Vol. 1 | Issue 17
September 14, 2026

WEEKLY MARKET BRIEF

THE FED HASN'T SPOKEN.

MORTGAGE RATES ALREADY HAVE.

The September Federal Reserve decision has not been released. Treasury yields and mortgage-rate indexes have already repriced in response to incoming information.

The consequential lesson is not to predict the meeting. It is to understand that mortgage markets rarely wait for it.

MORTGAGE PLANNING FOR HOMEBUYERS, HOMEOWNERS AND REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS

READ ONLINE

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Observation periods vary by metric and are labeled throughout. Publication date: September 14, 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rate Market Moved Before the Meeting

The Federal Open Market Committee will release its September decision on **Wednesday, September 16**. But the market did not wait for the announcement.

From September 4 through September 10, the 10-year Treasury yield increased from **4.78%** to **4.95%**. Optimal Blue's 30-year conforming mortgage-rate index moved from **6.744%** on September 3 to **6.880%** on September 10. The effective federal funds rate remained **3.63%**.

10-YEAR TREASURY	OBMMI 30-YR CONF.	FREDDIE MAC 30-YR	EFFECTIVE FED FUNDS
4.95%	6.880%	6.76%	3.63%
+17 bps since Sep. 4	+13.6 bps since Sep. 3	September 10, 2026	Through September 10

THE CONSEQUENTIAL SIGNAL

The Federal Reserve controls a short-term policy rate. Mortgage rates reflect a broader market that continuously prices inflation, economic growth, Treasury yields, mortgage-backed securities, investor demand, risk and new information.

August consumer and producer inflation data gave bond markets additional information to process. Headline consumer prices rose 0.4% during the month, while final-demand producer prices also rose 0.4%. That does not tell us what mortgage rates will do next. It tells us why waiting for a single policy announcement is not a complete mortgage strategy.

BUYERS

Build around a durable payment and cash plan - not a predicted meeting outcome.

HOMEOWNERS

Define the improvement that would justify acting before the rate opportunity appears.

PROFESSIONALS

Distinguish a Federal Reserve headline from an actual change in borrower pricing.

The meeting matters. The market's interpretation of everything surrounding it matters more to mortgage rates.

Sources: Federal Reserve H.15, observations through September 10, 2026; Optimal Blue OBMMI, September 3 and September 10, 2026; Freddie Mac PMMS, September 10, 2026; Federal Reserve effective federal funds rate; BLS CPI and PPI, August 2026.

SIGNAL VS. NOISE

A Fed Decision Is an Event. Mortgage Pricing Is a Market.

NOISE | WHAT THE HEADLINES IMPLY	SIGNAL | WHAT THE DATA ESTABLISH
X THE FED SETS MORTGAGE RATES. It does not. The Fed sets a short-term policy rate. Thirty-year mortgage pricing is influenced by longer-term bond markets, mortgage-backed securities, inflation expectations, investor demand, risk and loan-specific factors.	**CHECK MORTGAGE PRICING MOVED BEFORE THE MEETING.** Optimal Blue's 30-year conforming index increased from 6.744% on September 3 to 6.880% on September 10.
X IF THE FED CUTS, MORTGAGE RATES AUTOMATICALLY FALL. Not necessarily. Markets frequently price expected policy changes before a meeting. The reaction depends on expectations and how investors interpret the decision, projections and new information.	**CHECK THE 10-YEAR TREASURY ALSO MOVED HIGHER.** The yield rose from 4.78% on September 4 to 4.95% on September 10.
X A SINGLE WEEK'S MOVE ESTABLISHES THE NEXT TREND. No. The increase between September 3 and September 10 is verified. Its continuation is not. A weekly observation describes what happened; it does not predict what happens next.	**CHECK THE FEDERAL FUNDS RATE HAD NOT CHANGED.** The effective federal funds rate remained 3.63% through September 10.
X THE NATIONAL RATE IS AVAILABLE TO EVERY BORROWER. It is not. National indexes provide context. Credit, property, occupancy, loan program, equity, points, lock period and timing affect actual pricing.	**CHECK INFLATION REMAINED RELEVANT.** August CPI and PPI both increased 0.4% during the month. Markets received new inflation information before the meeting began.

The mistake is not being uncertain about rates. The mistake is treating a forecast as a financial plan.

Sources: Optimal Blue OBMMI, September 3 and September 10, 2026; Federal Reserve H.15, observations through September 10, 2026; Federal Reserve effective federal funds rate; Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 2026 CPI and PPI.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Rates Repriced as Inflation Data Arrived

Optimal Blue OBMMI - September 10, 2026 - national average lock-rate indexes

30-YEAR CONFORMING	15-YEAR CONFORMING	FHA 30-YEAR
6.880%	6.292%	6.668%
VA 30-YEAR	**USDA 30-YEAR**	**JUMBO 30-YEAR**
6.461%	6.670%	6.924%

Optimal Blue Mortgage Market Indices are derived from actual consumer rate-lock activity captured through the Optimal Blue platform. They provide national market context and are not an individual rate quote. Borrower, property, loan structure, lock period, points and timing affect actual pricing.

SECONDARY BENCHMARK | FREDDIE MAC PMMS | SEPTEMBER 10, 2026 30-YEAR: 6.76% | 15-YEAR: 6.09%

Freddie Mac's survey uses qualifying conventional conforming applications submitted through Loan Product Advisor. Its methodology differs from Optimal Blue. The measures are shown separately and are not averaged.

INFLATION CONTEXT

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - AUGUST 2026

Headline CPI +0.4% monthly | +3.4% annual
Core CPI +0.3% monthly | +2.4% annual
Shelter +0.3% monthly | +3.0% annual
Energy +2.1% monthly | +16.3% annual

Monthly changes seasonally adjusted; annual changes unadjusted.

PRODUCER PRICE INDEX - AUGUST 2026

Final demand +0.4% monthly | +5.4% annual
Final-demand goods +1.1% monthly
Final-demand services +0.1% monthly
Less food, energy and trade +0.3% monthly | +4.7% annual

Monthly changes seasonally adjusted; annual changes unadjusted.

VERIFIED FACT

Mortgage-rate indexes and Treasury yields moved higher before the September decision. August CPI and PPI both rose 0.4% during the month.

INTERPRETATION

Inflation remained relevant to bond pricing. The market was processing new information before the Fed announced its decision.

INFERENCE - NOT PREDICTION

The meeting may create volatility, but these data do not establish the next direction of mortgage rates.

Sources: Optimal Blue OBMMI, September 10, 2026, accessed through the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; Freddie Mac PMMS, September 10, 2026; Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI and PPI, August 2026.

HOUSING MATH

A 13.6-Basis-Point Move Changed the Payment Before the Fed Voted

A small rate movement can change both the monthly payment and the loan amount supported by that payment.

30-YEAR FIXED | $450,000 INITIAL LOAN | PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST ONLY | OPTIMAL BLUE INDEX

SCENARIO A
September 3

LOAN AMOUNT
$450,000

RATE
6.744%

MONTHLY P&I
$2,917

SCENARIO B
September 10

LOAN AMOUNT
$450,000

RATE
6.880%

MONTHLY P&I
$2,958

RATE MOVEMENT
+13.6 bps
+0.136 percentage points

MONTHLY CHANGE
+$41
principal and interest

SAME PAYMENT LOAN
$443,795
approximately at 6.880%

SAME-PAYMENT VIEW

$493,105 purchase price

$6,895 below $500,000

With 10% down, preserving approximately the same $2,917 monthly principal-and-interest payment

Assumes 10% of the resulting price - not fixed $50,000 cash

THE COMPLETE DECISION

1. Full monthly housing obligation
2. Cash required and reserves after closing
3. Price negotiation or eligible seller concessions
4. Taxes, insurance, mortgage insurance and dues
5. Expected time in the home and loan
6. Cost and breakeven of any rate strategy
7. Flexibility if plans or markets change
8. Whether the plan works without a forecast

A rate forecast answers what someone thinks may happen. A payment framework answers what you can responsibly do.

Illustration only. Figures are rounded and use standard fixed-rate amortization. Payments include principal and interest only and exclude property taxes, homeowners insurance, mortgage insurance, association dues, points, lender charges and other third-party costs. Optimal Blue OBMMI is a national market index, not an individual quote. Rates, programs and terms are subject to change. Not all borrowers or properties qualify. Source: Optimal Blue OBMMI, September 3 and September 10, 2026.

SOUTHERN MARYLAND PULSE

National Rates Moved. Local Leverage Remained Uneven.

Closed-sale price and DOM: three months ending August 2026. Homes sold and listing-market data: August 2026.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY

CLOSED-SALE MARKET - REDFIN

MEDIAN CLOSED-SALE PRICE	$434K	+4.5% YoY
HOMES SOLD	121	+7.3% YoY
CLOSED-SALE DOM	42 days	+3 days YoY

LISTING MARKET - REALTOR.COM

ACTIVE LISTINGS	275	+14.6% YoY
MEDIAN LISTING PRICE	$459,950	-3.7% YoY
LISTING-MARKET DOM	36 days	-2 days YoY

READ

More active selection came with higher closed-sale prices and more August closings. That does not support a broad claim that sellers have lost leverage.

CALVERT COUNTY

CLOSED-SALE MARKET - REDFIN

MEDIAN CLOSED-SALE PRICE	$467K	-0.6% YoY
HOMES SOLD	118	+4.5% YoY
CLOSED-SALE DOM	48 days	+11 days YoY

LISTING MARKET - REALTOR.COM

ACTIVE LISTINGS	324	+50.7% YoY
MEDIAN LISTING PRICE	$515,000	-6.8% YoY
LISTING-MARKET DOM	36 days	-3 days YoY

READ

Calvert had the largest inventory increase. Added supply is meaningful, but nearly stable closed pricing and more sales do not show uniform seller weakness.

CHARLES COUNTY

CLOSED-SALE MARKET - REDFIN

MEDIAN CLOSED-SALE PRICE	$434K	-3.7% YoY
HOMES SOLD	215	+0.5% YoY
CLOSED-SALE DOM	52 days	+3 days YoY

LISTING MARKET - REALTOR.COM

ACTIVE LISTINGS	622	+7.4% YoY
MEDIAN LISTING PRICE	$477,590	-3.2% YoY
LISTING-MARKET DOM	45 days	+7 days YoY

READ

Softer prices and longer market time may create room to investigate terms. The evidence still does not support treating every seller or neighborhood alike.

METHODOLOGY NOTE

Redfin closed-sale DOM measures homes that ultimately sold. Realtor.com listing-market DOM follows listings from their listing date until they close, go pending or leave the market, depending on data availability. These are different metrics. Redfin's published annual percentages are retained because recent estimates may incorporate revision adjustments and displayed counts may be rounded.

Sources: Redfin county housing-market pages, August 2026; Realtor.com Housing Inventory Core Metrics, August 2026, accessed through the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT - CAPITOL HILL - WASHINGTON, DC

Fewer Sales Did Not Mean Weaker Competition Everywhere

Redfin closed-sale market - observations through August 2026

MEDIAN SALE PRICE	HOMES SOLD	CLOSED-SALE DOM	SALE-TO-LIST	ABOVE LIST
$990K	174	39 days	99.3%	28.3%
+8.7% YoY	-15.8% YoY	-5 days YoY	+1.0 point YoY	+4.6 points YoY

WHAT THE DATA ESTABLISH

Capitol Hill recorded fewer August sales than a year earlier. Yet the median closed-sale price was higher, homes that sold moved five days faster, the sale-to-list ratio increased and a larger share sold above list price.

WHAT THE DATA DO NOT ESTABLISH

A higher median does not mean every Capitol Hill home increased in value by 8.7%. The mix of properties sold can move a neighborhood median. Fewer transactions also do not automatically mean less competition for the homes buyers considered most desirable.

TRANSACTION VOLUME DESCRIBES HOW MUCH SOLD. COMPETITION METRICS HELP EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED.

BUYER IMPLICATION

A slower transaction count is not permission to underprepare. Distinguish between a property that has accumulated market time and one positioned to attract immediate attention. Establish the complete payment and cash plan before the competitive property appears.

SELLER IMPLICATION

A stronger median does not remove the need for disciplined pricing and presentation. Buyers still compare condition, carrying costs, alternatives and financing implications. The property must earn attention before it can earn favorable terms.

Fewer closings can coexist with meaningful competition for the properties that do sell.

METHODOLOGY NOTE

Redfin reports the neighborhood median closed-sale price and closed-sale DOM for the three months ending August 2026. The displayed homes-sold count is for August 2026. Redfin's published annual percentage is retained because recent estimates may incorporate revision adjustments and displayed counts may be rounded.

Source: Redfin, Capitol Hill Housing Market, observations through August 2026.

STEVE'S TAKE

Do Not Let a Meeting Become the Strategy

The housing conversation often treats Federal Reserve meetings as if they were rate-setting appointments for homebuyers. They are not.

The Fed's decision, projections and language matter. But the mortgage market continuously processes inflation, employment, Treasury supply, investor demand, mortgage-backed securities and expectations about what may come next.

That is why mortgage rates can move before the Fed acts. It is also why a policy-rate reduction does not guarantee an equivalent decline in mortgage rates.

This week offered a clean example. The effective federal funds rate remained unchanged through September 10. During the same period, the 10-year Treasury yield and the Optimal Blue 30-year conforming mortgage-rate index moved higher.

That does not tell us where rates go next. It tells us that waiting for a headline is not the same thing as having a strategy.

FOR A HOMEBUYER

Know the payment, cash requirement and complete obligation that can be carried responsibly. Evaluate the property without requiring a perfect rate forecast.

FOR A HOMEOWNER

Define the monthly improvement, total cost, breakeven period, time horizon and equity objective that would make a refinance worthwhile.

FOR A REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONAL

Help clients separate a Federal Reserve headline from the property-level analysis and financing preparation their decision actually requires.

Issue 11 established that the Fed is not the mortgage market. Issue 17 shows why that distinction remains practical: mortgage pricing had already changed before the September decision arrived.

The strongest plan is not the one built around certainty. It is the one that remains useful when certainty is unavailable.

That is the work: define the decision before the market asks you to make it.

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NMLS 381933

CONTINUE YOUR PLANNING

Turn Market Information Into a Personal Decision

SCHEDULE A MORTGAGE-PLANNING CONVERSATION

Review payment targets, cash requirements, financing options and the timing of your next move.

MeetSteveCombs.com

READ THE WEEKLY MARKET BRIEF

Access the current issue and prior editions.

steve-combs.com/weekly-market-brief/

ASK STEVE

Send a mortgage or housing question at any time.

AskSteve247.com

BUILD YOUR HOMEBUYER STRATEGY

Prepare the payment, cash and financing framework before the right property appears.

steve-combs.com/buy/

START WITH A TARGET PAYMENT

Translate a comfortable monthly budget into a responsible planning range.

steve-combs.com/target-payment-calculator/

BEFORE YOU BUILD A PLAN AROUND A RATE HEADLINE, ASK:

1. Is this a Fed policy rate, Treasury yield, mortgage index or actual quote?
2. What complete monthly housing obligation remains comfortable?
3. How much cash and liquidity should remain after closing?
4. What improvement would make a refinance or rate strategy worthwhile?
5. What happens if the expected market move does not occur?
6. Does the plan work without requiring a forecast to be correct?

Information describes the market. A decision framework connects it to your life.

CLOSING

Build the Plan Before the Announcement.

WEEKLY MARKET BRIEF | ISSUE 17

THE FED HASN'T SPOKEN.
MORTGAGE RATES ALREADY HAVE.

The September decision had not yet arrived. The mortgage and Treasury markets had already moved.

That is not a prediction about what comes next. It is a reminder that a durable housing or mortgage strategy cannot depend on one meeting, one headline or one forecast.

Understand the complete obligation. Define the threshold that would justify action. Prepare for more than one possible outcome.

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