

Out of the norm: Big cities where homes remain affordable

This part of a series of Associated Press stories about how the U.S. housing market has evolved in the 10 years since the market peaked.

By JIM SALTER
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Until recently, Christina Brouk was living with her parents. Now, still in her early 20s, she's living the American dream of home ownership — the same dream that's grown elusive for many young adults since the housing bubble peaked 10 years ago.

Homes in many areas of the United States have become so costly that few but high-earners can afford them. Rising rents have made it hard to save enough to buy. Cities that offer plentiful jobs for educated young adults — New York, Boston, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington — have become prohibitively expensive home markets.

Then there are the exceptions.

St. Louis, near where Brouk lives, is one. So are Minneapolis, Pittsburgh and Kansas City, Missouri. In those areas, homes remain comparatively affordable relative to local incomes. An improved U.S. economy has fueled job and pay growth. Throw in historically low mortgage rates, and ownership is still within reach — even for those just entering their careers at modest salaries.

"You really live to do this," Brouk, a 24-year-old medical secretary who, along with her fiancé, Derek Schmittgens, bought a three-bedroom ranch home in the St. Louis suburb of Imperial, Missouri, in December. "It's what you work for."

The St. Louis metro area, situated squarely in the Rust Belt, might seem an improbable place for a stable housing market. The local economy is far diminished from its peak decades ago as a hub of muscular industrial giants. Many corporations like brewing giant Anheuser-Busch that once were based here closed, moved or merged. This year, the NFL's Rams cited rosier economic opportunities in Los Angeles as a reason for their decision to return to the West Coast.

Yet having never experienced the heights of the housing bubble, St. Louis never



Kelsey Funk poses outside her home in St. Charles, Mo. Funk paid \$113,000 for her three-bedroom home in suburban St. Louis about a year ago. "I think what surprised me was how affordable it is," Funk said. "My monthly payment is way cheaper than rent. The cost to rent was generally \$900 to \$1,000. My mortgage is now \$690. And it's something I own."

absorbed the full brunt of the bust, either. Its economy has remained reasonably steady compared with turmoil elsewhere in the country where foreclosures caused demand for rentals to surge.

A tech corridor in the city's Central West End is attracting some higher-paying jobs at companies like Square, a mobile payment company founded by Jack Dorsey, a St. Louis native who co-founded Twitter. Jobs in health care and finance continue to grow, economists say. The metro area's unemployment rate is just below the national level of 4.9 percent. And home prices remain roughly in line with area incomes.

A new low

Nationally, home ownership is near a 48-year low. A key reason is that surging rents and home prices have made it next to impossible for many people to save enough to buy — even though today's ultra-low mortgage rates have the effect of lightening housing bills. An analysis by The Associated Press found that monthly housing payments have dropped in the past decade while rents have climbed.

Yet in the St. Louis area, buyers in the 25-34 age group are having a comparatively easy time, data tracked by Realtor.com shows: Those young buyers make up 40 percent of purchase mortgages

in the metro area, compared with an average of 35 percent nationally.

The median home value in the St. Louis metro area is \$152,000, \$24,000 less than the national average and far below many other big cities, especially on the coasts, said Charles Gascon, an economist for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. And, the median household income of \$56,041 is about \$2,700 above the national average, Gascon said.

"You really didn't see the big boom or the big bust" in St. Louis through the economic downturn, Gascon said. "But you can go even beyond that. Delinquency rates didn't spike as high in the St. Louis area, and our economy as a whole didn't contract as much as the rest of the country."

Brouk and Schmittgens lived separately with their parents as they spent months searching for just the right home. They found it in Imperial, a town of 5,000 a half-hour south of St. Louis. They agreed to the \$140,000 asking price the day the home hit the market, grabbing it before other buyers could make an offer.

The brick home, on two-thirds of an acre, lies on a quiet cul-de-sac adjoining a wooded area. It needed some work. The young couple replaced the carpets and painted the walls. Next up, they'll redo the kitchen cabinets and finish the basement.

Still, Brouk said, "it kind of ended up being everything we wanted."

Another millennial, Kelsey Funk, paid \$113,000 last year for a three-bedroom home that sits near the historic Main Street in St. Charles, Missouri, another suburb.

"What surprised me was how affordable it is," said Funk, a 26-year-old real estate agent. "My monthly payment is way cheaper than rent. The cost to rent was generally \$900 to \$1,000. My mortgage is now \$690. And it's something I own."

"Millennials in many markets are just locked out," said Jim Dohr, president of Coldwell Banker Gundaker, the largest real estate firm in St. Louis. "We're bucking the trend. It all comes back to affordability."

Low prices have benefited housing markets throughout the Midwest, said Jonathan Smoke, chief economist for Realtor.com.

"I think affordability turns into a major selling point for the market — not just for individuals who stay there and put down roots, but also to attract other people, including attracting businesses," Smoke said.

For Funk, there's nothing like the pride and contentment of having her own home.

"Once you own, it's a totally different feeling," she said. "You actually feel like a grown-up."



AP Photo/Steven Senne
Fisherman Carl Berg unloads containers of whelks from a fishing vessel at a dock in Little Compton, R.I., in May.

'Ugly' snails, once ignored by fishermen, now a prize

By MATT O'BRIEN
Associated Press

LITTLE COMPTON, R.I. — Cooking a channeled whelk is not for the squeamish. But sliced and sprinkled over a bed of linguine, it's a chewy delicacy in old-fashioned Italian eateries along the East Coast.

The sea snails known by Italian-Americans as scungilli used to be such a niche market that fishermen ignored them when they turned up in lobster traps or oyster dredges.

Now they're a prized commodity. Because of growing demand in Asia and the collapse of other industries, such as lobster, fishermen searching for something else to catch are keeping and selling the big marine snails.

"There's an international market for the product, primarily in Hong Kong and South China," said Rick Robins, who owns Bernie's Conchs in Virginia and manages export sales for Chesapeake Bay Packing. "It's a popular item in Cantonese cooking."

Most people who order a plate of scungilli probably haven't seen one of the hairy-shelled gastropods in the wild. A voracious predator, it crawls along the bottom of Atlantic coastal inlets from Nantucket Sound to North Carolina's Outer Banks, piercing its razor-edged proboscis into clams and other prey.

"They're not like their Caribbean cousin," said Rhode Island fisherman Greg Mataronas, comparing it to the tropical, vegetarian conch. "They're the Northern, ugly version. Their faces are a hunk of meat."

Big shell bucks

It's an increasingly lucrative hunk of meat: A large whelk can be sold for as much

as \$7 in a live market.

The annual dockside value of the whelk catch now tops \$1 million in Virginia and Rhode Island, \$1.4 million in New Jersey and \$5.7 million in Massachusetts, according to marine fishery agencies in those states. In Delaware, knobbed and channeled whelks are now the third most valuable fishery behind blue crabs and striped bass.

In the colder waters of Maine, a smaller waved whelk served up as a "pickled wrinkle" is seeing a resurgence in popularity. The same whelk is also fished in Canada and favored in Korean cuisine, Robins said.

In southern New England, as the lobster industry declined from Cape Cod to Long Island Sound, the market for channeled whelks grew so quickly that states have scrambled to establish rules to let the snails grow big enough to breed.

"As lobster fishing has declined, whelk fishing has increased," said Scott Morello, a researcher at Maine's Downeast Institute for Applied Marine Research & Education. "Even so, it's still not as profitable for a year-round fishery that you'd want to base an entire economy off of it."

Mataronas identifies himself as a lobsterman, just as his father and grandfather did in the Rhode Island seaside town of Little Compton.

"Lobstering was so good in the '90s" that he paid no attention to snails, he said. But since 2000, he's devoted much of his spring and fall to trapping whelks in the calm waters of the Sakonnet River, a tidal strait that flows into Rhode Island Sound. Baited by dogfish meat and horseshoe crabs, the snails crawl into traps left about 10-feet deep on the muddy sea floor.

THE DAILY
ASTORIAN

TV LISTINGS

Evening listings
WEDNESDAY

WEDNESDAY EVENING													JULY 13				
A	L	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30				
2	KATU	(2) KATU News		Jeopardy!	Wheel of Fortune	ESPY Awards	Celebrate major sports achievements. (N)						KATU News at 11	(35) Jimmy Kimmel			
3	KOMO	(4) KOMO 4 News		Jeopardy!	Wheel of Fortune	ESPY Awards	Celebrate major sports achievements. (N)						KOMO 4 News	(35) Jimmy Kimmel			
5	KING	(5) NBC Nightly News	KING 5 News	KING 5 News	Jeopardy!	America-Talent	"The Judge Cuts 2" Reba McEntire joins the panel tonight. (N)						The Night Shift "All In" (N)	KING 5 News	(35) Tonight Show		
6	KOIN	(6) KOIN 6 News at 6	CBS Evening News	Extra	Ent. Tonight	Big Brother (N)		Criminal Minds	"The Sandman"						Gothic "Christina's World" (N)	KOIN 6 News @ 11	(35) S. Colbert (N)
7	KIRO	(7) KIRO 7 News	CBS Evening News	The Insider	Ent. Tonight	Big Brother (N)		Criminal Minds	"The Sandman"						Gothic "Christina's World" (N)	KIRO News	(35) S. Colbert (N)
8	KGW	(8) KGW News at 6:00 p.m.		Live at Seven	Inside Edition	America-Talent	"The Judge Cuts 2" Reba McEntire joins the panel tonight. (N)						The Night Shift "All In" (N)	KGW News at 11	(35) Tonight Show		
9	KRCW	(3) Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Modern Family	Modern Family	Penn&Tell "Won't Get Fooled Again" (N)	Whose Line (N)	Whose Line Is It?		KGW News at 10	(35) Two 1/2 Men	9 Months	"The Final Countdown" (N)				
10	KOPB	(10) Journeys in Japan	Business (N)	PBS NewsHour		SuperNature: Wild	"Crowded Skies" (N)						Nova "Making North America: Human"	9 Months	"The Final Countdown" (N)		
12	KPTV	(12) 6 O'Clock News		Family Feud	Family Feud	Chef "Vets, Jets and Home Cooks" (N)	Wayward Pines	"Pass Judgement" (N)		10 O'Clock News		11 O'Clock News	Loves Ray				
13	KPDx	(13) Mike & Molly	Mike & Molly	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	FOX 12's 8 O'Clock News on PDX-TV	FOX 12's 9 O'Clock News on PDX-TV			The Closer "Executive Order"		The Closer "Old Money"					
13	KCPQ	(13) Name Game	Modern Family	Pre-match	MLS Soccer FC Dallas at Seattle Sounders FC (L)					Q13 News at 10		Q13 News	MasterChef (N)				
20	TBS	(20) Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Q13 News at 10		Q13 News	MasterChef (N)				
22	KZJN	(22) Two and a Half	Two and a Half	The Simpsons	The Simpsons	Modern Family	Modern Family	Q13 News at 9		Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Friends	Friends				
29	ESPN2	(29) MLB Baseball Home Run Derby		SportsCenter		SportsCenter				ESPY Awards	Celebrate major sports achievements.						
30	ESPN2	(30) NBA Basketball Summer League (L)	NBA Basketball Summer League (L)					E:60		SportsCenter	SportsCenter						
31	NICK	(31) Henry Danger	Henry Danger	Crashletes	The Thundermans	NickyRickyDicky	The Thundermans	Full House	Full House	Full House	Full House	Friends	Friends				
32	DISN	(32) Liv Maddie	(35) K.C. Underc.	(05) Let It Shine (2012, Family) Coco Jones, Trevor Jackson, Tyler James Williams.		Walk the Prank (N)	K.C. Undercover	Liv and Maddie	Bunk'd	Stuck in Middle	K.C. Undercover						
34	FAM	(34) ** Failure to Launch (06) Sarah Jessica Parker, Matthew McConaughey.		YoungHungry (N)	Baby Daddy (N)	Guilt "Blood Ties"		Pretty Liars "Hit and Run, Run, Run"		The 700 Club							
35	FMC	(35) (5:00) *** The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo (11) Rooney Mara, Daniel Craig. (10) FXM Presents *** The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo (2011, Crime Story) Rooney Mara, Christopher Plummer, Daniel Craig.											(40) FXM Presents				
36	LIFE	(36) Little Women: LA "Media Frenzy"	Little Women "Ride or Die Wedding"	Women "Baby Showers and Blindsides"	Women "Spa Day Sparring" (SP) (N)	Little W "Little Babies, Big Lies" (SP) (N)	LW Atlanta "Little Babies, Big Lies"										
39	ROOT	(39) Xterra USA Championship "2015"	Halls of Fame	MLS Soccer Montreal Impact at Portland Timbers (L)						MLS Soccer FC Dallas at Seattle Sounders FC							
39	FS1	(39) UFC Fight Night Site: Denny Sanford Premier Center -- Sioux Falls, S.D. (L)						Postshow "McDonald vs. Lineker" (L)		Garbage Time (N)	Fox Sports Live	TMZ Sports (N)	Fox Sports Live				
43	SPIKE	(43) Movie	*** Four Brothers (2005, Action) Tyrese Gibson, André Benjamin, Mark Wahlberg.			*** I Am Legend (2007, Sci-Fi) Alice Braga, April Grace, Will Smith.							The Marine (06)				
44	COM	(44) (15) South Park	(20) South Park	(25) South Park	(50) South Park	Simpsons Already Did It"		Another Period (N)	South Park	The Daily Show	The Nightly Show						
45	HIST	(45) Amer. Pickers "Red Barn, Black Keys"	Amer. Pickers "Red, White and Blues"	American Pickers "Plymouth Rocks"	Amer. Pickers "What's Inside the Vault"	Pawn Stars (N)	Pawn Stars (N)	Wahlburgers (N)	Black, White (N)	(05) Pawn Stars	(35) Pawn Stars						
46	A&E	(46) The First 48	Duck Dynasty	Duck Dynasty	Duck Dynasty	Duck Dynasty (N)	Duck Dynasty (N)	Wahlburgers (N)	Black, White (N)	(05) Wahlburg (N)	(35) Duck Dynasty						
47	TLC	(47) Say Yes-Dress	Say Yes-Dress	I Am Jazz "Confronted With Hate"	My Big Life "Fat Girl" Spread Thin" (N)	Big Fat Fabulous Li. "Cereal Stalker" (N)	I Am Jazz (N)			Big Fat Fabulous Li. "Cereal Stalker"							
48	DISC	(48) Dual Survival "Take Me to the River"	Dual Survival "Mosquito Coast"	Dual Survival "Bulgarian Blizzard" (N)	Dual Survival "Burning Island" (N)	American Tarzan (N)				Dual Survival "Burning Island"							
49	NGeo	(49) Rocky Mountain "The Hills Have Eyes"	Inside "Lockup Down Under"	San Quentin Unlocked	Life and Death Row "Judgment"	Life and Death Row "Punishment" (N)	Major Crimes "Foreign Affairs"			Life and Death Row "Judgment"	Life and Death Row "Punishment"						
50	TNT	(50) Castle "An Embarrassment of Bitches"	Castle "The Blue Butterfly"	Castle "Once Upon a Crime"	Castle "A Dance With Death"	Major Crimes "Foreign Affairs"				Major Crimes "Skin Deep"							
51	AMC	(51) (4:30) Jumanji (95, Fant) Robin Williams.	*** Jaws (1975, Horror) Richard Dreyfuss, Robert Shaw, Roy Scheider.			*** Jaws 2 (1978, Horror) Lorraine Gary, Murray Hamilton, Roy Scheider.				Mr. Robot "eps2.0_unm4sk-pt1.tc; eps2.0_unm4sk-pt2.tc" (N) Hacking Robot (N)							
52	USA	(52) Law & Order: S.V.U. "Lost Traveler"	Law & Order: S.V.U. "Friending Emily"	Law&Order: SVU "Intimidation Game"	Suits "To Trouble" (SP) (N)	Cutthroat Kitchen (N)		Diners, Drive-Ins	Diners, Drive-Ins	Diners, Drive-Ins	Diners, Drive-Ins						
53	FOOD	(53) Chopped	Chopped	Chopped	Chopped	Buying/Sell "Suburban to Urban" (N)		Hunt Vintage (N)	House Hunters	Property "Not Ready for the Suburbs"							
54	HGTV	(54) Buying "From Out-Dated to Modern"	Buying and Selling	Desp. Kitchens (N)	Desp. Kitchens (N)	Buying/Sell "Suburban to Urban" (N)		Tyrant "Cockroach" (N)		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon							
55	FX	(55) X-Men: The Last Stand	*** The Amazing Spider-Man 2 (2014, Action) Emma Stone, Jamie Foxx, Andrew Garfield.			Anderson Cooper 360		Anderson Cooper 360		Anderson Cooper 360							
57	CNN	(57) Anderson Cooper 360	CNN Tonight With Don Lemon	CNN Tonight With Don Lemon	The O'Reilly Factor	The Kelly File With Megyn Kelly				On the Record							
58	FNC	(58) The Kelly File With Megyn Kelly	Hannity														
61	CNBC	(61) Leno Garage "The Essence of Cool" (N)	Jay Leno "Wolf in Sheep's Clothing" (N)	Jay Leno "Anything but Four Wheels"	Jay Leno Garage "The Essence of Cool" (N)	Flipping "Appetite for Demolition" (N)	WatchWhat (N)	Real Housewives		Real Housewives							
63	BRav	(63) The Real Housewives	The Real Housewives "Steel Calzones"	Housewives "The Benefits of Friendship"	(15) *** Bad Day at Black Rock (54) Spencer Tracy. (45) *** The Law and Jake Wade (58) Robert Taylor.												
64	TCM	(64) (5:00) Hour of the Gun James Garner.	*** The Magnificent Seven (60) Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson, Yul Brynner.			*** Resident Evil: Apocalypse (04) Sienna Guillory, Oded Fehr, Milla Jovovich.				Nurse (2014, Thriller) Kathleen Turner.							
65	SYFY	(65) (5:00) The Cabin in the Woods	*** Turistas (2006, Adventure) Melissa George, Olivia Wilde, Josh Duhamel.			WesternSport	Noble Outfitters	Product Showcase									
69	RFD	(69) WesternSport	Noble Outfitters	HS Rodeo Tour	Equestrian Nation	RW Horsemanship	Rural Eve. News	Women's Rodeo	Racer's Edge								

GET TO THE POINT.
Expert Service. Guaranteed.

Del's OK
TIRE FACTORY
is changing its name to **DEL'S OK**
point S
TIRE & AUTO SERVICE

(503) 325-2861
35359 Business 101
Astoria, OR 97103
MON - FRI 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM
SAT 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
tirefactory.com/astoria

Same local owners, friendly service and guarantees on warranties.