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Spring Home Improvement

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It also keeps sales flat, the latest state realtors association report reveals

The Wisconsin REALTORS Association recently released its January 2025 Wisconsin Real Estate Report, highlighting a continued affordability challenge.

Median price increased 10.6% to \$293,000 compared to January 2024 levels, and the average 30-year fixed mortgage rate rose to 6.96%, which is 32 basis points higher than the January 2024 average rate.

The state remains in a strong seller's market, as it stays well below the six-month benchmark that characterizes a balanced market.

Chris DeVincentis, 2025 Chair of the Board of Directors, Wisconsin REALTORS Association, pointed out struggles of firsttime buyers.

"Low inventories generated strong price pressure in every region of the state, but home price appreciation was especially strong in the more urbanized areas of the northeast and southeast where prices rose in the 10% to 12% range over the last year," DeVincentis said.

"Higher prices and higher mortgage rates really hurt first-time buyers who rely heavily on financing in their home purchases," he added.

Tom Larson, President & CEO, Wisconsin REALTORS Association, said he hopes for improved affordability.

"We cannot draw too many conclusions about 2025 home sales based on January sales volume since we only sell about 5% of annual sales in a typical January," Larson said.

"However, it is good to see a modest increase in home sales to start 2025 even though affordability fell 12% compared to January 2024," he said.

"Hopefully mortgage rates begin to fall, improving affordability and increasing sales as we move into the spring and summer seasons," Larson added.

David Clark, Professor Emeritus of Economics and WRA Consultant, highlights a pause in short-term rates: "The Federal Open Market Committee is the Federal Reserve Bank's committee that sets short-term interest rate targets. At the January FOMC meeting, the Fed indicated the labor market remains resilient, but inflation continues to be elevated," Clark said.

"As a result, it will pause any changes to short-term rates for the near term as the Fed takes a 'wait and see' approach to the potential impact of the new administration's policies on inflation and economic growth," he added.

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

According to a recent report from the Wisconsin REALTORS Association, the state remains in a strong seller's market, as it stays well below the six-month benchmark that characterizes a balanced market. The latest numbers show that home sales in January only rose 0.6% compared to January 2024 but the median price rose 10.6% over that same period. METRO CREATIVE PHOTO Homes & Design

HOMES & DESIGN

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In thinking about getting your yard ready for spring and summer, now is the ideal time to visit a local nursery, plant centers, outdoor power equipment service dealers or contact a landscaper. According to Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, it's also a good time to review safety tips for equipment used outdoors.

Get your backyard ready

Keep safety in mind when it comes to outdoor power equipment

"Backyarding" – the art of taking indoor activities to the outdoors – is a trend that has caught on. Now that spring is here and winter is finally winding down, thoughts of playing in and working in the yard often kick into high gear.

Perhaps you are already dreaming of family gatherings, grilling and eating in your backyard. Or maybe you wish to add a yoga zone, design an outdoor movie theater, or build an agility course for your pet this year.

Maybe this will be the year you wish to add a pollinator garden or plant a vegetable or flower garden. Or you could be hoping to get that outdoor office setup with extended WiFi.

Knowing the purpose of your yard and how it will meet the needs of your family and pets is a great start to getting "backyard ready" for these warmer weather activities.

Also, knowing your climate zone and the mix of trees, shrubs, grass and flowering plants that will grow sustainably is key to designing a dream yard.

After all, our yards are not only an oasis for family but also for wildlife and

important pollinators such as birds, bees and butterflies.

Now is the time to start planning.

Visit your nursery, plant centers, outdoor power equipment service dealers, and/or contact a landscaper, according to representatives of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute.

"Think about how your yard can work best for you, your family, pets and community, but do it now," says Kris Kiser, CEO and President of OPEI.

"And while you're getting it in top shape for warm weather, remember to keep safety top of mind, especially with your equipment and tools," Kiser added.

Tips to keep in mind

Here are some tips from the institute to get your backyard ready, safely and efficiently:

• Take stock of your outdoor power equipment to help you maintain your yard and make big jobs easier.

A lawn mower will trim the grass, but perhaps you might need a cultivator for a garden, a chain saw to take down dead tree limbs, or a leaf blower to clear debris.

Having the right equipment on hand can help you save time and effort if you don't want to hire a professional.

• Follow equipment manufacturer's guidance for safety and usage of all outdoor power equipment.

Look over the manual for your equipment for a refresher on how to safely use it and read the safety information on equipment manufacturer's websites.

Review how to shut on and off equipment and make sure safety features are working and have not been disabled. Never disengage or disable manufacturerinstalled safety equipment.

• Remember to keep children and pets away from outdoor power equipment. No children on mowers.

• Do not mow in reverse, and avoid starting, stopping or turning a mower on a slope. Follow manufacturer guidance to the letter on mowing on slopes.

• Service equipment as needed and according to manufacturer's directions. Well-maintained equipment will last longer and run more efficiently.

• Buy fresh fuel for gasoline-powered equipment and be sure you have matched the correct battery with the right charger. Use only those batteries that are authorized for your equipment and do not use counterfeits.

• Before working in the yard, clear the area of dead limbs, sticks and debris. Inspect trees for damage and clear the work area.

By keeping this information in mind, you can get your yard in its best shape safely.

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Where to put a microwave in a small kitchen

Drawer-style unit saves space and offers functional benefits

For those with compact kitchens, a common dilemma is the ideal placement of the microwave oven. When every inch of space counts – especially counter space – finding the perfect spot for this vital appliance can make all the difference.

Deciding where to put a traditional countertop microwave can result in your tiny kitchen feeling even more cramped than it already is. Many people That's where the sleek and space-saving solution of the drawer style microwave comes into play.

"In the quest for both functionality and style, the game-changing world of drawer style microwave ovens can transform your compact cooking haven into a sleek





Deciding where to put a traditional countertop micro-wave can result in a small kitchen feeling even more cramped than it already is. One option to consider is a drawer style microwave. STATEPOINT PHOTO Homes & Design

and efficient space." says Peter Weedfald, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Sharp Home Electronics Company of America

Here are some of the major benefits of this style of microwave:

Undercounter elegance

Drawer style microwaves are designed to fit seamlessly under your countertops, providing a streamlined and sophisticated look. Unlike traditional microwaves that can occupy valuable counter space, drawer style microwaves can blend effortlessly into your kitchen cabinetry, giving you a clutterfree cooking zone.

Ergonomic accessibility

One of the standout features of this style microwave is the ergonomic design. Positioned at a convenient height, they reduce the need to reach or bend over, making them more accessible for users of all ages. Say goodbye to the hassle of lifting hot dishes from an overhead microwave. With the press of a button or a voice command (depending on the model), effortlessly slide out the drawer style oven and you're all set!

Multi-functional marvels

Drawer style microwave ovens often come with additional features. For example, select Sharp Microwave Drawer Ovens offer touchless operation, a concealed control panel and even integrated convection capabilities to enhance the functionality of your kitchen.

seamless integration

When it comes to creating a cohesive kitchen aesthetic, drawer style microwaves are the epitome of seamless integration.

Available in various finishes and styles, these microwaves can complement your existing cabinetry, contributing to a polished and unified look.

Location considerations

So, where should you put your drawer style oven? According to Sharp Home Electronics Company of America, the original inventor, designer and manufacturer of built-in drawer style microwave ovens, here are a few guidelines to consider:

• Adjacent to cooking zones: Strategically installing your drawer style microwave close to your range or oven encourages a smoother workflow and allows for you to transfer hot dishes easily while minimizing the risk of spills.

• Island installation: Incorporating a drawer style microwave into a kitchen island is a popular choice. This central location ensures accessibility from all sides, making it a convenient and accessible choice for various kitchen activities.

• Integrated design: If you're undergoing a kitchen remodel, consult with your designer to integrate the drawer style microwave seamlessly into your cabinetry. This could not only maximize space but also enhance the overall aesthetics of your kitchen.

For more information about drawer style microwaves and other kitchen appliances, visit shop.sharpusa.com.

"Microwave drawer ovens, with their space-saving design and range of functional benefits, have redefined kitchen design. By incorporating a microwave drawer oven, you can create a functional and beautiful culinary space that defies the limitations of kitchen space," says Weedfald.





There are many resources to learn what plants will thrive

When planning your yard or garden, you likely focus on the what and the where. After all, a beautiful plant in a prime location enhances curb appeal and even bragging rights.

You may pay less attention though to understanding how your location, or plant hardiness zone, impacts your garden's success.

To help ensure your plants don't just survive, but thrive, the experts at lawn care equipment manufacturer Exmark are sharing the following insights about plant hardiness:

what is plant hardiness?

Plant hardiness is the secret sauce of any healthy outdoor space. Plant hardiness is the ability of a plant to survive adverse growing conditions such as drought, flooding, heat and cold.

Have you ever watched with frustration as a late-season temperature dip leaves your beautiful buds with a serious case of frostbite? Plant hardiness zones were developed to help landscapers, gardeners and lawn care enthusiasts avoid this heartache.

American farming contributes billions of dollars to the gross national product annually, which is one reason why the USDA has long monitored weather data. If determining when the average final frost may occur for every region in the country is worth billions, what could that same knowledge mean for your garden? Well, choosing plants with hardiness levels appropriate to specific planting zones gives you the best chance of cultivating healthy, beautiful plants.

What is my growing zone?

The United States is divided into 13 zones. Zones 1-6 being the coldest, and 7-13 the warmest. Zone 1 averages -60 degrees F while zone 13 never drops below 70 degrees F.

A general guideline is to plant anything designated for your zone or lower, but never higher. Know what zone you live in and make a point of checking the tag on the back of the plant or seed pack before planting.

Perennials versus annuals

There's a reason you see palm trees in Florida, not Wisconsin. When it comes to perennials, it's not about when the first frost is, but how cold it gets, and whether that plant can survive and thrive through winter.

Plant hardiness zones are less important however when it comes to annuals. Because these plants are only meant to last one growing season; waiting until after the average first frost date will save you from having to re-plant.

Know that even if your plant survives the frost, it may never match the photo you saw advertised at the nursery.

Planting zone rule of thumb

Plant hardiness zone maps are, well, all over the map. Consider the number assigned to your zip code as a starting point. You may live right at the break between one zone and the other.

When in doubt, guess too low, rather than too high. In the South, the heat stress a plant not made for the conditions. Your particular geography can also affect your hardiness zone, like if you live on a hill or in a valley.

For more insights, check out the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, and watch "Find Your Plant Hardiness Zone," an episode of "Backyard Smart," an original series from lawn care equipment manufacturer, Exmark. To watch the video, visit Backyard Life, which is part of a unique multimedia destination with a focus on helping homeowners improve their outdoor living spaces. There you can also download additional tips and view other Exmark Original Series videos.

Understanding what plants will thrive in your climate is essential to a healthy landscape. Fortunately, free resources abound to help you plant successfully.

(STATEPOINT)

Learning about things such as the growing zone you live in, plant hardiness and the difference between perennials and annuals will help increase the odds of your plants thriving. DAVID PRAHL/ISTOCK Homes & Design HOMES & DESIGN • SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT • APRIL 2025



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On the garden path Celebrate Asclepias by planting milkweed Add color to your yard and support pollinators at the same time

Grow milkweed (Asclepias) to support monarch butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees while adding color, fragrance, and beauty to your landscape.

You'll find native milkweeds throughout North and South America. In recognition of this garden star's



By **MELINDA MYERS** Contributor

attributes, 2025 has been deemed the Year of the Asclepias by the National Garden Bureau.

With so many to choose from, select the milkweed that is best suited to the growing conditions, your landscape design, and garden maintenance. Some milkweeds are very aggressive and can quickly take over garden beds and large areas in the landscape, requiring time and effort to maintain their spread.

Butterfly milkweed (Asclepias tuberosa) is one of the tamer milkweeds with lots of ornamental appeal. This adaptable milkweed is hardy in zones three to ten and was named the 2017 Perennial Plant of the Year.

Grow butterfly milkweed in full sun with well-drained soil. You'll appreciate its drought tolerance once it's established.

If you are gardening in clay soil, consider growing Asclepias tuberosa var. clay, a natural variant found growing on clay soil. Mark the location of any butterfly milkweed in the garden or plant some spring flowering bulbs nearby to avoid accidentally digging up this late-to-emerge perennial.

Gardeners will enjoy the orange blossoms in meadow, prairie, and even semi-formal gardens. Combine this beauty with yellow, purple, and blue flowers. Deadhead faded flowers to extend bloom time and prevent reseeding if this is a concern.

When looking for a bit larger plant that tolerates moist to wet and occasionally

Milkweed (Asclepias) supports pollinators. Grow milkweed to support monarch butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees while adding color, fragrance, and beauty to your landscape. And as a bonus, deer and rabbits tend to leave any type of milkweed alone.

PLANET NATURAL PHOTO Homes & Design

dry soils, check out red milkweed (Syriaca incarnata), also known as pink and swamp milkweed. You'll enjoy the fragrant reddish-pink flowers and the butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds that visit the flowers. It's hardy in zones three to nine plus red milkweed grows three to five feet tall in upright clumps.

The flowers are followed by narrow pods that release silky-haired seeds like other milkweeds. It grows best in full sun with moist soil and is less aggressive than common milkweed. Grow this milkweed in sunny midxsdsxed borders, natural gardens, rain gardens, and alongside ponds.

And best of all, the deer and rabbits tend to leave it be along with other milkweeds.

Common milkweed (Asclepias syriaca) is a favorite of monarchs, hardy in zones three to eight, but very aggressive, spreading by deep rhizomes and seeds.

The purple-pink flowers are fragrant at night, and you will find a variety of butterflies stopping by for a visit. Keep it contained by persistently removing unwanted suckers and seedpods before they open to prevent reseeding.

Sullivant's milkweed (Asclepias sullivantii) is similar but a bit less aggressive. It has the same great butterfly appeal and is hardy in zones four to seven.

These are just a few of the more than 100 native milkweed species, many of which you may want to add to your gardens.

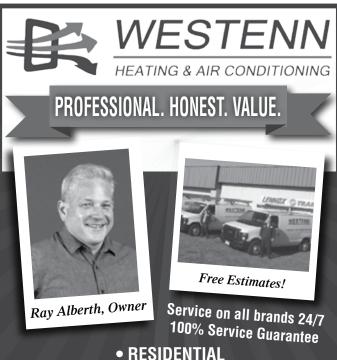
You can find out more about the species native to your region in the Milkweed Regional Guides located on the Xerces Society website. You are sure to find one or more to add to your garden beds.

Melinda Myers has written over 20 gardening books, including Midwest Gardener's Handbook, Revised Edition, and Small Space Gardening.

She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" instant video and DVD series and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment radio program.

Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine. Myers' website is www.MelindaMyers.com.





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INVENTORY • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Report highlights

Existing home sales in January 2025 only rose 0.6% compared to their January 2024 levels, but the median price increased 10.6% to \$293,000 over that same period.

Weak inventory continued to characterize the Wisconsin existing home market even as January listings improved compared to their January 2024 levels. New listings rose 8.7%, and their total listings were up 5.9% over the past 12 months.

Even though months of available inventory rose 3.7% to 2.8 months over the last year, this market continues to be classified as a strong seller's market since it is well below the six-month benchmark that characterizes a balanced market.

The average 30-year fixed mortgage rate rose to 6.96%, which is 32 basis points higher than the January 2024 average rate of 6.64%.

The combination of higher mortgage rates and higher median prices more than offset the modest 0.4% estimated increase in the state median

family income, which led to lower statewide affordability.

The Wisconsin Housing Affordability Index shows the fraction of the median-priced home that a potential buyer with median family income can qualify to purchase, assuming a 20% down payment with the remaining 80% balance financed with a 30-year fixedrate mortgage at current levels.

The index fell from 146 in January 2024 to 128 in January 2025, which is a 12.3% reduction over the past year.

Lower affordability has resulted in more days on the market for homes that closed in January. Average days on the market rose from 79 days a year ago to 86 days in January 2025, which is an increase of 8.9% over that period.

About the WRA

The Wisconsin REALTORS Association is one of the largest trade associations in the state, overseen by a statewide board of directors comprised of members from the top real estate firms around the state.



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Here is a listing of recent single-family home, condominium and vacant land sales in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties. The information is provided through the Multiple Listing Service.

RACINE COUNTY

SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

Burlington

home and property sales

 325 Alice St 	\$279,900
• 32821 Bayview Dr	\$173,000
• 3730 S Browns Lake Dr	
• 28731 Durand Ave	
• 33407 Fairview Ct	
7845 Greendale Ave	
• 30150 Hickory Ln	
 2124 Ravenswood Rd 	
• 2101 Stonegate Rd	
Caledonia	
• 3221 3 Mile Rd	\$315,000
• 2510 4 1/2 Mile Rd	\$325,000
• 5937 4 Mile Rd	
• 13119 Bell Rd	
• 2523 Catherine Dr	
• 3509 Cranberry Ln	\$375,000
• 4052 Highway 31	\$315,000
• 4907 Highway 31	\$380,000
6322 Newcastle Ln	
• 2956 Northbridge Dr	\$330,000
• 1212 Palamino Dr	
• 2535 Tammy Ln	
• 1824 Tiffany Dr	\$320,000
• 4907 Twin Elms Dr	
• 3810 Valley Rd	\$321,000
Dover	
• 24845 Kennedy Ave	
Mount Pleasan	
6430 Anforest Ln	
 3218 County Line Rd 	
 2851 Crosswinds Dr 	
1218 Graceland Ave	
 213 S Green Bay Rd 	
• 3146 Hickory Grove Ave	\$147.500,
• 623 Hunter Dr	\$548,500
• 630 Hunter Dr	\$495,000
• 1123 Larson St	\$200,000
• 5839 Mount Vernon Way .	\$495,000
• 4829 Piper Ln	
Norway	
• 26033 W Loomis Rd	\$575.000
• 27333 Pioneer Rd	
• 4734 Raynor Ave	
• 7525 W View Dr	
• 25805 S Wind Lake Rd	
Raymond	
• 4524 68th St	\$1 075 000
	+1,010,000

• 2635 Waukesha Rd \$770,000 Sturtevant

- 3161 Karnopp Ct..... \$455,000 Union Grove
- 520 18th Ave \$320,000
- 1095 5th Ave Lt37 \$619,900
- 1147 5th Ave \$560,000 • 431 Kiddle Ln \$486,000

Waterford

- 4742 Lookout Ln..... \$486,000
- 910 Meadowgate Dr..... \$481,000
- 561 Rivermoor Pkwy \$415,000
- 4109 Riverside Rd...... \$405,000
- 29408 Riverview Ln...... \$838,000
- 410 Waterford Dr \$399,773 Wind Point
- 100 Meriburr Ln \$400,000

CONDOS

Caledonia

- 5234 Briarwood Cir \$417,900 Mount Pleasant
- 3036 Meyer Ct..... \$198,000
- 1047 Prairie Dr 102 \$175,000
 1627 Summerset Dr 3 \$184,000
- Racine
- 111 11th St 3AS \$199,000
- 5311 Byrd Ave.....\$115,000
- 333 Lake Ave 37.....\$10,000333 • Lake Ave 302.....\$285,000
- Sturtevant • 1513 92nd St 50...... \$225,000
 - Union Grove
- 1711 State St 50 \$217,500 Waterford
- 639 Annecy Park Cir 8 \$379,900
- 406 Park Place Ct A \$320,000 Wind Point
- 24 Lakewood Dr 24 \$485,000

VACANT LAND

Raymond

• Lt0	10th	Ave	 	 \$955,	000

WALWORTH COUNTY

SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

Bloomfield

Bloomfield					
• W911 Hyacinth Rd \$295,000					
• W1347 Litchfield Rd \$2,300,000					
• W1039 Marigold Rd \$295,000					
• N1663 Orchid Dr \$315,000					
Darien					
• W7423 Creek Rd\$389,900					
• N3698 Oak Hill St \$625,000					
Delavan					
• 814 Ann St \$115,000					
• 311 Breezy St\$195,000					
• 3218 Chicago Club Dr \$155,000					
1207 Evergreen Dr \$383,000					
• 4004 Forest Dr \$135,000					
• 930 Holland Ave \$363,000					
• 2589 North Shore Dr \$225,000					
• 116 S Seventh St \$295,000					
• 2906 Tilden Ave \$236,000					
East Troy					
• 2704 Red Oak Ln \$523,900					
• W1113 Spleas Skoney Rd \$335,000					
• 1858 Thomas Dr \$325,000					
• N Wilmers Grove Rd \$1,334,000					
Elkhorn					
• 214 N Church St \$205,000					
• 1138 W Rosemary Rd \$364,000					
• 308 Sunny Hill Dr \$394,000					
Fontana					
• 687 Myrtle Ave \$860,000					
Geneva					
• 1267 Geneva Natl W \$1,340,000					
Genoa City					
• 612 Franklin St \$299,900					
Lafavette					
Lafayette • N6199 Oak Ridge Ct \$749,000					
• W3788 Scotch Heather Ln . \$515,000					
Lake Geneva					
• 1515 Linda Ln \$1,290,000					
• 224 Lookout Dr \$625,000					
• 1120 Madison St \$330,000					
• 1120 Mauison St					
• 1515 Miller Rd \$565,000					
• 1000 Timothy Dr\$506,000					
Linn					
• N395 Swamp Angel Rd \$370,000					
Lyons					
• 5918 Spring Valley Rd \$235,000					
Sharon					
• W9448 County Road X \$275,000					

home and property sales

Here is a listing of recent single-family home, condominium and vacant land sales in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties. The information is provided through the Multiple Listing Service.

Trov

• N8989 Scout Rd\$599,500
Walworth • 405 1st St\$258,000 • N758 Highway 14\$422,000
Whitewater • W8183 Elkhorn Road \$261,000 • 466 S Pleasant St \$260,000 Williams Bay
• 470 Chasefield Dr \$535,000 •135 Trail Ln \$548,000
CONDOS
Delavan • 423 Betzer Rd F
• 1277 E Bluff Rd 6 \$255,000
VACANT LAND
East Troy • Lt34 County Road J \$325,000 Elkhorn
• Lt2 Hazel Ridge Rd\$75,000 Lafayette
• Lt1 Candlewood Dr\$69,900 Linn
• Lt2 Maple Ct\$240,000 Sharon
• Lt15 Eastview Dr \$39,500
• Lt11 Highway 67 \$600,000

KENOSHA COUNTY

SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

Bristol

- 21104 122nd St..... \$195,000 Randall
- 9100 400th Ct..... \$1,400,000 • 200/1 00th DI ¢1 220 000

• 39941 90th Pl	.\$1,330,000				
Salem Lakes					
• 26710 106th St	\$175,000				
• 26825 106th St	\$270,000				
• 24613 118th St	\$549,000				
• 23433 124th Pl	\$187,500				
• 8128 249th Ave	\$400,000				
• 11907 264th Ave	\$216,000				
• 12017 258th Ave	\$230,000				
• 10891 292nd Ave	\$875,000				
• 24417 84th Pl	\$565,500				
• 24729 84th St	\$218,000				
• 27304 Camp Lake Rd	\$540,500				
• 103 E Poplar St	\$345,000				
Sommers					
• 805 12th St	\$808,000				
• 10825 1st St	\$150,000				
• 160 60th St	\$250,000				
• 940 Green Bay Rd	\$350,000				
• 115 S Lakeshore Dr	\$505,000				
Twin Lakes					
• 504 Chapel Ave	\$200,000				
• 547 Gatewood Dr					
• 1461 Oak St					
• 624 Wilmot Ave					

Wheatland

32928 75th St.....\$349,900

CONDOS

Pleasant Prairie

- 9288 Creekside Cir 223 \$285,000
- 6620 Meadowlands Cir 8A. \$210,000 Somers
- 141 S Lakeshore Dr B-5..... \$348,000

VACANT LAND

Paddock Lake

- 25811 78th PI Lt40 \$97,900 Randall
- Lt38 106th St..... \$89,900 Salem Lakes
- 10834 Antioch Rd......\$315,000 • Lt0 Silver Lake Rd \$806,000 Wheatland



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