

SPRINGFIELD

Westwood/Beacon Hill

A Real Estate Letter from Matthew Maury of Stuart and Maury Realtors

Dear Springfield/Westwood/Beacon Hill area Resident,

October, 2015

It is surprising how quickly the real estate market can swing. In May, I wrote the following sentence; **“The dramatic difference in our current market is that there is so little for sale.”** At that time there were only a few homes for sale in our community, now five months or so later, the market has more offerings for sale. While several homes are now under contract, it seems to be taking longer to sell a home this Fall and initial asking prices sometimes need to be adjusted. When few homes are for sale, each offering receives maximum attention, but when choices are plentiful, motivation can drop on the part of the buying public. Let’s take a look at the Springfield area homes that are currently offered for sale or pending at this early October writing:



5617 Lamar Rd. Pending \$827K



5500 Pollard Rd. \$859,000



5402 Cromwell Pending 879K



5600 Springfield Dr. \$899,000



5625 Ogden Pending \$925,000



5708 Marengo Pending \$929K



5624 Knollwood Rd. Pending \$1,025,000



5504 Jordan Pending \$1,049,000



5613 Parkston Rd. \$1,080,000



Mass. Ave. \$1,299,000



5416 Albia Rd. \$1,629,000



5607 Chesterbrook Rd. \$1,994,000



5603 Pollard Rd. \$1,995,000

Whew. So you can see that there are 7 homes currently for sale and six under contract. All the pending sales are at the lower end of the spectrum. It's good news that my listings on Marengo and Cromwell are now pending and that the Jordan Rd. property which had started at a much higher initial asking price of \$1,175,000, went under contract after switching agents and adjusting the price to \$1,049,000. It's also good news that the Knollwood property is under contract. A lot of this activity has taken place in early October after a sluggish September.

But it can be fairly said that there are some really good houses for sale at the moment that are struggling. Call me a touch partial, but the Ogden Rd. property above is on my block a few doors down from my house. It's one of the great blocks in Springfield and this home has an exceptionally good backyard. The house was reduced to 925K from 949K, it should have sold more quickly, I'm mystified, but at least it did go under contract recently. And then there is Pollard Rd. Surprisingly, it's a "short sale" and its price is in free fall. It was purchased in 2005 for \$963K. It went on the market for 959K, was reduced to 899K and then 859K. Now it's 849K. It's not an easy house to buy, lenders sitting in Ivory Towers somewhere in the ether need MONTHS to decide what to do with an offer (why I will never ever understand!). Thus, most normal buyers just can't wait around for an answer. And so the home twists in the wind. It's not a good house at 849K, it's a GREAT house. Take note that on the upper end of the spectrum the brand new house built by Paul Rasevic on Chesterbrook has now been completed. If you haven't had a chance to see it at an open house, try to get down there and check it out. It's a big house, and exquisite. Also, take note that a new home will be rising shortly at 5603 Pollard Rd. I sold the existing home to a builder, Renovation Studio, for \$805,000 earlier this year. The artist rendering above shows a carefully crafted product that will fit nicely into the streetscape.

Anytime there are eight houses for sale (another is quietly "pending" at the corner of Ridgefield and Ogden), buyers have lots of choices. Thus, motivation and urgency can wane. There hasn't been much for sale recently in Wood Acres, but a bit of a "tsunami" of sorts is on the way shortly. Across Bethesda and Chevy Chase, agents are struggling with very good properties that are dragging. The general sense is that too much is for sale, not just in our area, but across the board. It would be above my pay grade to accurately speculate as to why so much has come on the market recently, but speculate I will. Many of the homes for sale are owned by seniors or aging boomers looking to cash out and start the next phase of their lives. I have been wondering in these pages for

awhile about the millennial/Gen Ex generations and their ability to buy homes. We need the next wave to start becoming homeowners. Think back to when so many of you bought your homes in the '70's and '80s. While incomes were a lot lower, the prices were astoundingly lower. The job market was more plentiful and you probably were not saddled with as much crushing student loan debt. Are there still plenty of younger couples looking for houses in our area? Sure. But they are more cautious and sometimes need help from parents to get to their destination. The landscape has changed. In the final analysis sellers and their agents can decide how much they want to sell their homes for, but only buyers determine what a house is worth. If they don't step up and buy, the market struggles. It's really not that complicated. Slowly, we are getting it done for sellers.

There ARE success stories this year too of course. Let's take a look at a few of the homes in our community that have sold and *settled* in 2015 so far:



5705 Ridgefield Rd.
Sold \$853,000



5705 Cromwell Dr.
Sold \$897,000



5608 Pollard Rd.
Sold \$925,000



5904 Cromwell Dr.
Sold \$940,000 *



5613 Ridgefield Rd.
Sold \$960,000*



5420 Albia Rd.
\$1,000,000*



5304 Ridgefield Rd.
Sold \$1,150,000



5953 Searl Terrace
Sold \$1,195,000



5949 Searl Terrace
Sold \$1,550,000*

*Stuart and Maury sold these homes.

The Albia Rd. sale is an interesting one. The owners, moving to a retirement facility, had owned the house for close to six decades and were in little position to put the house fully on the market. It was full to the brim with a lifetime of personal effects and the home needed a full scale renovation. Bob Jenets and I were able to match the right buyers to the house and it was sold quietly. It's a wonderful home and a youthful touch will restore it to its glory.

The two sales on Searl are noteworthy as well.

I sold a home on Marengo Rd. back in 2010 to the daughter and son-in-law of a Searl Terrace family. The daughter had grown up on the "street of dreams", as I like to call Searl Terrace. When a modest Searl house came on the market for \$1,195,000, the family pounced on it and the young couple moved up the street. It's one of the great buys of 2015 in my estimation. So often, homes that "need work" are misjudged by the buying public. A lot of buyers are just too busy to tackle a project. Understood. But with a little elbow grease and patience, the rewards can be enormous. You just don't get onto the "gold standard" for \$1,195,000 anymore. And so, I sold their Marengo Rd. for them and it is pending settlement.

The other sale on Searl at \$1,550,000 could easily have been predicted. Who is it that ends up on Searl Terrace? Why, Springfield and Wood Acres owners, that's who. A stunning percentage of the homes on Searl are occupied by owners who previously lived in Wood Acres or Springfield. There's an appreciation for that block that is acquired when you live close by. The sale at \$1,550,000 is the second highest sale ever on Searl, exceeded only by a sale at \$1,600,000 last year backing to the Park.... (hmmm, to a Springfield resident!). 5949 is a big beautiful home with six bedrooms above the first floor, an improved kitchen and master bath, abundant square footage, timeless classic architecture and a surprisingly good backyard. Stuart and Maury agent Bob Jenets sold the home and the couple coming from Wood Acres got a great house. These kind of sales are rewarding in our business. My father, Deane Maury, and Bill Stuart were pulling off similar maneuvers in the early 1960s! I don't think either of them ever dreamed that values would rise to these levels 55 years later.

Finally, the new home at 5405 Brookeway Dr. has sold and settled at \$1,980,000. Stuart and Maury



was asked to be the listing agent after the home had been listed with another company for 254 days. Our agent, Kate Slawta, got it under contract in 18 days. We aren't miracle workers, but there's a reason we've been the leader in your community for a very long time. Well, since 1956! Intensive market knowledge accrued by seeing every home for sale for decades makes a difference. We live here, we care more than anybody, we are your neighbors, we are advocates for the quality of life in our community. We have roots. By the way, I am super pleased to mention that Searl Terrace resident Kevin Cullinane, a residential appraiser of considerable experience and skill, has also joined our firm recently as a

licensed Realtor. Kevin's vast pricing knowledge is a great resource for our company and we are thrilled to have him.

Sincerely,

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Over \$790,000,000 in career sales