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Latest Pros and Cons on Housing and Rates

Home sales numbers and other housing-related data have been hot topics of conversation recently. Some say positive housing trends are over. Others say it's no big deal. The truth continues to be somewhere in between.

It's clear that we've turned some sort of corner when it comes to the housing market for 3 reasons:

1. **Existing Sales weakness**

As early as the end of 2017, we'd already seen year-over-year growth in existing home sales **contract** in 2 consecutive reports. That was the first time that had happened since the rate spike of 2013 led home sales into a cooling period for much of 2014. Since then, most of the reports have come in at slightly lower levels versus the previous year.

2. **Price Gains Turned a Corner**

The annual pace of home price gains began to decline as of this Spring--also for the first time since the 2014 cooling period. To be clear, home prices are **still appreciating** on average. But this year's appreciation rate has been lower than last year's for several months now.

3. **Inventory is Finally Rising**

However you want to slice it--time on market, months of supply--inventory is doing something different than it had been doing. 2015-2017 marked two years of an extremely stable trend of contraction (falling inventory). People were buying more homes than sellers were bringing to market. That began to change in early 2018.

National Average Mortgage Rates

	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.43%	+0.02	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	5.95%	0.00	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	5.82%	+0.02	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	6.62%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	6.28%	-0.01	0.00
Freddie Mac			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.35%	-0.51	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	5.51%	-0.65	0.00

Rates as of: 8/30

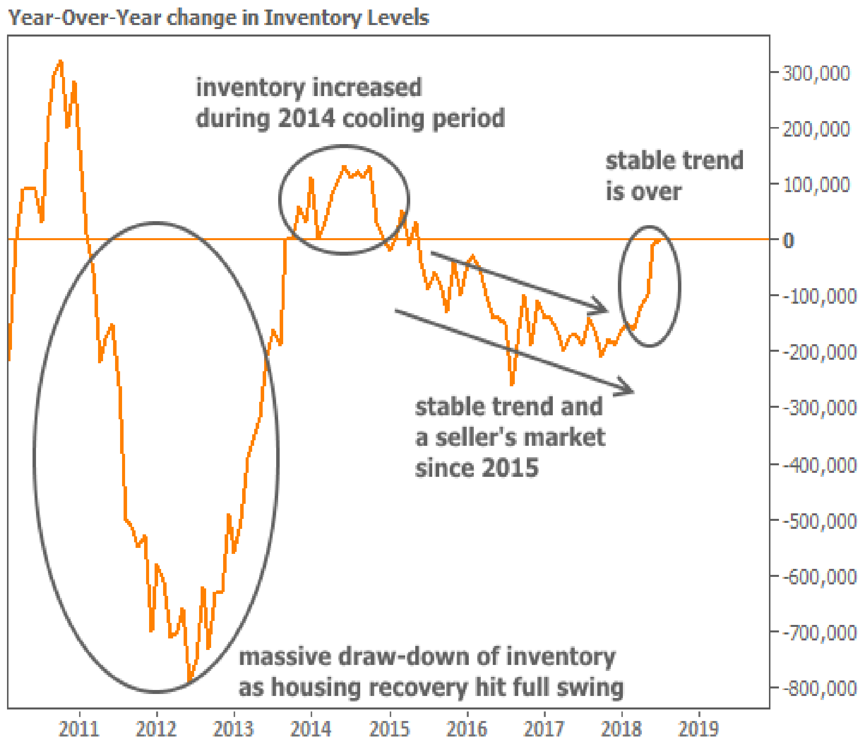
Market Data

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.0	99.35	-0.16
MBS GNMA 5.0	99.91	-0.04
10 YR Treasury	3.9039	+0.0424
30 YR Treasury	4.1932	+0.0468

Pricing as of: 8/30 5:59PM EST

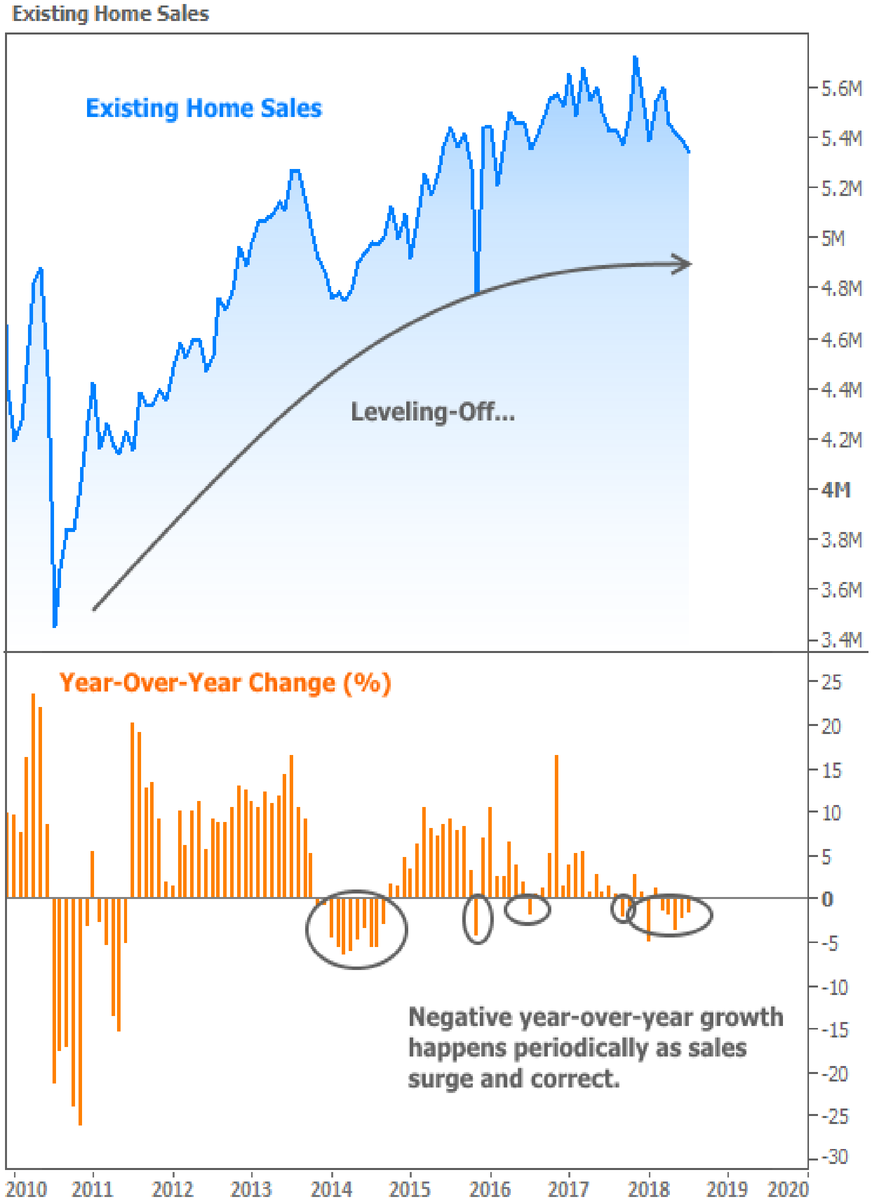
Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Aug 28	226.9	+0.49%
Building Permits	Mar	1.46M	-3.95%
Housing Starts	Mar	1.32M	-13.15%
New Home Sales	Mar	693K	+4.68%
Pending Home Sales	Feb	75.6	+1.75%
Existing Home Sales	Feb	3.97M	-0.75%
Builder Confidence	Mar	51	+6.25%

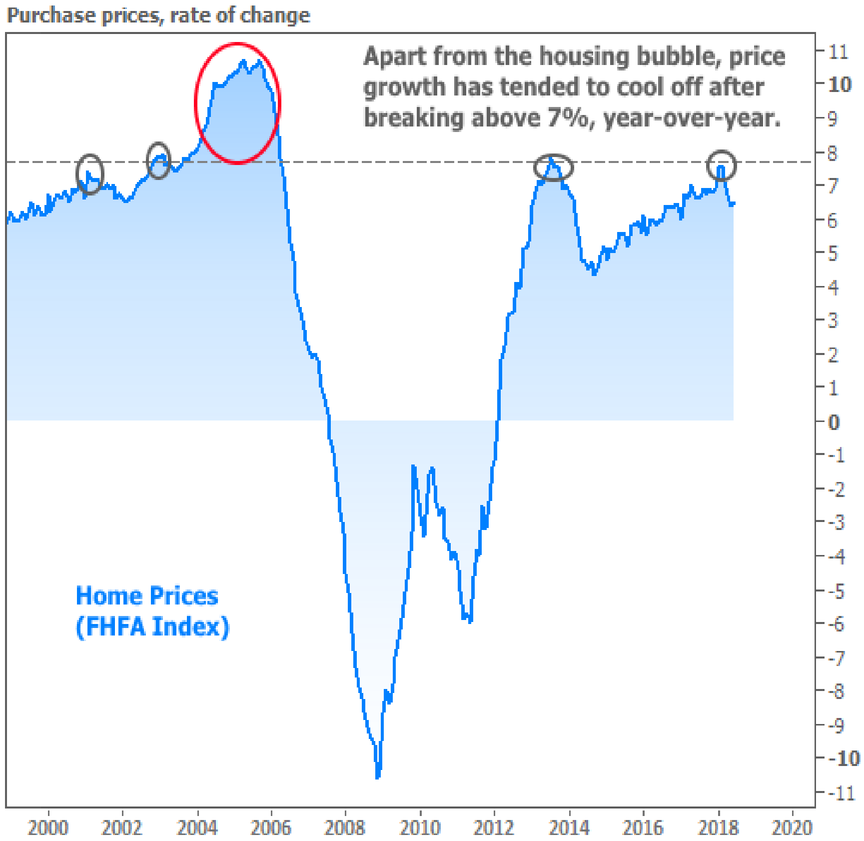


Inventory serves as a great jumping-off-point for the rest of this conversation. Let's look at the chart above again. As of this week, and for the first time in several years, the number of existing homes for sale **matches** the number from the same report last year. Before that, inventory was contracting. Indeed, the National Association of Realtors frequently cited inventory as a key constraint for home sales. In that sense, it could just as easily make the list of factors that may **help** home sales going forward.

If anything, we're really only seeing another instance of "cooling-off" for housing numbers--a shift from an outright seller's market to something that gives buyers a fighting chance. Any time that happens, the early phases end up looking like a reversal. In both cases, lines on charts change their path and year-over-year growth turns negative. It's happened to existing home sales on **multiple occasions** throughout the recovery.

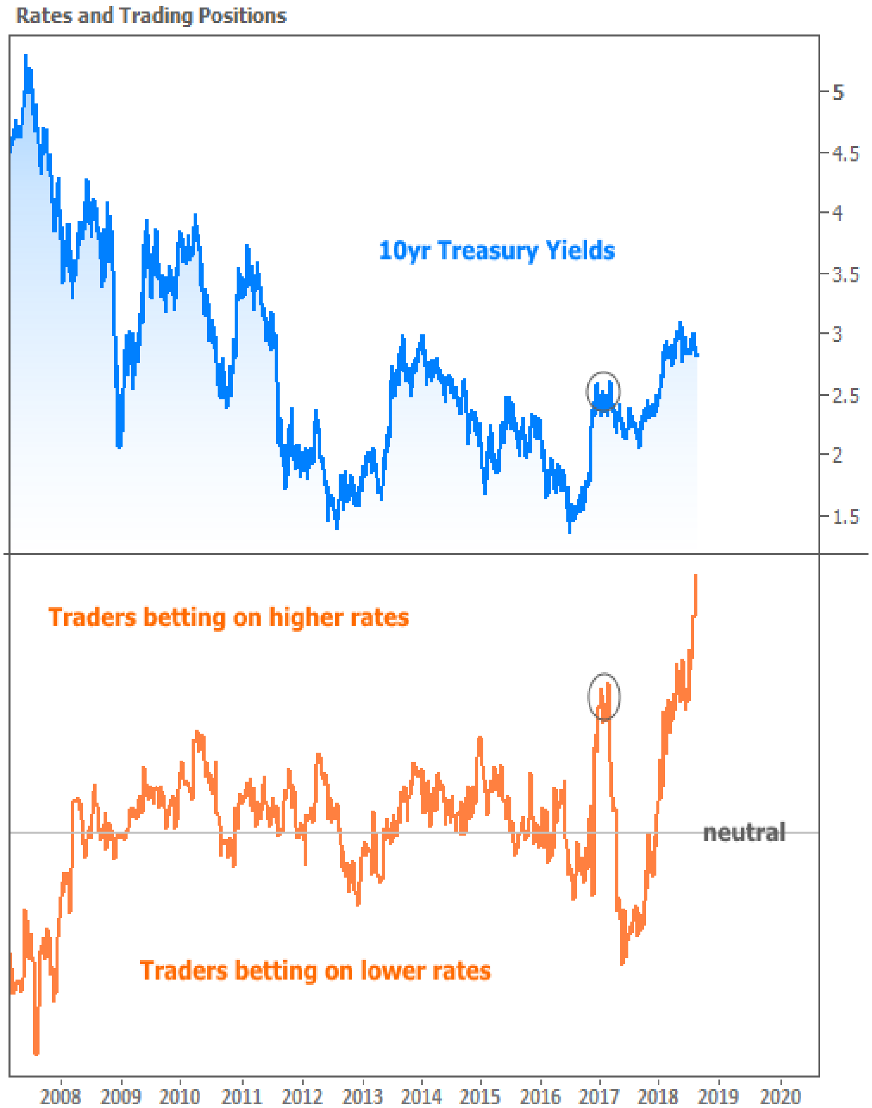


Speaking of fighting chances, the cooling in home price appreciation wasn't a moment too soon. Here too, we can take one of the negative talking points for the housing market and counter with the "too much of a good thing" argument. Price appreciation can only outstrip income gains for so long.



Interest rates have been a key supporting actor. Up to a certain point, the rising rate environment of the past 2 years didn't cause major problems. This was especially true as rates recovered during much of 2017. But in 2018 the spike resumed--with unavoidable implications for affordability eventually taking a toll on home price appreciation.

Paradoxically, the good news is that traders are betting **more heavily than ever** that rates will continue to move higher. The following chart shows rates in relation to trading positions. The higher the orange line, the more traders are betting on rising rates. This can actually be a contrarian indicator at times (like early 2017). Trading positions often become this lopsided only when traders are chasing some underlying theme that is already nearing completion. In the simplest terms, it would be like saying rate sentiment has hit rock bottom and we could soon be looking at a "nowhere to go but up" situation. Or is that "nowhere to go but down?"



The major caveat to that line of thinking on rates is that the word "soon" could mean months or even years when it comes to the bond market. Still, it's a much better position to be in compared to the beginning of 2013 or the middle of 2017 when trading positions were skewed in the other direction. In both cases, the result was a swift move toward higher rates.

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Recent Economic Data

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Wednesday, Aug 22				
7:00AM	w/e MBA Purchase Index	232.1		225.5
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Refinance Index	982.7		927.5
10:00AM	Jul Existing home sales (ml)	5.34	5.40	5.38
10:00AM	Jul Exist. home sales % chg (%)	-0.7	0.6	-0.6
Thursday, Aug 23				
8:30AM	w/e Jobless Claims (k)	210	214	212

Event Importance:

No Stars = Insignificant
☆ Low
★ Moderate
★★ Important
★★ Very Important

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
9:00AM	Jun Monthly Home Price yy (%)	6.5		6.4
9:00AM	Jun Monthly Home Price mm (%)	0.2		0.2
10:00AM	Jul New home sales chg mm (%)	-1.7	2.2	-5.3
10:00AM	Jul New home sales-units mm (ml)	0.627	0.645	0.631
Friday, Aug 24				
8:30AM	Jul Durable goods (%)	-1.7	-0.5	0.8
Monday, Aug 27				
1:00PM	2-Yr Note Auction (bl)	36		
Tuesday, Aug 28				
9:00AM	Jun CaseShiller 20 yy (%)	6.3	6.5	6.5
10:00AM	Aug Consumer confidence	133.4	126.7	127.4
1:00PM	5-Yr Note Auction (bl)	37		
Wednesday, Aug 29				
7:00AM	w/e MBA Purchase Index	230.1		232.1
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Refinance Index	952.9		982.7
8:30AM	Q2 GDP Prelim (%)	4.2	4.0	4.1
10:00AM	Jul Pending Sales Index	106.2		106.9
10:00AM	Jul Pending Home Sales (%)	-0.7	0.3	0.9
1:00PM	7-Yr Note Auction (bl)	31		
Thursday, Aug 30				
8:30AM	Jul Consumer Spending (Consumption) (%)	+0.4	0.4	0.4
8:30AM	Jul Personal Income (%)	+0.3	0.3	0.4
8:30AM	Jul Core PCE (y/y) (%)	2.0	2.0	1.9
8:30AM	w/e Jobless Claims (k)	213	214	210
Friday, Aug 31				
9:45AM	Aug Chicago PMI	63.6	63.0	65.5
10:00AM	Aug U Mich Sentiment Final (ip)	96.2	95.5	95.3
Wednesday, Oct 17				
2:00PM	FOMC Minutes			

Service oriented, responsive, competitive rates and an in depth knowledge of todays mortgage market

After completing my degree in finance at the University of Connecticut, I started in the mortgage business right out of college in 2004. With 15+ years of experience and a primary objective of thoroughly explaining all available loan options to my clients with what is typically the largest investment in their lives, I strive to always make myself available. I constantly educate myself with respect to the mortgage industry and underwriting guidelines for FHA, VA, conventional and jumbo financing. I deliver on the expectations discussed up front and provide the service level my clients deserve from day one. I will remain in touch throughout the process and continue to follow up with you after closing. My goal is to wow you and turn you into clients for life. I want you to be so impressed that throughout and after the process you share my information with your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers who may value from my services.

Steve Chizmadia