



Happy Holidays

From Melissa & Dan DeBono



A LOOK BACK AT 2004

2004 was a good year, although the hurricanes caused a LOT of problems for a LOT of people. Highlands County didn't fare too well, as three of the four storms hit us with quite a bit of intensity. The good news was that the damage wasn't catastrophic — just real messy. Several people lost their roofs, and blue tarps are still “the



Waterfront prices soared in 2004 - how high can they go?

style” as the roofing companies are very busy and many people still have a couple months to wait.

Property values increased dramatically during the year, and that made our investor

clients very happy — especially the many that worked with us for the past few years. Many clients “flipped” their lots for a nice profit, and purchased rental properties which are doing very well for them now as the hurricanes did put a “squeeze” on rentals for the snowbirds (*see below*).

Locals, not used to these higher prices, and quite a few snowbirds on fixed incomes had a more

difficult time finding affordable homes that were neat and clean — and in very good shape! The good news was that we found many great homes for clients and they

were thrilled —but, patience was needed!

So, depending upon how you look at it, it was a very up and down year, but overall it was a great year for us and our clients and we thank all of you tremendously!

A LOOK AHEAD TO 2005



We are anticipating that 2005 will be another great year for real estate in Highlands County. However, this could be good or bad news depending upon who you are. We think the news is great for investors as there seems to be ample opportunity and all indicators still look good. We think that rentals will be “hot” as well as vacant lots and acreage. Waterfront property prices continue their upward climb — how high can they go? — we just don't know!

The “bad” news is that people looking for homes are finding

that the upward swing in prices is a burden. It's difficult to find a nice, little place to call home for \$80—90k anymore — those days seem gone forever. The silver lining here is that if you are selling another home, chances are moving to Highlands County will still be considerably cheaper than where you are coming from. Even though our prices have increased, we were really low before the market turned “hot” and we're still relatively cheap.

Perhaps the most difficult problem is for the snowbirds looking for a second home. Prices have increased so much that some are prevented from buying. This is in turn making rentals even more desirable — we received at least a 60 percent increase in inquiries from our Website this year!).

All-in-all, we think 2005 will be even better than 2004, and we look forward to the possibility of working with all of you!

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