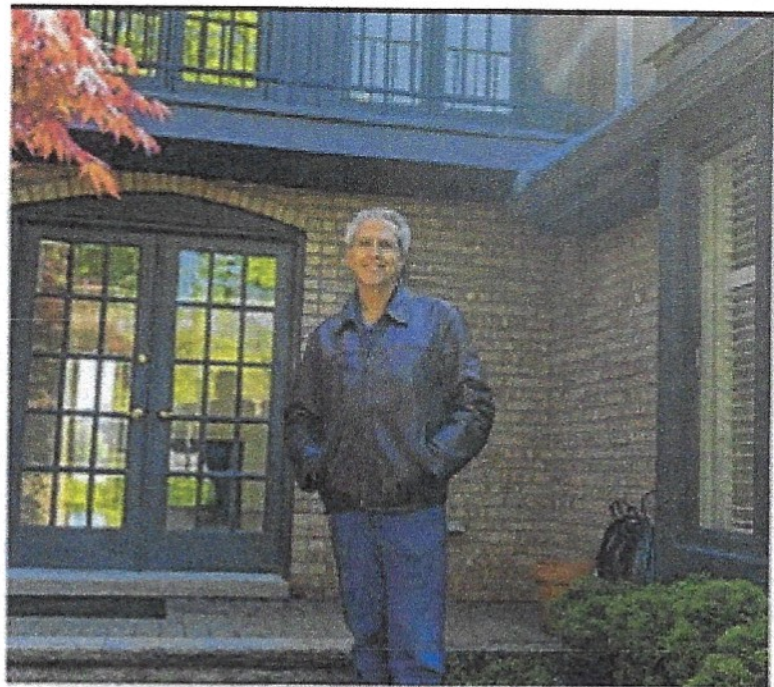


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More condo sellers are having to drop their prices to close deals.



SYLVIA JARRUS FOR WSJ Gordon Miller was thinking about buying a condo north of Detroit to be near his adult daughter.

For One Man, Buying A Condo Made Sense

BY VERONICA DAGHER

There are a lot of reasons not to buy a condominium these days. Gordon Miller did it anyway.

He looked past the homeowners association dues that are rising across the country, and the special assessments that more buildings are charging for major repairs. He acknowledged that a condo probably wouldn't appreciate as quickly as a single-family house, and might eventually be tougher to sell.

What he found is that there are deals to be had for someone willing to stomach the risks. About 57% of U.S. condos that sold in April went for less than their original asking price, according to real-estate brokerage Redfin.

Nationwide, the condo market lags behind the single-family home market in demand. There are good reasons for this in places like Florida, where the costs of ownership are surging. But the condo market doesn't come with such extreme risks everywhere.

Consider Michigan, where Miller was looking. Condo prices are more affordable compared with the national average. Association dues rose less than in the country as a whole in April versus last year.

"I sensed it was a buyer's market," Miller said.

Miller budgeted up to \$600,000 for a four-bedroom condo north of Detroit to make visiting his adult daughter easier. He happens to be a mortgage broker and has his primary residence in North Carolina. He wanted a condo partly so he wouldn't have to worry about lawn care when he wasn't in town. Miller didn't care much about amenities and didn't want them to drive up his HOA dues. His approximately \$1,000 monthly budget for dues and property taxes limited his options, he said.

He estimated that many of the roughly 60 online listings he clicked through significantly exceeded his budget for those items. Condo association dues were up 7% in April nationwide this year versus last, and as much as 10% in parts of Florida, but just 3% in Michigan, according to Redfin.