

HOME

Living In the Heart of Florida

Feb/Mar 2010



Trend Realty ROCKS

Trend Realty – Rock Solid in Real Estate

By David Greenberg photography by Brad Palmer

Trend Realty, a leader in the Gainesville real estate industry for 35 years, is now a part of the Prudential Real Estate Network.

This change will make the company even stronger than it already is by tying it to an organization with more than 1,940 franchise offices and approximately 62,000 sales professionals in the United States and Canada.

The agency will now be known as Prudential Trend Realty.

“Prudential Trend Realty makes a wonderful addition to our network,” said Earl Lee, president of Prudential Real Estate

and Relocation Services. “The company is a dominant force in greater Gainesville, with a sales team known for exemplary service, consultation and innovation. Just as important, Prudential Trend Realty is a strong corporate citizen and supports a variety of community and charity initiatives. In sum, the new affiliation represents two fine companies coming together, and customers will surely benefit.”

Prudential Real Estate and Relocation Services, Inc. is Prudential’s integrated real-estate brokerage franchise and relocation services business. The company, headquartered in Irvine, Calif., offered its first franchise in 1988. Each brokerage is independently owned and operated. The companies are selected based upon outstanding performance records, high levels of customer service, and business values shared with those of Prudential.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for our company and the customers we serve,” said Thomas McIntosh, president of

Prudential Real Estate brokers had the highest average sales price of any national real estate firm.



Prudential Real Estate has the Highest Average Sales Price.



Source: Average Sales Price is based on an analysis of transaction sides and sales volume data of the largest independently owned brokers in the U.S. for franchise networks recording at least 25,000 closed transaction sides in 2008, as reported in the 2009 Real Trends 500.

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Prudential Trend Realty. "This is a big step for us. We are placing the Trend name next to one of the best known brand names in the financial services sector, and I feel really good about that. In addition to the increased recognition, we are acquiring access to a network of the finest real estate brokers in the country, and our associates will have access to the best real estate marketing tools in the industry."

To confirm this McIntosh cited a recent survey conducted by Real Trends which demonstrated Prudential Real Estate brokers had the highest average sales price of any national real estate firm.

"That is a reflection of the quality of our Prudential colleagues around the country," he said.

Trend client and builder Barry Rutenberg, the local Arthur Rutenberg Homes franchisee, said he believed his company's productive 15-year relationship with Trend Realty will get even better.

"They've done a great job marketing our homes," Rutenberg said. "We look forward to the new resources that will be offered to us in the relationship with Prudential."

Trend associate Charlene Dinkla grew up in Jacksonville and knows the Prudential name.

"I've been familiar with the Prudential name for a long time because of their large corporate presence and signature building in Jacksonville," she said. "The Rock represents stability, security and strength. I'm looking forward to having the Rock on my business card."

Eddie Foster, a Realtor and senior vice president at Prudential Trend Realty, has known McIntosh since 1995 when Foster was president of the Board of Realtors and McIntosh was president-elect.

"This change has been one of the smoothest and most accepted we've ever had. The biggest question is why we didn't do it sooner. I admire the decision. It's going to be great, and Tommy is the right person to lead us through it," Foster said.

"The decision to make this move was well thought out. Tommy sought the input of several associates, and we offered unanimous support. He is a very positive and thoughtful leader," Foster added.

Realtor Phillips has known McIntosh for 22 years. She was a school teacher, and they attended the same church many years ago.

"I was ready for a change after 20 years as a teacher," she said. "I talked to him about a career in real estate, and he encouraged me to pursue it. I never considered working any place else. I have been with Trend now for almost four years. I have such respect for the company and for Tommy. He brings such terrific, positive energy. He always has us headed in the right direction."

"This company has done well," Phillips continued. "We have seen success in a very challenging market. Throughout the company there is no doubt that this is a positive move. We know we will be able to improve our already excellent service. While our yard signs will be changing, our commitment to excellence will not."

The company's high quality, and McIntosh's leadership, is recognized not only in the office and at Prudential, it is also seen around Gainesville because of his community involvement. He is currently on the boards of directors of Gainesville MLS, FloridaWorks and M&S Bank. Additionally, he is on the executive committee and board of the Builders Association of North Central Florida (BANCF) and the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, where he is scheduled to be chair in 2011. He is also a past-president of the Gainesville Alachua County Association of Realtors (GACAR).

"All of these different roles have one thing in common," McIntosh said. "They are all with organizations which work hard to create a better business climate in Alachua County. This community needs more, and better, jobs across the board. Unemployment and under-employment are a problem in this area. I have a strong desire to see the citizens of our community employed to their potential."



Q&A Questions and Answers about Prudential Trend Realty

HOME: Wasn't there another Prudential firm in Gainesville?

MCINTOSH: Yes. It is my understanding that company's franchise agreement has expired. We are the only Prudential affiliate in the Alachua county market.

HOME: Last month your company was called ERA Trend Realty and now you are called Prudential Trend Realty. What has happened?

MCINTOSH: It sounds confusing but it really is not. Trend Realty is a Gainesville company which has chosen to affiliate with a franchise. We terminated our franchise agreement with ERA and executed a new franchise agreement with Prudential. We have a 10-year contract with Prudential so this is a long-term decision.

HOME: What initiated the change?

McIntosh: As I mentioned, our firm had been an ERA franchise. Late last year I became concerned about that arrangement and notified ERA that I was exercising my right to terminate the franchise agreement. This was a big decision for us because we had been affiliated with ERA for more than 35 years. We were consistently a Top 25 company in the ERA system, and I was an ERA insider due to serving on their National Advisory Council. I felt we had achieved all we could with that brand so we were making plans to be an independent real-estate company. Coincidentally, a representative from Prudential contacted me. After extensive discussions we mutually agreed that both companies could better serve the market by teaming together. It became obvious that Prudential offered the best way for our company to support our associates and get to the next level.

HOME: Sounds risky. Any concerns?

MCINTOSH: When you assess risk it is important to realize there is risk in doing nothing. I was more concerned about that. We've now affiliated with a company that is rock solid – both figuratively and literally. They have a solid reputation and a solid financial position. We have a very strong partner in Prudential. I argue this is the least risky decision.

HOME: What is so special about the Prudential franchise?

MCINTOSH: Great question. 1) The Prudential brand is "Rock Solid." That name recognition adds instant credibility for customers who may not know us. Typically, 40 percent of homebuyers are coming from somewhere else. It is likely those out of town buyers know and have a favorable opinion of Prudential. 2) Prudential has an extensive relocation and referral network. When one of our clients relocates out of the area, we have confidence that we can help them find a quality agent in their new location. Conversely, many people relocating to the Gainesville area will utilize the Prudential Relocation network. 3) The additional tools and support that are available to our associates will enhance their professionalism. Prudential has an incredible resource called PREA Center which places marketing materials, training materials and other industry related tools at our associate's finger tips. PREA Center is a very comprehensive resource.

In summary, we've increased our name recognition, increased our ability to serve our customers and increased the support we can offer our associates.

HOME: What's next?

MCINTOSH: It is going to take a lot of time and effort to ensure that we successfully execute this transition. I am completely focused on that objective right now. Once that happens then our company will pause, have a brief celebration – and then set the next goal.



Because of that dedication and philosophy, chamber CEO and Executive Director Brent Christensen describes McIntosh as the perfect community leader.

"His business leadership is so wide-ranged," Christensen said. "Tommy is a great visionary thinker. Beyond that, he can do something that is often difficult in a business setting where people come in with their individual interests. He is tremendous at helping to build consensus in the business community. What I may like best about him, though, is that he is not afraid to take on controversial issues."

Foster says that while McIntosh's involvement helps the community, it also makes him a better Realtor.

"I am involved mainly in commercial sales," Foster said. "I really appreciate his involvement with the chamber and with all the other organizations. A lot of his competition doesn't do that. It means a lot to the "movers and shakers" in this town. When they see how hard he works for this community, it makes it easier for them to decide to bring their business to me."

Trend Realty was first organized in 1973. From the beginning the company has adopted as a core value ensuring that highly trained sales associates will consistently deliver excellent customer experiences. Even though the sales associates' compensation is derived from commissions, the company has always believed that no commission is worth the associate's or the company's reputation.

The company's success stems from that credo and its commitment to the community.

"We believe it is important to give back to the community," McIntosh said. "Our associates get to live a nice life because of what this community has to offer. We feel a responsibility to build upon what has been given to us. Since we have a large civic-minded sales

force, our associates are leaders in virtually every group out there working to improve conditions in our community. Our associates volunteer their time, resources and talent to serve in organizations across a wide spectrum – faith-based, community-building, political groups, charities, and the school system. Any time civic-minded people gather odds are there will be a Trend Realty associate among them. Rest assured that civic involvement will continue and will likely grow in our affiliation with Prudential."

Prudential Real Estate supports Sunshine Kids, which is an organization that supports kids receiving cancer treatment at children's hospitals across the country.

"I've confirmed that Sunshine Kids currently works with cancer patients at Shands Hospital. I'm sure it is just a matter of time before our associates become involved with Sunshine Kids," said McIntosh.

Trend associate John Caldwell said he likes the sound of the change.

"Since the 1890's the name Prudential has been associated with the iconic Rock of Gibraltar, representing a strength and stability which obviously has stood the test of time, and since 1973 the name Trend Realty has been associated with integrity and stability in offering real estate services," Caldwell said. "Prudential Trend Realty – Like a Rock. I like that. It has a solid ring to it."

McIntosh said his team is ready for the change.

"This is a crazy, hectic, exhilarating and fun time," he said. "I liken this to getting ready for a big trip. We're packed and prepared. Now we're sitting in a plane out on the runway, and the captain has just issued instructions to make sure our seat belts are fastened and that the trays are locked in the upright position. This company is the plane, and Prudential is providing the jet engines. We are ready to take off." 

