached home sales in March 2020 totalled 493, a 51.7 per cent increase compared to the 325 sales in March 2019. The benchmark price of an attached unit is \$791,800. This represents a 2.5 per cent increase from March 2019, and a 0.9 per cent increase compared to February 2020.

*Editor's Note: Areas covered by the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver include: Burnaby, Coquitlam, Maple Ridge, New Westminister, North Vancouver, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, South Delta, Squamish, Sunshine Coast, Vancouver, West Vancouver, and Whistler.