

STEVE COMBS

STRATEGIC HOUSING & MORTGAGE INTELLIGENCE

Weekly Market Brief

Southern Maryland & the DMV

The Market Is Rewarding Preparation

Why today's buyers may have more leverage than they realize.

THIS WEEK'S KEY THEMES

- › Inventory continues improving across many markets
- › Buyers are gaining negotiating leverage
- › Southern Maryland affordability remains surprisingly strong
- › Seller concessions are creating new opportunities
- › The market is rewarding preparation



Read online

steve-combs.com/weekly-market-brief

Steve Combs · NMLS #381933 · Cornerstone Home Lending · Equal Housing Lender



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What You Need to Know This Week

The housing market is sending mixed signals — and most buyers are only reading half of them. Mortgage rates remain elevated. Oil prices are back in the headlines. Inflation concerns have resurfaced. The Federal Reserve's tone has shifted. Those are the headlines. But the other half of the story is this: inventory is improving, sellers are becoming more flexible, and buyers are finding negotiating opportunities that simply did not exist during the frenzy of 2021 and 2022. Many are asking when rates will come down. The better question may be: what opportunities exist today that did not exist when rates were lower?

<p>6.454%</p> <p>30-YR CONFORM.</p> <p>OBMMI national avg, June 18, 2026</p>	<p>6.119%</p> <p>30-YR VA</p> <p>OBMMI national avg, June 18, 2026</p>	<p>5.742%</p> <p>15-YR CONFORM.</p> <p>OBMMI national avg, June 18, 2026</p>	<p>130</p> <p>CHARLES AFFORD.</p> <p>Affordability Index — above 100 benchmark</p>
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SOUTHERN MARYLAND MARKET SNAPSHOT · SOURCE: MBS HIGHWAY

St. Mary's County	Calvert County	Charles County
MEDIAN PRICE \$510,011	MEDIAN PRICE \$537,289	MEDIAN PRICE \$531,753
DAYS ON MARKET 35 days	DAYS ON MARKET N/A	DAYS ON MARKET 38 days
5-YR FORECAST +22.12%	5-YR FORECAST +21.32%	5-YR FORECAST +19.89%
AFFORD. INDEX 119	AFFORD. INDEX 138	AFFORD. INDEX 130

MORTGAGE & RATE INTELLIGENCE

30-YR CONFORMING 6.454%	30-YR JUMBO 6.476%	30-YR FHA 6.308%
30-YR VA 6.119%	30-YR USDA 6.213%	15-YR CONFORMING 5.742%



Source: Optimal Blue OBMMI®

National averages are market context only. They are not a rate quote, Loan Estimate, APR disclosure, approval, commitment to lend, or guarantee of terms.

Last Updated: June 18, 2026

SOUTHERN MARYLAND HOUSING FUNDAMENTALS

Market	Median Price	Afford. Index	HH Income	Own. Rate
St. Mary's County	\$510,011	119	\$122,491	73%
Calvert County	\$537,289	138	\$131,846	84%
Charles County	\$531,753	130	\$126,119	76%
Prince George's Co.	\$458,790	112	\$103,734	64%



STEVE'S MARKET SIGNAL™

Week of June 23, 2026

THIS WEEK'S SIGNAL

■ YELLOW — Proceed With Strategy. Opportunity Is Present.

The macro environment is complex — oil prices, inflation concerns, a more hawkish Fed. But locally, the picture is more nuanced. Inventory is improving. Sellers are offering concessions. Buyers have more choices and more negotiating leverage than they have had in years. The buyers who succeed in this environment are those who stopped asking 'when will rates fall?' and started asking 'what can I accomplish today?'

THIS WEEK'S STRATEGIC CONCEPT

Higher Rates Created Advantages. Are You Using Them?

Most buyers view higher rates purely as a problem. They are also a filter. The buyers who left the market when rates rose created opportunities for the buyers who stayed prepared.

WHAT HIGHER RATES ACTUALLY CHANGED FOR BUYERS

2021–2022 Market

- Waived inspections routinely
- Offers over asking — sometimes 10–15%
- No seller concessions available
- Dozens of competing offers
- Buyers had almost no leverage

Today's Market

- Inspections being accepted again
- Negotiating room in many price ranges
- Seller-paid closing costs available
- Fewer competing offers in most markets
- Prepared buyers have real leverage

"A refinance can fix a rate. A missed opportunity in a less competitive market may never return."



HOUSING MATH™

A \$10,000 Seller Contribution

Most buyers immediately ask for a lower purchase price. The better question is how to use the seller's money most effectively. The right answer depends entirely on the buyer's priorities.

SCENARIO	Purchase Price: \$500,000	Seller Contribution: \$10,000
<p>PRICE REDUCTION</p> <p>PURCHASE PRICE \$500,000 → \$490,000</p> <p>APPROX. MONTHLY SAVINGS \$65–75/month</p> <p>CASH TO CLOSE Largely unchanged</p> <p>KEY BENEFIT <i>Permanent payment reduction</i></p>	<p>CLOSING COST CREDIT</p> <p>PURCHASE PRICE \$500,000</p> <p>CASH TO CLOSE REDUCED Up to \$10,000</p> <p>MONTHLY PAYMENT Unchanged</p> <p>KEY BENEFIT <i>Preserves liquidity & emergency reserves</i></p>	<p>2/1 TEMPORARY BUYDOWN</p> <p>YEAR 1 EFFECTIVE RATE 4.50% (saves ~\$600/mo)</p> <p>YEAR 2 EFFECTIVE RATE 5.50% (saves ~\$310/mo)</p> <p>YEAR 3+ NOTE RATE Returns to 6.50%</p> <p>KEY BENEFIT <i>Maximum short-term payment relief</i></p>

STEVE'S TAKE

Most buyers immediately ask for a lower purchase price. The better question is: *"How can we use the seller's money most effectively?"*

- If cash is tight: **Closing Cost Credit**
- If payment is the priority: **Temporary Buydown**
- If long-term savings matter most: **Price Reduction**

The smartest strategy is not universal. It is personal.



STEVE'S PERSPECTIVE

What I'm Seeing on the Ground This Week

The housing market is not easy right now. But it is not broken either. Higher rates have created challenges — and they have also created opportunities. The buyers who understand that distinction are the ones finding success today.

Today's buyers often face less competition, more inventory, better negotiating leverage, and seller concessions that were essentially unavailable just a few years ago. Those advantages are real. The buyers who are succeeding are the ones who understood their options before they found the home they wanted.

My role is not to tell anyone when to buy. It is to make sure the math is clear, the strategy is sound, and the decision belongs to the buyer — not the headlines.

Steve Combs · Mortgage Strategist

WHAT SMART BUYERS ARE DOING RIGHT NOW

- › Getting fully underwritten before shopping — not just pre-qualified
- › Negotiating seller-paid closing costs and temporary rate buydowns
- › Preserving liquidity rather than exhausting reserves on the down payment
- › Taking advantage of reduced competition and improved inventory
- › Building 5-to-7-year ownership plans rather than short-term rate predictions
- › Focusing on payment comfort first, reserves second, interest rate third



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