March 2026

The Property Digest
Real Estate Newsletter

Current Market Conditions

Many students and young professionals wonder when the right time will be to buy their first home or invest in real estate. First-time homebuyers accounted for only 21% of home purchases last year, highlighting the difficulty younger generations face in entering the housing market. According to Redfin, the average home price in Fairfield County has exceeded $653,000, an increase of about 3% from the previous year. Young professionals are increasingly being priced out of the market, especially given today's higher mortgage rates, which are around 6%. Just a few years ago, buyers could secure mortgage rates near 3%. At the time, many homeowners locked in fixed interest rates and are now unlikely to sell, contributing to limited housing inventory.

With tight inventory and Fairfield County being a desirable area, inventory continues to put upward pressure on home prices. Most students and young professionals have been forced to rent. The average rent in Fairfield County is around $3,309, up 5.6% in just three months. Overall, the market is reflecting a period of adjustment rather than a downturn. Elevated interest rates have reduced overall affordability and slowed inventory turnover, while unwilling homeowners have reduced the likelihood of a price decline. Borrowing costs are high, and operating costs are rising. Meanwhile, Fairfield County has strong demand, limited inventory, and stable employment, which supports overall housing value.

The Return of Character Within the Kitchen

Trends are always coming and going, but while fashion usually get all the attention, The Digest is far more interested in what's trending inside our homes. One of the biggest shifts in recent years has been in kitchen design. Modern kitchens aren't new. In fact, they gained popularity in the 1950s with the introduction of the "work triangle," a layout prioritizing efficiency by keeping the refrigerator, stove, and sink within easy reach. At this time though, functionality didn't come at the expense of character, early modern kitchens still had personality, color, and charisma.

Fast forward to the 2010s, and kitchens took a sharp turn toward the white and gray, builder-grade era. For about fifteen years, renovations leaned heavily on affordability and efficiency, favoring plain materials, neutral palettes, and minimal detail. While practical, the look is repetitive, and now, frankly boring. Homeowners are officially ready to move on.

Today's kitchens are warmer, richer, and much more expressive. Think creamy whites, soft taupes, warm woods, and earthy colors layered with bright and fun colors. Custom cabinetry, statement appliances, bold backsplashes, and unique flooring are all making a comeback. Also, decorative moldings, wall paneling, trims, and thoughtful architectural details, finally bringing back all of the personality kitchens used to have.

Because of "out with the new in with the old," kitchens have a way to be fun and colorful, and still remain timeless.



1950s



2010s



2026

Current Market Conditions - Mike Agate
Modern Kitchens - Avianna Sebouhian

Sponsor Spotlight:

Danna Rogers & Jen Kass Team

Love Where You Live



Danna Rogers and Jen Kass have built one of Fairfield County's leading luxury real estate teams through 20+ years of market expertise, concierge-level service, and a reputation for integrity and results. Known for their deep knowledge of Westport/Fairfield and surrounding communities, strategic marketing, and strong builder relationships, they guide clients seamlessly through every step of the process.

Supporting future real estate professional at Sacred Heart University reflects their belief in mentorship, ethical leadership, and investing in the next generation who will shape and elevate the industry for years to come. Go Pioneers!

Contact
Email: dannakrogers@gmail.com
Mobile: (917) 282-6292
Office: (203) 226-0300
Address: 30 Elm Street, Westport, CT 06880
Website: higginsgroup.com/agent/danna-rogers

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Building Credit as a Broke College Student

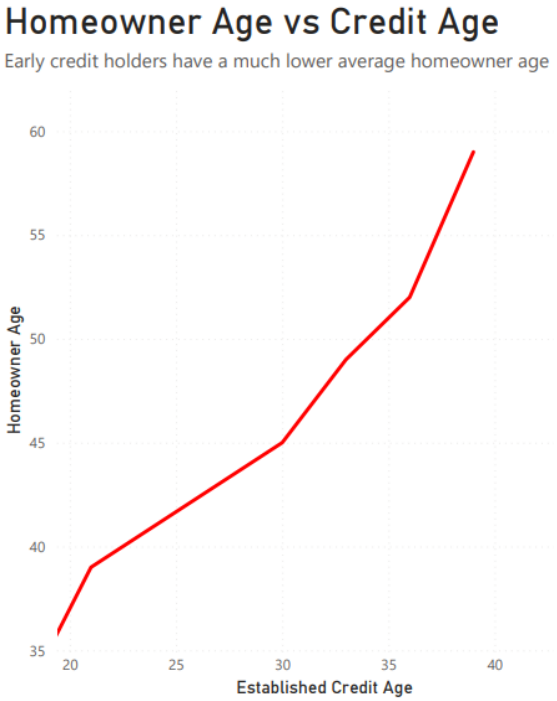
For many college students, owning a credit card feels optional. However, a credit card is one of the simplest tools for building long-term financial stability. A strong credit history can help you secure better interest rates on major purchases like a car or mortgage, potentially saving thousands of dollars over time.

When choosing a first card, prioritize practicality. The Wells Fargo Active Cash Card is a popular first credit card, offering 2% cash back on all purchases, no annual fee, and a $200 cash bonus after spending $500 in the first 3 months.

Additionally, the Discover it ® Student Cash Back Card is another popular first card, offering 5% on specialty purchases, and 1% on all others. It also includes a dollar-for-dollar match on all cash back earned in the first year, with no annual fee.

Building credit does not require heavy spending. In fact, maintaining low balances over a long period is far more effective than short bursts of high spending. Simply owning and responsibly managing a card can make a difference.

With great power comes great responsibility. Make sure to charge only what you can afford to pay off in full each month and review statements for unauthorized charges. A credit card is not free money; it is a financial tool that can shape your future.



This chart shows that delaying credit establishment leads to a disproportionately higher homeowner age, accelerating the path to homeownership later in life.

Trumbull Mall at a Crossroads

Coming from New Jersey, the most mall-dense state in the country, taking the shuttle over to the Trumbull Mall for the first time felt like a different kind of disappointment. The mall has about 170 retail units, and according to commercialsearch.com, 42 are currently available for lease. That is a quarter of the mall that right now is completely vacant; potential revenue going unrealized every day!

In 2023, Namdar Realty purchased the Trumbull Mall from the multinational Westfield Group, but prospects of the mall's future are still uncertain. Notably, in September of 2025, Ulta Beauty filed suit against Namdar Realty in an effort to break their ten-year lease because of the mall's negligence to fix problems with the HVAC, which was making temperatures unbearable for shoppers. Ulta stated that they notified the mall in May of 2024 about the issue, which remained unresolved for a year until the store had to shut its doors permanently last June.

The same month, Namdar defaulted on its $152.3 million loan, and the Trumbull Mall's day-to-day operations and management were outsourced. Some of Namdar's properties have gone into foreclosure, and municipalities have even clawed back their properties via eminent domain. The town of Trumbull has stated that they, "would not be broken-hearted if Namdar were no longer the owner of the mall."

Local officials are seeking private investors for the mall's redevelopment, which would include new amenities such as office spaces, luxury apartments, outdoor dining, a hotel, and additional retail units. This proposal follows a larger national trend of the mixed-use redevelopment of shopping malls, which have consistently been seeing less foot traffic since the rise of online shopping, and especially in the wake of the pandemic. While some residents remain wary about the idea of a redevelopment, ultimately, if this plan goes through, it will guarantee a huge economic boost for Trumbull, and the surrounding area.

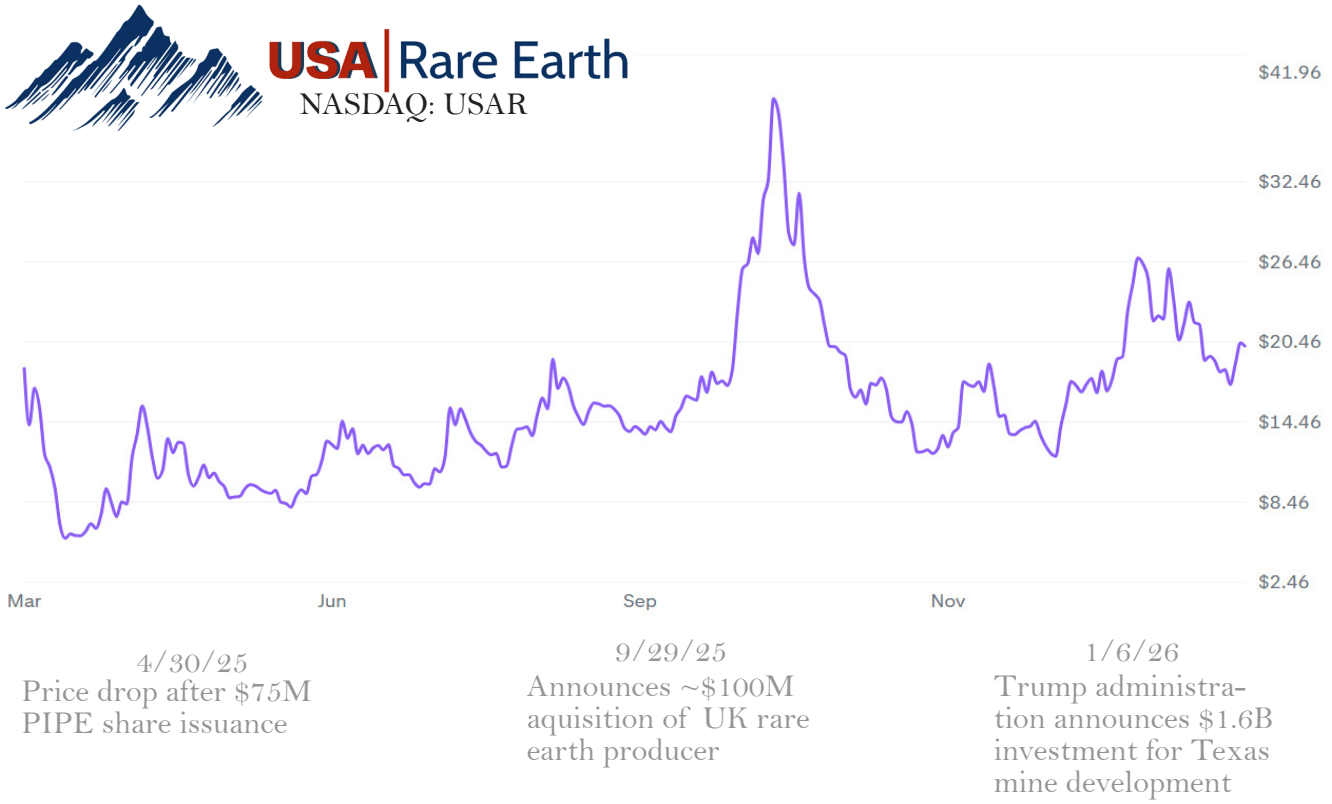


Rare Earth Element (REE) Refining

Demand for rare earths elements – and the processed materials that turn them into usable inputs has climbed alongside the buildout of EVs, wind turbines, data centers, and defense. The strategic risk is less about who can mine the physical element, than about who can separate and refine them into the processed materials. Where China remains the dominant force—controlling 91% of REE refining and 94% of permanent magnet refining (IEA 2025).

In April 2025, China leveraged this monopoly with "Announcement 18," which tightened export controls on certain medium and heavy rare earth items through heightened scrutiny and licensing. Immediately, there was a drop in available supply for importers and a repricing of European Rare earth metals upwards of 6x, as buyers searched for available material. Washington responded with more financing, stockpiling, and a push to stand up American-based "mine-to-magnet" supply chain. On February 3, 2026, Trump announced "Project Vault", a strategic mineral reserve intended to spur private-sector stockpiles, paring $2b in private capital with a $10b loan via the U.S Export-Import Bank. Rare-earth Equities rallied on the headline, a sign that policy is becoming a driver of pricing in the sector.

Over the next decade, there will likely be a sustained capex push into non-China processing and magnet capacity, backed by government investments, long-term contracts, and joint ventures. In the short-term, volatility will define the sector, China's export policy and domestic US investments will lead to selloffs and restocking rallies that swing pricing. As America pushes the domestic buildout, real estate constraints have become a source of pricing power. A main chokepoint is where you can realistically build separation and magnet capacity, industrial land with the correct power, water, and permits. For example, Mountain Pass in California, the only operational mine in America, shows value concentrating around an operational mine, not just the ore body. US REE markets are projected to grow at a CAGR of 9.2% through 2030, with prime, permit-advantaged industrial land following suit.



USAR exhibits short-term volatility, with positive market reactions to rare-earth-related capital investments, primarily real estate acquisitions.

How 8-30g Shapes Policy in Fairfield County

Here in Fairfield County, real estate policy differs significantly from the rest of the United States. This is due to the stronger role played by our state government and the stricter local zoning practices. One of the most important regulations for shaping housing development in the greeter Fairfield area is Connecticut's affordable housing statute, Section 8-30g. This law allows developers to override local zoning regulations if a certain percentage of the housing units are deemed affordable. While many states leave zoning decisions almost entirely to the local governments, Connecticut uses 8-30g to pressure for more affordable development.

Fairfield recently qualified for a temporary moratorium under this statute, highlighting how significant and controversial this policy is at a local level. Beyond state mandates, Fairfield County towns are known for restrictive zoning rules, including large minimum lot sizes, limits on multifamily housing, and lengthy approval processes. These zoning practices reflect longstanding preferences for preserving suburban character and property value. Each state has developed its own legal framework for regulating housing. Economic conditions, political priorities, population growth, and historical development all influence how housing is regulated. In Fairfield County, proximity to New York City and a high-income population have increased housing demand. This demand, combined with restrictive zoning policies, limits new development and intensifies price pressures.



Fairfield City Hall



Fairfield First Selectman Christine Vitale

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