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[A Note from Ann:](#)

Lending Options Expand

With the housing crash well in our rear-view mirrors, the economy booming and home values increasing, lenders across the nation are loosening their requirements for home loans. We are now seeing Down Payment Assistance programs and 80/15/5 or 80/10/10 loans again. What does this mean?

The Down Payment Assistance Loans are for buyers that have an income below the Median Income bracket for this area. Some of these are even grants that do not have to be paid back, most have a minimum amount of time you must live in the home. Others are simply loans with a slightly higher interest rate. Your lender can discuss your options with you. If they don't know, find a lender who does as these fill a much needed gap. Add these to the already 0 down VA and USDA loans, buying a home just got a whole lot easier for time homebuyers or low income buyers.

The 80/15/5 (or 80/10/10) means you get a first Conventional Loan for 80% of the mortgage (traditional 20% down), then you get a 2nd loan for 15% (so in essence financing 95% together). This leaves you with a 5% down payment and NO PMI as the first loan is the one that counts towards the required 20% down. These second loans carry a higher interest rate (normally 5 1/2% - 6% depending upon creditworthiness). The 80/10/10 would be a 2nd loan for 10% and 10% down payment. The second loans are for much less and are easier to pay off faster. These are great options for those wanting or needing to hang onto their cash for needed repairs, renovations, etc.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions about these and I can help you find a lender that will suit your needs. I hope you're all having a great summer and have a Happy 4th of July!

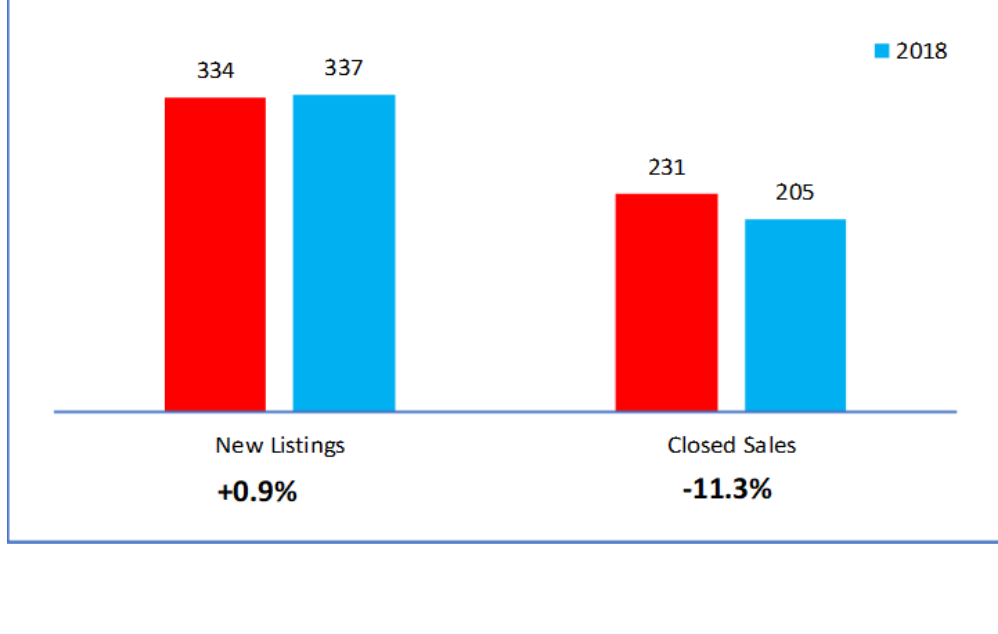
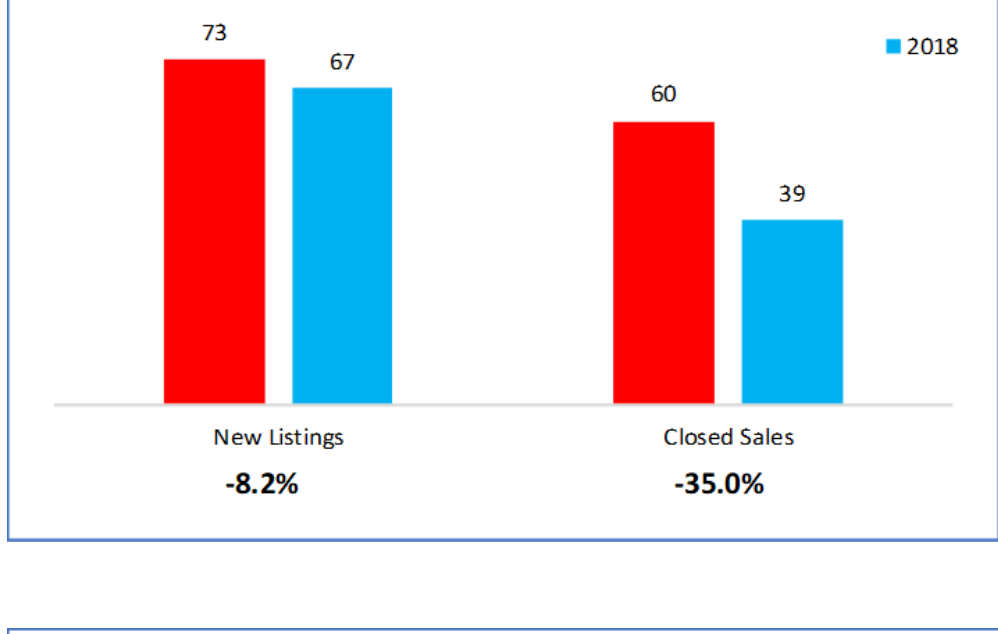


In This Issue

- **A Note from Ann**
- **Bastrop Area Monthly Statistics**
- **Around Town/Upcoming Events**
- **What You Should Really Know About Browsing for Homes Online**

[Bastrop Area Monthly Statistics](#)

Below are the current statistics for the Bastrop Area. The average home sale price for June was \$256,235, which is up +22.2% from the previous year. The average home sale price for 2018, so far, is \$227,535, which is up +9.9% from 2017.



[Around Town](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)



July 4th - Elgin 4th of July People's Parade and Celebration

Push, Pedal, Pull and Pets is the theme of the annual parade and celebration held on the Fourth of July. Everyone is invited to walk or ride down Main Street from City Hall to Veterans' Memorial Park. All non-motorized entries are accepted. Food and fun follow the parade with a short program and a Soap Box Derby Exhibition by the local Cub Scouts. For more information, [click here](#).

July 4th - 4th of July at Community Gardens

Spend your 4th of July with us at Community Gardens!! We'll feature live musical performances by Kidnapidy, Ali Holder, Johnny Chops, and The Peterson Brothers. Sign up for one of our tournaments: Washers & Baggio!! Registration is \$20 per two person team. Enter the kiddos in a Fun Fishing Derby! Cash prizes and trophies are up for grabs!!! All this fun is followed by our First Annual Firework Show!! For more information and to register, [click here](#).

July 4th - Black Tree's Fourth Fest

Black Tree is proud to be hosting our first annual FOURTH FEST in Smithville, Texas. Gates open at 4 pm on July 4th, 2018. Join them for live music, fireworks, and an afternoon of celebration! Live music including: Kevin Fowler, Randall King, Blake TorreyBand, Ben Tyler Johnson, and Mark Winston Kirk! That along with a huge fireworks display, food truck park, 5 bars, and a fantastic musical lineup. This top notch FOURTH FEST showcase is one you can't miss! For more information and to buy tickets, [click here](#).

July 10th—July 14th - Elgin Rodeo

The Elgin Rodeo is coming soon to Elgin! The top 20 teams will rope during rodeo performances, which begin at 7:30pm. 4D Barrel Races will be held. On Friday and Saturday, there will be precision, drifill team, mutton bustin', kids' calf scramble, bareback riding, saddle bronc & bull riding, calf roping, steer wrestling, team roping, barrel racing, and girls breakaway roping. Admission for adults is \$10; ages 5-12, \$5; Ages 4 & under are free. For more information, [click here](#).

July 14th - McDade Watermelon Festival

At the McDade Watermelon Festival Car Show, enjoy the annual Grande Parade, music on the grounds, food, contests, games and lots of FUN! Free entry and free melon feast after the Prize Melon Auction. For more information, [click here](#).

July 28th - Casino Night

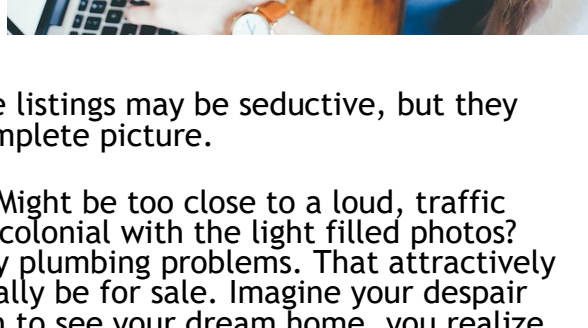
22nd Annual Casino Night - Sponsored by the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce. This annual event features gaming (with \$10,000 in chips included) a catered dinner and drinks, raffle and more. This fundraiser benefits the many Fall events sponsored by the Chamber. For more information and to purchase tickets, [click here](#).

[What You Should Really Know About Browsing for Homes Online](#)

By: [HouseLogic](#)

It's fun! It's exciting! It's important to take everything with a grain of salt!

Oh, let's just admit it, shall we? Browsing for homes online is a window shopper's Shangri La. The elegantly decorated rooms, the sculpted gardens, the colorful front doors that just pop with those "come hither" hues.



Browser beware, though: Those listings may be seductive, but they might not be giving you the complete picture.

That perfect split level ranch? Might be too close to a loud, traffic choked street. That handsome colonial with the light filled photos? Might be hiding some super icky plumbing problems. That attractively priced condo? Miiiight not actually be for sale. Imagine your despair when, after driving across town to see your dream home, you realize it was sold.

So let's practice some self care, shall we, and set our expectations appropriately.

You Keep Current. Your Property Site Should, Too

First things first: You wouldn't read last month's Vanity Fair for the latest cafe society gossip, right? So you shouldn't browse property sites that show old listings.

Get the latest listings from [realtor.com](#), which pulls its information every 15 minutes from the Multiple Listing Service (MLS), regional databases where real estate agents post listings for sale. That means that [realtor.com](#)'s listings are more accurate than some others, like Zillow and Trulia, which may update less often. You wouldn't want to get your heart a flutter for a house that's already off the market.

BTW, there are other property listing sites as well, including Redfin, which is a brokerage and therefore also relies on relationships with brokers and MLSs for listings.

The Best Properties Aren't Always the Best Looking

A picture, they say, is worth a thousand words. But what they don't say is a picture can also hide a thousand cracked floorboards, busted boilers, and leaky pipes. So while it's natural to focus on photos when browsing, make sure to also consider the property description and other key features.

Each [realtor.com](#) listing, for example, has a "property details" section that may contain important information such as the year the home was built, price per square foot, and how many days the property has been on the market.

Ultimately though, ask your real estate agent to help you interpret what you find. The best agents have hyper-local knowledge of the market and may even know details and histories of some properties. If a listing seems too good to be true, your agent will likely know why.

Treat Your Agent Like Your Bestie

At the end of the day, property sites are like CliffsNotes for a neighborhood: They show you active listings, sold properties, home prices, and sales histories. All that data will give you a working knowledge, but it won't be exhaustive.

To assess all of this information — and gather facts about any home you're eyeing, like how far the local elementary school is from the house or where the closest Soul Cycle is — talk to your real estate agent. An agent who can paint a picture of the neighborhood is an asset.

An agent who can go beyond that and deliver the dish on specific properties is a true friend indeed, more likely to guide you away from homes with hidden problems, and more likely to save you the time of visiting a random listing (when you could otherwise be in the park playing with your canine bestie).

Want to go deeper? Consider these sites and sources:

- School ratings: Data from [GreatSchools.org](#) and the National Center for Education Statistics, and the school district's website
- Crime rates and statistics: [CrimeReports.com](#), [NeighborhoodScout.com](#), [SpotCrime.com](#), and the local police station
- Walkability and public transportation: [WalkScore.com](#) and [APTA.com](#)
- Health ratings: [HealthInsight.org](#), [LeapfrogGroup.org](#), and U.S. News and World Report rankings

Just remember: You're probably not going to find that "perfect home" while browsing listings on your smartphone. Instead, consider the online shopping experience to be an amuse bouche to the home-buying entree — a good way for you to get a taste of the different types of homes that are available and a general idea of what else is out there.

Once you've spent that time online, you'll be ready to share what you've learned with an agent.

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