

Realtors® See a Decade of Dramatic Developments

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At the beginning of the 21st century, most home buyers had never viewed a home online; the three top home sale marketing methods were yard signs, newspaper ads and open houses; and nearly nine out of 10 buyers financed their purchase with a fixed-rate, 30-year mortgage. What a difference a decade makes. “The real estate industry has seen tremendous change and evolution over the past decade,” said [NAR President Vicki Cox Golder](#), owner of Vicki L. Cox & Associates in Tucson, Ariz. “As the first, best source for real estate information, Realtors® have not only anticipated and adapted to the evolving needs of their clients and customers, but also have influenced industry trends and innovations that will carry us into the future.”

In 1999, buyers who went online in search for a home were in the minority – only 37 percent of buyers used the Internet in their home search, according to data from the NAR Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers. Today, 90 percent of buyers are searching online, and the real estate industry has responded. Sites like REALTOR.com, which attracts nearly 12 million total visits every month, have evolved to give today’s buyers what they want – not just property listings, but multiple photos, online videos, mapping features, and comprehensive neighborhood information, as well.

Median home values over the past decade have increased more than 25 percent, from \$137,600 in November 1999 to \$172,600 in November 2009 (the most recent existing-home data available). Fewer people are buying detached, single family homes – 82 percent in 1999 compared to 78 percent in 2009 – but more people are buying homes in suburban neighborhoods – 46 percent in 1999 compared to 54 percent today.

Buyers themselves have also changed. A smaller proportion of married couples are buying homes these days; while married couples comprised 68 percent of all home purchases at the beginning of this century, they represent 60 percent of all buyers today. Single men and women have made up the difference – single men purchased 10 percent of all homes last year, compared to only 7 percent 10 years ago. Single women now represent more than one-fifth of all home buyers – 21 percent, up from 15 percent in 1999.

Other things haven’t changed. The median age for home buyers last year was 39, just as it was in 1999. Neighborhood quality, affordability, and convenience to work and school have consistently been top priorities for both past and present buyers. And eight out of 10 recently surveyed consumers believe that owning a home is an investment in their future.

“Realtors® have been around for more than 100 years, but one constant during that time has been the persistence of homeownership as the American Dream,” said Golder. “As the first decade of this century comes to a close, NAR stands ready to meet the many challenges and opportunities that lie ahead by helping our Realtor® members better serve their clients and communities and ensuring that those dreams of homeownership remain possible for all who want to achieve it.”