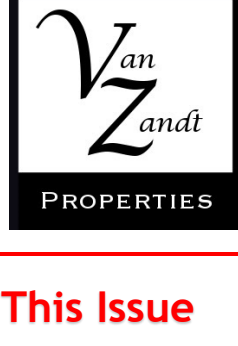


**BROUGHT TO YOU BY:**  
Ann Van Zandt, Broker, ABR, CRS, GRI, SRS, Green  
(512) 629-3081  
[ann@bastrophomes.com](mailto:ann@bastrophomes.com) [bastrophomes.com](http://bastrophomes.com)



**May 2020**

## A Note from Ann:

I hope this finds everyone well! These are crazy times we're living in! We did close the office during the Pandemic and have been working from home. I am seeing a lot of activity picking up these days. I truly believe it's due to everyone being tired of being locked up!

We are showing homes with masks and gloves and taking all precautions. Most homes listed right now are vacant. I do anticipate more "occupied" homes going on the market when people feel comfortable with the status of the spread of the virus - mid-May or early June possibly. Once we are back to semi-normal I expect a robust market due to all of the pent up demand and listings for the past few months.

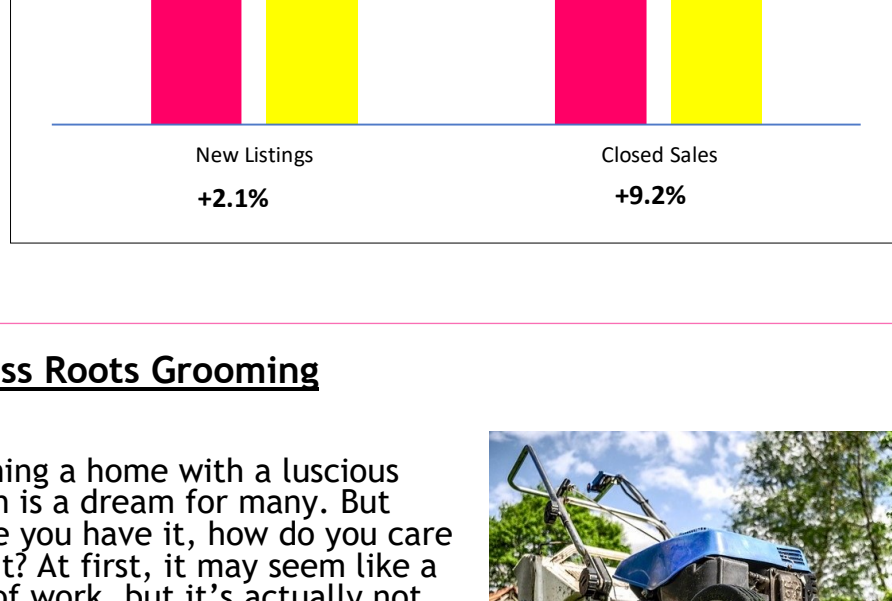
The Feds are working on making sure loans do not become too restrictive - we will have to wait and see what happens there. Like I said - crazy times! No one knows what to expect! Until we meet again - hang in there and if you'd like to view homes, let me know, or if you want to list your home we can start getting ready now so we hit the gate running! We hope to re-open the office May 18th, but then again, we're in a "wait and see" pattern. Peace and wellness to all!

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- A Note from Ann
- Bastrop Area Monthly Statistics
- Grass Roots Grooming
- Coronavirus Mortgage Relief: What You Need To Know

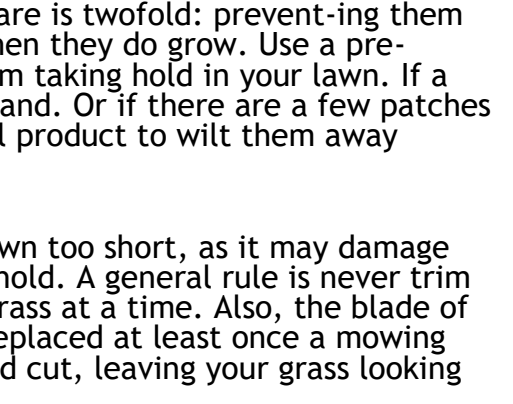
## Bastrop Area Monthly Statistics

Below are the current statistics for the Bastrop Area. The average home sale price for April was \$274,457, which is up 12.4% from the previous year. The average home sale price for 2020, so far, is \$263,063, which is up 12.6% from 2019.



## Grass Roots Grooming

Owning a home with a luscious lawn is a dream for many. But once you have it, how do you care for it? At first, it may seem like a lot of work, but it's actually not difficult if you take the time to learn. Here are some tips on how to maintain a pristine lawn.



**Watch out for weeds.** Proper weed care is twofold: prevent-ing them from sprouting and removing them when they do grow. Use a pre-emergent herbicide to stop weeds from taking hold in your lawn. If a few grow, you can pick them out by hand. Or if there are a few patches of weeds, use a granular weed control product to wilt them away without harming your grass.

**Mow the right way.** Don't cut your lawn too short, as it may damage the grass and not allow roots to take hold. A general rule is never trim more than one-third of the blade of grass at a time. Also, the blade of your mower should be sharpened or replaced at least once a mowing season. A dull blade results in a jagged cut, leaving your grass looking malnourished and unsightly.

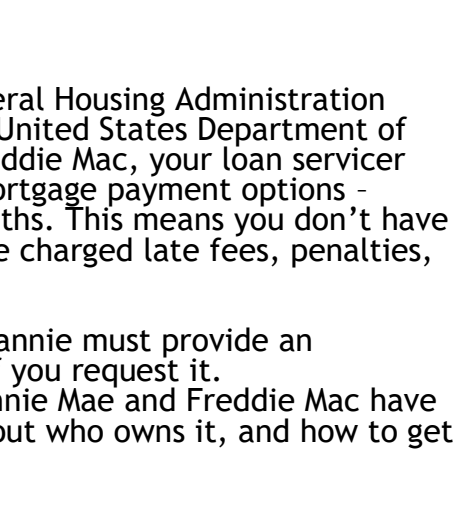
**Provide nutrients.** Watering and feeding your lawn in the right way will result in increased and consistent lawn health. When watering, make sure to do so in the early morning, as it gives the sun time to help evaporate the water sitting on the grass blades. Moisture that sits on your lawn may cause disease. When feeding, use a mixture of fast- and slow-release nitrogen-enriched fertilizers to keep your lawn healthy. But make sure not to apply fertilizer to any dormant grass, as it can't absorb nutrients when in this state.

## Coronavirus Mortgage Relief: What You Need To Know

By: Leanne Potts

It's a confusing time, but lenders are putting remedies, like forbearance, in place to help homeowners.

Mortgage lenders, and the federal agencies that regulate lenders, are putting coronavirus mortgage relief measures in place to ensure homeowners have options if they're unable to make payments. Your first stop in the face of financial hardship is your lender or bank.



Just keep in mind lenders are working to figure out and implement the new mortgage relief policies outlined by the regulatory agencies. So you might read one thing from the FHFA, a federal regulator, but your bank might be doing something else.

In addition, due to the number of homeowners affected by the pandemic, lenders are dealing with a crush of calls and online queries. Be patient, persistent, and prepared to spend time on hold. Here are the resources you need now.

### Your Mortgage

#### Federally Backed Mortgages

If you have a mortgage backed by Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Veteran's Administration (VA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Fannie Mae, or Freddie Mac, your loan servicer must offer you deferred or reduced mortgage payment options - called forbearance - for up to six months. This means you don't have to pay your mortgage and you won't be charged late fees, penalties, or interest while you can't pay.

Loan servicers for FHA, Freddie, and Fannie must provide an additional six months of forbearance if you request it. Not sure who backs your own loan? Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have loan look-up sites where you can find out who owns it, and how to get in touch with them.

#### Mortgages Not Federally Backed

If your mortgage is one of the 5 million in the United States not backed by a federal entity, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which includes a coronavirus mortgage relief mandate, doesn't apply. But regulators have encouraged those lenders to work with borrowers who can't pay their mortgages, and most banks and other lenders are suspending mortgage payments or offering forbearance.

The level of relief you get will depend on who owns your loan. Contact your lender to find out what's available.

Regardless of the type of loan you have, you must apply for coronavirus mortgage relief through their mortgage servicer. That's the entity that collects your monthly payments and decides how long the assistance will last. When you reach your mortgage servicer, you'll need to explain your situation and provide information about your income, expenses, and assets.

#### Foreclosure and Evictions

Federal officials have imposed a nationwide halt to foreclosures and evictions for more than 36 million Americans with home mortgages backed by the FHA, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac.

The moratorium only affects borrowers with mortgages backed by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, FHA, VA, and RHS (Rural Housing Service loans through the USDA). This doesn't apply to the roughly 35% of mortgages held in bank portfolios and private label securities. But some individual lenders are offering relief.

Some cities, counties, and states, including Delaware, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Texas, have placed a moratorium on foreclosures. Check with your city, county, and state governments. Find state-by-state tallies online.

#### Housing Counselors

Another tool in your relief toolbox are housing counselors. Counselors can provide independent advice on buying a home, renting, defaults, foreclosures, and credit issues. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's look-up tool lets you can find counselors in your state.

#### Your Credit

The CARES Act forbids lenders from ding your credit score for missed payments on federally backed mortgages and student loans during your forbearance period. The federal government is also encouraging private lenders to suspend reporting late payments on eligible mortgages. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has more advice about protecting your credit.

To keep close tabs on your credit, you can now obtain a free credit report from each of the three credit bureaus, Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion, every week for the next year through April 20, 2020. The companies ratcheted up their once-a-year allowance to help consumers "protect their financial health during the sudden and unprecedented hardship caused by COVID-19."

Get all three reports in one spot: [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com).

#### Your Student Loan

The CARES Act includes immediate relief for those who can't make their monthly payments on federally held loans due to coronavirus. All loan payments (both principal and interest) are suspended through Sept. 30, 2020, with no penalty. You don't need to apply for this program or contact your lender. It's automatic.

If you keep making payments, they'll be applied entirely toward the principal. These suspended payments will count towards any student loan forgiveness already in effect.

Some loans under the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program and some Perkins Loans not owned by the Department of Education aren't eligible for suspended payments. Nor are private student loans owned by banks, credit unions, schools, or other private entities. If you can't make payments, contact your loan servicer to find out what options are available. Many are offering ways, like forbearance, to postpone payments.

Not sure who your servicer is? Look on your most recent statement and contact the servicer immediately.

If your student loan is already in default, the relief act immediately suspends wage garnishments or tax refund deductions. They'll resume after the suspension ends.

Find out more about student loan relief at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

#### Your Taxes

The IRS has pushed back the deadline for filing and payment of federal taxes to July 15, 2020. Many states are following suit. Check with your state tax agency for details on deadlines.

#### Your Real Estate Transaction

If you're going to be buying or selling a home in the near future, find out if your county recording office can complete the deal online. In addition, more than half of states, many under emergency state directive, allow for remote online notarization of documents. This makes it safe and easy to complete real estate transactions under social distancing orders. The number of states allowing remote notarization could grow as pandemic legislation expands.

#### Your Appraisal

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have provided detailed appraisal alternative guidelines, so homeowners and appraisers can practice social distancing on Freddie and Fannie loans through May 17, 2020. FHA, VA, and RHS are also allowing variations on the usual appraisal protocol. Check with your servicer for details.

#### Look Out For Scams

Fear breeds scams. And scammers are out in full force during the pandemic. Beware of third parties offering mortgage assistance and other help. Seek help from your lender directly. For information on circulating scams, and guidance on identifying them, visit the Federal Trade Commission website.

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