



Home sales market shows more signs of improving

By [Shonda Novak](#)

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Austin-area existing home sales were up 14 percent last month compared to a year earlier, the second month in a row that sales have been higher than last year's.

"The latest figures show that we are seeing the economic recovery continue in Austin," said Judith Bundschuh, chairman of the Austin Board of Realtors.

Last year was the fourth in a row that local home sales were down from the year before. Economists say an improving job market, and an improving national economy, could reverse that trend this year.

The board said 975 homes sold in Central Texas in January. Active listings fell 5 percent, to 8,144, meaning less for buyers to choose from.

The median price was \$190,000, up 6 percent. The higher median could be due to the bulk of the sales being in the \$200,000 to \$400,000 range.

"I think we're seeing more expensive properties being bought now" than when the federal homebuyer tax credits were in place through early 2010, said Tom Polk, a broker associate with Stanberry & Associates Inc.

Byron "Buddy" Schilling, president of JB Goodwin Realtors, had this explanation for the bump in median: "The stock market is back, and more people have more money. Those people with money realize that these interest rates will not stay low all year. They are buying now, some for the interest rates, but we are also doing a lot of cash sales."

Schilling said housing demand locally "will continue up because of the improving job market."

"As people realize mortgage interest rates are going up, more buyers will buy. And interest rates are going up," he said.

Polk said he thinks buyers are "in denial" about the tightening market.

"They think it's a slow market and continue to make low offers, and when they don't get the house, they think it's only because of that one time. They don't realize the chances are against them right now," Polk said.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin