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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-January 20, 2010

SALES AND AVERAGE PRICE END THE YEAR ON A POSITIVE NOTE

Residential sales activity in the area served by the Central Alberta REALTORS® Association posted another double-digit year-over-year gain in December 2009. Meanwhile, the average price for home sales rose to the highest level in more than a year.

Home sales recorded through the Association's MLS® System numbered 182 units in December 2009, jumping 56 per cent from the same month last year. This is the third year-over-year increase in as many months. By comparison, provincial sales activity jumped 62 per cent from year-ago levels in December. Sales in Central Alberta remain below those reported in the month of December in the peak years for activity, 2005 through 2007, but above all other years on record.

A stronger fourth quarter in 2009 compared to 2008 was not enough to offset fewer sales earlier in the year. As a result, annual sales were down 11 per cent on a year-over-year basis to 3,770 units in 2009.

"The strong sales momentum seen at the end of 2009 is likely to carry forward into the new year," said Derek Austin, President of the Central Alberta REALTORS® Association. "The significant recovery in demand, and accompanying return of average price growth to positive territory is beginning to draw more sellers back to the market."

The dollar value of all home sales totalled \$51 million in December 2009, up 60 per cent year-over-year. The dollar value of all homes sold in the province, by comparison, increased 73 per cent from year-ago levels. On an annual basis, the dollar volume of home sales in Central Alberta amounted to \$996.9 million, down 15 per cent from 2008.

Total sales activity rose 50 per cent from a year earlier to 219 units in December. The total value of all MLS® property sales amounted to \$65.4 million in December 2009, up 52 per cent from year-ago levels.

The number of new listings was up from a year earlier for the second month in a row. Numbering 345 units, new residential listings on the Association's MLS® System were up 12 per cent from year-ago levels. This also represents the highest level on record for the month of December.

There were 1,838 active listings on the Association's MLS® System at the end of December 2009, down seven per cent year-over-year. This is the 10th consecutive decline in active residential listings.

There were 10.1 months of inventory at the end of December 2009, well below the recessionary peak of 17 months reached one year earlier. The number of months of inventory is the number of months it would take to sell current inventories at the current rate of sales activity.

The Central Alberta REALTORS® Association is an MLS® listing co-operative, representing more than 640 REALTORS® located in Red Deer and throughout Central Alberta. Details and photos of all Central Alberta REALTORS® Association listings can be found on the national public web sites www.cara.ca, www.REALTOR.ca (residential properties) and ICX.CA (commercial and investment properties).