



## Practical Tips To Enhance Your Financial Freedom

**Scott Wimmer, CMC, CRMS.**  
Certified Mortgage Consultant  
NationsPlus Mortgage Corporation  
Phone: (540) 381-5485  
Fax: (540) 381-3090  
[scott@nationsplus.com](mailto:scott@nationsplus.com)  
[www.NationsPlus.com](http://www.NationsPlus.com)



### The Price is Right: Utilize Your Equity While You Still Can

While the stock market can be quite volatile, real estate has proven to be a stable investment over the years. According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, real estate prices had an average increase of 56% over a five-year period. Forbes reported an increase of 247% over the last 25 years. However, times are beginning to change. In fact, the national rate of real estate appreciation has had its most significant decline since the fourth quarter of 1999.

With this in mind, perhaps now is a good time to begin evaluating your financial needs for the future. If you were already thinking about utilizing your home's equity to consolidate debt, save for college tuitions or retirement, or even for additional real estate and other investments, contact your mortgage professional right away. Don't let this chance to realize the full value of your home's equity pass you by.

### Holiday Travel Tips: Shop Online and Save

While it may take several hours to get through airport security this holiday season, booking reservations online for airline tickets, rental cars, hotel rooms, and holiday packages has never been easier or cheaper. Here are a few tips to help you make the most of online opportunities:

- Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays are often the cheapest days to fly. Red-eyes and early morning flights are often the cheapest *times* to fly. If you can deal with the hassle, flights with one or more stops at major airports are often discounted.
- Look for student, military, senior citizen, and club discounts. By simultaneously booking hotels and car rentals, you can also save big.
- Visit the official sites of airlines and search for special sales and discount packages.
- Once you've visited many different websites, use your quote as a bargaining chip. Call a travel agent and see if they can find an even lower fare.
- For international travel, consider booking flights that arrive in one city but depart from another. This is known as an open-jaw ticket and could save you on time and transportation expenses.

### Buying versus Leasing: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Despite claims to the contrary, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to the question of whether to buy or lease a car. In either scenario, a portion of every payment is lost to depreciation, even with the best interest rate attached. With this in mind, consider your own lifestyle needs and priorities at the time of each transaction.

#### Benefits of Leasing:

- Lease payments are generally between 30%-60% lower than loan payments.
- Gap coverage insurance, which pays the gap between what you owe on a car loan and the car's true value in the event of an accident or theft, is often included at no extra cost.
- Little or no down payment is required for a lease, freeing up cash for investments with a better return.

#### Benefits of Buying:

- With the purchase of a car, significant trade-in or re-sale value can accumulate.
- There are no surprise fees or charges for wear and tear and overuse.
- Once your loan is paid off, you will have something tangible to show for the money you have spent over the years.

### Is a Hybrid Right for You?

According to recent reports, sales of hybrid vehicles increased by 26% last year. This is likely due to higher gas prices, a potential federal tax credit of up to \$3,400 for new hybrid owners, and a growing sense of environmental responsibility. However, according to Consumer Reports, while many hybrids can get up to 60 miles per gallon, they are still quite expensive. Most hybrid owners will not save a significant amount of money over the life of the vehicle. Fortunately, hybrid technology is advancing quickly and a more affordable hybrid could soon be on the horizon. In fact, Saturn and Toyota will release new, less expensive, more efficient models in 2007. These new advancements, combined with spending less time and money at the pump, could finally flip the expense equation and make hybrids the preferred vehicle of the future.

We lend in the following states: Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Licensed State Corporations Commission VA #MB-3416, Licensed NC Mortgage Broker # B136257-101, Licensed SC # MB-0627100-0627102

