



Chas Everitt



Berry Everitt



Barry Davies

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Much has been said lately about the tough time agents are having in the current property market, but actually we see several good reasons to be positive about the future.

In fact, the tight conditions are working to the advantage of those of us prepared to stay the course. For starters, the ratio of agents to sales is improving by the day. Every week another real estate office seems to close and the industry has also finally introduced new measures that require agents to be more comprehensively trained - making it more difficult for anyone to gain entry to the industry.

This means that there is the potential for good agents to make more sales each per month or per year in this market than during the last boom, when the market was flooded with new agents.

In addition, we see the opportunity now for strong agencies to beef up their teams even further. Recruitment opportunities abound, thanks to the fact that while established companies are lowering operating costs by sharing overheads and maximizing discounts, smaller companies are floundering.

Strong individuals who are labouring under weak brands and operators are looking elsewhere much more readily now.

And finally, now is the time when agents can show clients just how much value they add to the transaction. More and more home sellers are now realising that what they need is not a "cheap" agent but a highly motivated agent with access to outstanding marketing resources and a solid agency infrastructure.

Your Area Specialist:

Chas Everitt International sales agents have all the latest market information regarding local property values at their fingertips - and are committed to the highest standards of personal service when it comes to selling your home. In addition, the Chas Everitt International property group offers you, the homeowner, the best possible exposure for your property in both national and international markets. So if you are thinking of selling your home, call your nearest Chas Everitt International office today for the name of your local area specialist - or visit www.ChasEveritt.com

Every month the **Property Signpost Newsletter** will be issued to all our subscribers, filled with real estate information to help you make an informed decision, whether you are buying or selling a property.

In This Month's Newsletter:

- **Time to cash in on student housing**
- **Bust the drudge**
- **Put down roots with herbs**
- **Make a painless move**

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berry@propertysignpost.co.za

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Time to cash in on student housing

Student accommodation holds great potential as a property investment that is virtually recession-proof.

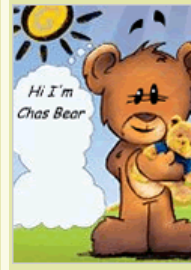
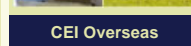
Demand for rental units near campuses is increasing rapidly as student numbers and waiting lists for university residences grow. And the pattern is set to continue in future thanks to the country's large percentage of young people and the increasing emphasis placed on tertiary education to plug skills shortages.

With greater pressure on universities and colleges to train larger numbers of students, budgets do not leave much scope to build additional student residences and tertiary institutions increasingly rely on the private sector to supply in the demand for student housing.

While there is already a strong argument to be made that bricks and mortar represent a sound long-term investment, student housing is unique in that rent per square metre is on average much higher than rentals for normal residential units and, secondly, finding a tenant is usually no more arduous than keeping the property listed with an agency affiliated with the institution. Many institutions compile free property listings and distribute the list to prospective students at the end of each academic year.

The key to a successful investment is to target areas close to campuses. Rents and occupancy rates rise in direct relation to the distance the property is from campus.

Even so, some institutions have a greater need for student housing than others because their student numbers are growing faster. In Gauteng the universities of Pretoria, the Witwatersrand and Johannesburg are showing strong growth, while mining activity around Potchefstroom is



expected to translate into greater residential density and thus growing applications at the local university.

Investors may also be rewarded by keeping an eye on the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg. The city has been named as the province's sole capital and growth is expected to swell student numbers at the local university.

The thought of letting students loose in your investment property may be too much for some to contemplate but careful selection of the property may limit annual maintenance. Elements to keep in mind in this regard include robust surfaces such as floor and wall tiles or washable paint and basic fittings that can be replaced at little cost. A breakage deposit paid by tenants should go a long way to cover the replacement cost of basic fittings damaged accidentally. And, speaking of maintenance, the annual summer vacation at the end of the academic year is an ideal time to attend to basics such as cleaning up and making repairs. Even students who renew their contracts for the next year - and thus pay the rent over the holiday period - are likely to spend their holidays elsewhere, giving landlords plenty of time to do maintenance.

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Bust the drudge

Few people would list housework among their favourite pastimes but luckily there are some tricks to minimise the drudgery.

Whether you are thus buying a new home, planning a spot of renovation or just sprucing up for spring, the following tips can help you cut down the time spent on tidying, dusting and scrubbing:

- Choose solid floor surfaces such as wood or tile - they will get just as dusty as carpets but are quicker to clean and spills can be simply mopped up.
- Choose smooth countertops for the kitchen and bathrooms that are easily cleaned with a quick wipe.
- Paint techniques such as sponging and rag-rolling create visual depth and can mask sticky fingerprints, especially in children's bedrooms or playrooms.
- Elaborate window treatments such as swags and drapes are dust traps and difficult to wash - consider simple and elegant curtaining or roller blinds.
- Keep in mind that textured or patterned upholstery will hide the odd mark better than plain or smooth fabric.
- Ample storage space such as cupboards and toy boxes can minimise clutter and speed up cleaning time.
- Avoid open shelving and cabinets with louvre doors or doors with raised panels that gather dust.
- Recessed light fittings stay cleaner than lampshades and chandeliers - and if you enjoy company better than cleaning, consider installing dimmer switches that will create ambience and hide the dust!

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Put down roots with herbs

A patch of herbs not only adds interest to your garden and your dinner table - it can increase the value of your property.

Studies have shown that well-kept gardens can increase property values by about 10% and a herb garden is a good choice in situations where space is limited, such as townhouse gardens. Similarly, a dull corner in a large garden can be profitably transformed into an aromatic patch.

A trend that is gaining popularity is to plant herbs among other plants in garden beds and borders instead of a dedicated herb garden. Many herbs, such as the sage family, have attractive flowers and herbs with grey foliage can be used with good effect to create colour contrast. An added bonus with this approach is that some herbs will deter harmful pests and attract beneficial insects.

Herbs are easy to grow provided they get plenty of sunlight and are planted in soil that drains well. Most herbs can also be grown in containers and a collection will add interest to a sunny patio and supply a keen cook with a ready supply of fresh material.

If you are in the market for culinary herbs consider starting with basic herbs that make up the classic bouquet garni, namely parsley, thyme and bay leaf. A bay tree will do well in a large pot and can be clipped to keep it compact. Other favourites include perennials such as sage, oregano and rosemary, and annuals such as basil and the peppery watercress.

Popular fragrant herbs include pineapple sage, lemon verbena and the mint family, all of which will spice up summer drinks, while lavender arguably retains top spot as the all-time favourite.

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Make a painless move

Moving day can be very trying for the whole family, but good planning can prevent lot of unnecessary stress.

First of all, proper packing, whether you attempt it yourself or hire a professional team, is crucial. And if you do hire packers, you should ask them to tackle the job a day or two before the move and make sure that you are present during the process.

You should also make sure you get a full and legible inventory list, that all items and boxes are numbered, and that you buy additional insurance, if necessary.

Secondly, you need to bear in mind that your removal company will not be liable for breakages

or loss of items that you have packed. Consider packing small valuables, such as jewellery or coin collections, separately and keeping them with you rather than transporting them with the rest of the household goods.

Third, make sure you are present when the removal van arrives to load your belongings and that you can stay in contact with the driver while in transit. If you cannot be at the new address before the removal team arrives, arrange that somebody meets them there.

And finally, check items against the inventory list as they are unloaded and report losses or damaged packaging before signing the driver's copy, then direct the team of movers to take items to the rooms where they need to be unpacked.

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