



THE LAMPPOST

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What an Obama Administration Means to Your Mortgage

The debates are done, the election is over, and on January 20, 2009, Barack Obama will be inaugurated as President of the United States. No matter where you fall in the political spectrum, no one knows for sure exactly what this will mean to the future of our country. With this in mind, putting all politics aside, lets take a closer look at Obama's plan for our future. And since a home is still the biggest, most important investment you'll ever make, the limited space of this article will focus on Obama's basic housing measures.

More Economic Stimulus – Since trouble in the economy won't wait until January 20th, plans for another economic stimulus package are already in the works, so we might even see this happen, in one form or another, before Obama takes office.

Obama has also discussed a housing stimulus as well, to stem the tide of foreclosures, including a temporary 90-day freeze on foreclosures, as well as measures to address the demand side of the housing issue. This package includes \$25 billion in state fiscal relief, which Mortgage Law Central says will help avoid "painful property tax increases."

Obama also mentioned he wants to "aggressively and comprehensively" implement the recently-passed rescue plan and the Hope for Homeowners Act. This means the Treasury, HUD, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and all of the banks and loan servicers who benefit from the rescue bill will continue to coordinate broad mortgage restructurings and loan modifications for struggling homeowners. No one knows for sure exactly how this will be implemented or what it even looks like yet.

Reformed Bankruptcy Laws – Obama has promised to repeal the 2005 bankruptcy bill. A controversial measure, this will allow judges to alter mortgage terms during a bankruptcy, providing more protection for struggling homeowners.

New Mortgage Interest Tax Credit – Obama is expected to create a 10% universal mortgage interest credit for those who don't currently itemize. This means about \$500 in savings for 10 million American homeowners.

Protection Against Mortgage Fraud and Predatory Lending – During the campaign, Obama blamed the financial crisis on lax government regulations, so look for tougher regulations, new criminal penalties for mortgage fraud violators, more funding for enforcement programs, more detailed loan disclosure laws, new counseling programs and other consumer protections, including a new Home Obligation Made Explicit (HOME) score (kind of like a new APR calculation) to help borrowers better understand and compare mortgage costs during the mortgage process.

This will go a long way in protecting new home buyers from the opportunists that have given good mortgage professionals a bad name in the last few years. And since so much of our business depends on referrals from satisfied clients, the good news is a lot of these people are now out of business. Let's hope that any new measures introduced by the Obama administration will help keep a new breed of copycats from invading our industry as the real estate market begins to change for the better in 2009 and beyond.

Regardless of presidential administrations, until the economy shows signs of stability, you can expect volatility to continue in the financial and credit markets. This means continued volatility for mortgage rates, too, so if you or anyone you know is looking to buy or refinance a home, give me a call. I monitor the performance of mortgage-backed securities on a minute-by-minute basis, which allows my clients to capitalize on changes that will help lock in the best rate for their goals and needs. Also, if you'd like to discuss any of these or other changes that could affect your mortgage, don't hesitate to give me a call.



Another Christmas Mess...

There is a special expectancy in our home every Christmas. It's not just the kids looking forward to their Christmas gifts, it's my wife eagerly anticipating hers. Now, unlike the kids, Eloise does not sneak around the Christmas tree shaking boxes or gently peeling away wrapping paper to see what's inside. What she looks forward to is a special gift from her father called the "Christmas Mess."



This tradition started when Eloise was a little girl and happened upon her father working on some mysterious project in the garage. With wide eyes she innocently asked him, "Daddy, what you making?" and he replied, "Oh, I'm just making a mess." And so the "Christmas Mess" was born.

It has been a tradition that her father has carried on her whole life. Every year each "mess" is something different: a jewelry box, tool box, corner shelf, picture frame, photo album...anything and everything that can be made of wood. It is always created by hand, carefully sanded, beautifully stained, and made with great love. It is a ritual that all his four daughters treasure and fondly display. We have "Christmas Messes" in special places, all over our home.

Tradition and ritual is an important part of our family. It is something that we have adopted and carried on from each of our families and blended into our own. Whether I am praying bedtime prayers with my children or driving out for the annual hunt for the perfect Christmas tree, my children have come to depend on me to take the lead. Why is this so important to kids? According to Dr. Linda Budd, a prominent Twin Cities child psychologist, "Consistency and sameness helps children feel safe. The more we can create rituals and share consistent moments,

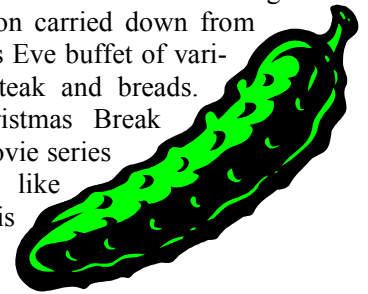


the more children are able to make connection with their family in our random and chaotic society."

Rituals and traditions also create a sense of belonging. Eloise and I focus on helping our kids experience this sense of belonging in our family. We tell them that friends will come and go as will neighbors and teammates — but family is forever. Our goal is to create an atmosphere of love, respect, support and tradition so that our children can always have a sense of belonging, confidence and personal growth.

Our daughter, Amy, as a senior in high school longed to "stretch her wings" and experience freedom. Interestingly, when she came home from her first semester at college, she was treasuring her brothers and sister and the family traditions that, just a year earlier, produced sighs and eye-rolls.

One of our many holiday traditions occurs during Thanksgiving weekend, when the kids put their names in a bowl and draw for a sibling for their "secret Santa" gift. They happily reveal their identity and gift on Christmas Eve. In another favorite, Eloise and I hide a pickle on the Christmas tree and the first kid to find it gets a prize. We like to go out at night to look at Christmas lights as a family. Another tradition carried down from Eloise's family is a Christmas Eve buffet of various fondue pots, seafood, steak and breads. We recently started a Christmas Break Movie Marathon watching movie series together over several nights like Rocky, Star Wars, and this year...Indiana Jones.



It hasn't always been easy to convince the kids that doing things together is a good idea. We've dealt with the occasional "snarvy" teenager as Eloise's father calls them. One year, we almost froze to death at the Hollidaz-zle parade! But now, the college students are the first to ask, "Hey, we're still going to do (add activity here) this year, aren't we???"

Family rituals and traditions are hugely important through out the year. Whether it is something you do every day, every week, every month or once a year, providing that sense of security with your children by doing the seemingly boring "over and over" things says "I love you" more than you know.

So whether you are cutting down a Christmas tree or baking cookies together, may your "Christmas Messes" be ones that your family will cherish for years to come.

Merry Christmas!