



FROM BERRY EVERITT

You make money when you buy property, not when you sell it - and we believe the next few months will be a "summer of dreams", when the best buying opportunities present themselves and set up the shrewd property investors to make the most money when the market recovers. It may be contra-intuitive to buy now, when the property market is in a downturn, but property prices are predicted to rise by 50 to 60 percent over the next three years and those who delay now will make relatively smaller returns on their property investments.

Currently, price growth has slowed almost to a halt while interest rates appear to have peaked, and there are many sellers eager to conclude deals. But there is already increasing demand as indicated by rising sale activity since August and this will intensify when interest rates start to fall next year.

At that point stock levels will really start to drop and prices will start to rise, which means that there is a window of opportunity to negotiate the best deals of just a few months. Looking back in three years' time, investors will recognize this as the turning point of the market. For those who intend taking advantage of this opportunity, we believe the best buys are likely to be in the medium-price, medium-size sector of the market, where price growth is currently at its lowest ebb and the high number of homes for sale make it possible to secure excellent value for money.

Such homes are also likely to experience the highest level of demand when the economy turns and many middle-class families who are currently 'making do' in rented accommodation or smaller homes can once again qualify for home loans and start looking for homes of their own or upgrades.

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:

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Email any comments to the editor:
berry@propertysignpost.co.za

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Hi-tech holiday cheer

Extended holidays may be off the cards this year-end due to the tough economic climate, but innovative gifts can also lift the spirits. Indeed, if you box clever with the presents you choose for your family, your home and yourself, you will find more time to relax and really enjoy the festive season. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

* With all the extra foot traffic in your home during the holiday break, a robotic vacuum cleaner may be a boon. There are several models available, but all work on the principle that you can switch in on and leave it to its own devices to clean floors and carpets while you soak up the sun or do a spot of gardening. The models are rechargeable and have super sensitive detection systems to prevent them from bumping into walls or furniture.

* Robotic lawnmowers essentially do the same for your lawn. Solar powered models by Husqvarna are available locally and once "trained" to stay away from flowerbeds, trees and swimming pools will cut the grass without supervision. The clever devices also sense when it is time to return to docking stations to be recharged and they run quietly compared to more conventional petrol or electrical mowers.

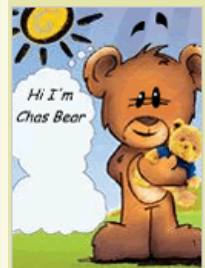
* If you still want to get into shape while your gizmos are mowing lawns and cleaning floors, you may want to take a look at the latest home gym equipment. Top of the range treadmills now incorporate such luxuries such as an iPod dock, touchscreen, television, radio, and software capable of automatically determining a workout regimen - but at a price. Cheaper models without all the bells and whistles will still help you to stick to those New Year's resolutions and you can always turn up the volume on your trusty old sound system.

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* If blood, sweat and tears are not your idea of fun, you may want to consider installing a home spa. Apart from hours of relaxation, this addition will also enhance the value of your home. Spa's range from the simply functional to state-of-the-art inventions with silent air induction systems, adjustable directional jets, underwater mood lighting - and even flat screen TV's complete with DVD and CD players, surround sound and, for good measure, a floating remote control.

* And finally, improved home security can bestow the gift of peace of mind. Wireless systems are quick and easy to install and can enhance existing security measures. Some models are ideal for perimeter security and activate alarms, flashing lights or floodlights when an intruder breaches your boundaries.

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Proper pool planning

Sweltering summer weather makes men's thoughts turn to installing swimming pools - but careful planning is vital before you take the plunge.

They can look inviting, afford hours of splashing fun and be a great addition to summer entertaining - but pools do require maintenance. You should make sure you have the time and inclination to keep up a regular regimen or that you can afford the services of a maintenance service.

In addition, pool plans must be passed by local authorities so you need to find out what the requirements are in your area - and check the regulations relating to pool safety measures such as fences and child restraints.

And if the subsoil is unstable or your area is prone to rock strata, you should consider a geotechnical survey to pinpoint potential problems and prevent costly mistakes.

Once you have cleared these hurdles, consider the purpose of the pool and discuss expectations with family members, who may have widely diverging opinions. Consensus is important so you can choose the right size and design of pool and derive maximum enjoyment once the pool is installed.

When choosing a design, you should also make sure that it will complement your garden - a tropical rock pool may, for instance, look out of place in a formal garden.

Then get at least three quotes from reputable pool construction firms and make sure that quotes are based on the same criteria to make comparison easier. Only consider contractors who can give recent references - and be sure to check these.

Hard landscaping, such as pool surrounds, will usually be included in the construction contract, but you may want to plan for additional features such as walkways or poolside patios and sundecks. Include such costs in your overall budget.

Also provide for soft landscaping once construction is completed and make sure that plants will complement and enhance the design of the new pool.

And finally, although pool safety is paramount, especially if your family is young, investigate options that will enhance the appeal of your pool as well as provide the required safeguards.

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Protect your asset by making your mark

Most homeowners realise they have to look after their property to protect the value of their asset - and it is no different for those who own homes in gated developments such as lifestyle estates or cluster complexes.

These are of course full title properties and require the same attention as stand-alone suburban homes, with one important addition - involvement in the Homeowners' Association (HOA), which is responsible for the upkeep of the surrounding grounds and communal facilities.

It is important to understand that HOAs are essentially co-operative bodies that not only represent all owners but also require their involvement in order to be effective. Apathy among owners can quickly lead to disinterest by the willing few, or discord in the community, especially in cases where individual homeowners vehemently disagree after the fact with decisions taken by the HOA directors.

Lack of co-operation is also an easy recipe for poor planning and poor financial management - which will inevitably lead to a declining "neighbourhood" and deteriorating property values. So if you live in an estate or a cluster complex and you want to ensure that your property investment will grow, get involved and become an active member of your HOA.

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Easy ways to save water

South Africa has limited water resources so even during the rainy season, homeowners need to be thinking about ways to save water. And it's easy enough to do so just by making a few small changes that will also keep your water bills down, such as the following:

*If you have a leaky tap, replace the washer immediately. A tap leaking at the rate of one drop per second will waste around 10 000L of water every year.

* Fit bathroom and kitchen taps with inexpensive aerators or flow restrictors. A showerhead fitted with a flow restrictor will use only about 7L of water per minute compared to 20L a minute for an old-style showerhead.

* Use a timer and try to restrict your shower time to less than five minutes.

* If you have an old-style toilet put a bottle filled with water or a brick into the cistern to reduce the amount of water used with each flush. The new-style toilets with flat cisterns only use about 3 to 6L per flush.

* In the kitchen, start by keeping cold drinking water in the fridge rather than running the tap until the water gets cool and thaw frozen food in the fridge or microwave instead of under running water.

* Also don't rinse hand-washed dishes under a running tap. If you have a dual sink, fill one side with soapy water and the other with rinsing water, or use a basin for rinsing.

* Don't use water-hungry kitchen-sink disposal units. Rather try composting which is an environmentally friendly alternative. Wash fresh fruit or vegetables in a laundry basin, not under running water.

* And in the laundry, try always to wait until you've got a full load before you use the washing machine. If you do a half load, adjust the water level accordingly.

* If you're going really "green", why not buy a water tank to catch the runoff from your roof and use rainwater in your washing machine? Alternatively, channel grey water from the washing machine rinse cycle to be re-used in your garden.

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