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WEST MONTANA REAL ESTATE NEWS

Keeping You Up To Date On Housing Trends & The Local Real Estate Market

Provided By: West Montana Homes

January Edition

Setting Homeownership Goals for 2026: Dream Big and Plan Smart

Whether you're dreaming of buying your first place, upgrading to your forever home, or improving the one you already have, 2026 is the year to make it happen. Your home is so much more than four walls and a roof. It's where you live your life, build memories, and create wealth. But achieving those big homeownership dreams doesn't happen by accident—it takes smart planning and action. So, let's break it down.

If You're Buying a Home - Dreaming of becoming a homeowner this year? Start with your budget. Get clear on your numbers—your credit score, down payment savings, and what you can afford monthly. A good real estate agent (hint: I know someone!) can help you understand the market and what's realistic in your price range.

Set a goal to get pre-approved for a mortgage by a specific date. This one step will move you from "just browsing" to "serious buyer" faster than you think. And remember: it's not just about finding a house—it's about finding the right house for you.

If You're Selling Your Home - Thinking about selling? Now is the time to get your home ready. Make a list of small, high-impact upgrades that will boost your home's value and appeal. (I can help!) Set a timeline: when do you want to list? Work

backward to schedule a consultation with a real estate expert who can give you an honest assessment and a winning strategy to sell for top dollar.

If You're Improving Your Home - Love where you live but want to make it better? Focus on projects that add comfort and value. Create a wish list and prioritize based on budget and impact. Whether it's updating the kitchen, building a home office, or finally tackling that backyard oasis, start with one goal and make it happen.

The best goals are specific, actionable, and have a clear timeline. Whether you're buying, selling, or improving, 2026 is your year to dream big and make it real. Not sure where to start? That's where I come in. Let's turn your homeownership dreams into plans—and your plans into reality. Give me a call, and let's get started!



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Top Projects to Boost Your Home's Value In 2026

It's January—the time of year when we set resolutions, make plans, and commit to doing things better than we did before. While you're writing down your goals, don't forget one of your biggest investments: your home. Whether you're thinking of selling in 2026 or just want to enjoy your home more while building equity, now is the perfect time to tackle some high-impact projects that will make your home more valuable—and maybe even more enjoyable to live in!

Here's the truth: a little effort today can mean a big payoff tomorrow. Let's dive into a few projects that are worth your time and money this year.

1. Start with the Curb: First Impressions Matter -

They say you never get a second chance to make a first impression, and the same is true for your home. A fresh coat of paint on the front door, new house numbers, and modern light fixtures can work wonders. While you're at it, add some winter-friendly landscaping like hardy shrubs or seasonal planters. Even a simple power wash can make your driveway and walkways look brand new. Curb appeal isn't just for spring—it's a year-round opportunity to impress buyers and neighbors alike.

2. Make Your Kitchen Shine -

No need to rip out cabinets or take on a massive remodel. Small, targeted updates in the kitchen can deliver huge results. Think about swapping outdated hardware for sleek, modern handles, adding a stylish backsplash, or replacing that tired faucet with something eye-catching. If your appliances are mismatched, consider upgrading to energy-efficient models. Buyers love the idea of lower utility bills, and you'll appreciate the savings, too.

3. Brighten Things Up with Lighting -

Good lighting can make or break a room's vibe. Swap out dim, outdated fixtures for something brighter and more modern. LED bulbs are a smart, energy-efficient choice—and they'll pay for themselves over time. Consider adding dimmer switches to main living areas to create an inviting ambiance buyers will love.

4. Tackle Energy Efficiency -

If you're serious about adding value, energy efficiency is non-negotiable in 2026. Insulate the attic to keep your home warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Seal up drafts around doors and windows. These are simple steps that won't break the bank but will make your home more attractive to eco-conscious buyers. Want to go the extra mile? Think about adding a smart thermostat or solar panels. Not only do they lower utility bills, but they also position your home as future-ready.

5. Refresh the Walls and Floors -

A fresh coat of neutral paint can transform a space, making it feel clean, modern, and ready for new owners. Stick with soft grays, warm beiges, or creamy whites—buyers love a blank slate. Floors are another area where small updates can make a big difference. Refinish hardwood, replace worn-out carpet, or add luxury vinyl planks for a polished, contemporary look.

6. Don't Forget the Little Things -

Sometimes, it's the small details that stand out. Fix squeaky doors, replace outdated doorknobs, and make sure all the outlets and switches match. A deep clean, including grout and baseboards, can also give your home that "wow" factor.

Investing in your home now is a win-win. You get to enjoy the upgrades while you live there, and when it's time to sell, you'll stand out in the market. So, what's your home goal for 2026? Whether it's a small upgrade or a big renovation, there's no better time to get started. Need advice on which projects will pay off the most when it's time to sell? I'd be happy to help! Here's to a more beautiful, valuable home in 2026!

Quote of the Month

Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible into the visible.

-Tony Robbins

2.

What's Happening In the Bitterroot?

The country is anticipating positive changes in 2026.

Regions that saw major price surges, including Montana, are now experiencing corrections. Both Buyers and Sellers have put their real estate decisions on hold for several years now creating a very sluggish market. While Montana's market hasn't been affected as severely as places like Florida or Texas, repercussions from market shifts are present. That will gradually get better in 2026.

Now that many people are re-evaluating their housing needs, they are looking at what they "need" out of their house to move forward—often with the goal of eliminating mortgage payments. When evaluating current home values against outstanding debts, the numbers may not always be favorable.

Home prices are not expected to rise, or even stay the same. They will probably continue to go down slightly. I often hear "I am not going to give my house away; I can stay here another year if I need to." Look at the whole picture objectively. The question is: Will you be in better shape a year from now, or will you just lose more paper equity? Sometimes there are ways to retain a little more of that equity than people think.

There is an unprecedented demand from buyers who previously postponed purchasing because they simply couldn't afford a new home. With wages creeping up and interest rates expected to remain in the low 6's, market activity is expected to go up, but affordability is still a huge problem. Here again, there are options, and some of them may be little known.

Real estate decisions are not a one-size-fits-all scenario. We will be glad to brainstorm what options you have and even whether it is the best time for you to buy or sell now.

Call or text us at 407-777-0710 for a private consultation or a Zoom meeting.

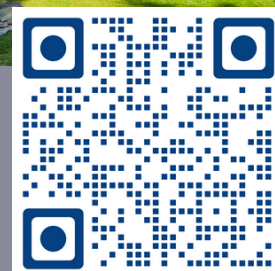
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FEATURED HOME OF THE MONTH!

Say goodbye to constant upkeep—this glu-lam engineered log home is specifically designed to minimize maintenance. Featuring walls that are 7 1/2 inches thick, the property serves as a true fortress, providing durability, efficiency, and peace of mind. This house was originally built as a model home by the founder of Glu-Lam-Log-Inc, located in the Bitterroot Valley, showcasing both innovation and craftsmanship.



**3 BEDS - 2 FULL BATHS -
2,137 SQFT
\$925,000**



**CALL TO SCHEDULE A TOUR OR ASK
HOW WE CAN FIND YOUR PERFECT HOME!**



Vinda Milless
Broker Owner



Call/Text: 406-777-0710
www.westmthomes.com

Agent Spotlight

West Montana Homes was founded by Vinda Milless on April Fool's Day, 2021. This was the most foolish thing Vinda had ever done or it was the smartest. She is convinced now that it was the smartest.

You see, Vinda had been a Realtor for nearly 30 years but she saw things a little differently from most of her peers and she decided she wanted to "make a difference," one person at a time. She really enjoys making things happen for people who have not been able to obtain the results they have been looking for.

Everyone needs a place to live, but needs change. Your home can enhance your life in so many ways -- increasing enjoyment, satisfaction, pride, accomplishment, security, and financial wellbeing. And, of course, investment homes are the most secure financial building blocks you can get.

Vinda is more than just a real estate agent. She is a **Target Marketing Specialist** and has developed systems and plans to help you make the very best decisions possible. Some of the programs she works with are:

The Perfect Home Finder Program where you can find homes that are not even on the market! You are the only one who knows about them!

There is a Best Bidder Event. The Seller knows they are getting the best possible price from their house at that moment. And the Buyer knows they are not overpaying for the house. Prices are not being set by either the Buyer or the Seller -- it's the present market.

With the Cash Offer Program you can put money in your pocket within two weeks and never have to show your home once.

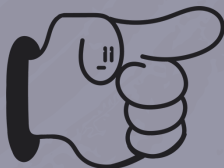
Contact us for details of unique and beneficial programs tailored to **YOUR** needs.

P.S. Be sure to ask about price guarantees -- the only place you will find them!

Check out our Year end market report and 2026 predictions



Real Estate Facts in Ravalli County



** (This is an unprecedented number. Some went back on the market, but many Sellers are in a "wait and see mode." They didn't get their price so decided to try again later.)*

- 236 Active Listings
- 592 Sales in 2025
- Average Sale Price, \$562,500
- Average List Price, \$675,000
- Average Sale Price was 97% of Asking Price
- *298 Listings Expired or Cancelled during the year