

Stan Sorensen:

Hey, everyone. Welcome to Altabanking, a business podcast for everyone interested in elevating their financial future. I'm your host, Stan Sorensen. And together, we're going to hear interviews and information and insights about all kinds of interesting things regarding Utah on the economy and all. Today, we're going to talk in particular about real estate and the housing market. And I'd like to go ahead and welcome our guest, Ben Pack, my good friend, and colleague. He's the president of the Altabank mortgage division.

Ben Pack:

Thanks for having me on. This is fun, Stan.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah. Thanks for coming in, Ben. Yeah, we've got all kinds of interesting things to talk about. We could probably go on for two, three hours on this particular topic. Before we get started, though, just for everybody that's listening, give us kind of a quick intro. Tell us a little bit about you.

Ben Pack:

Yeah. well, it's been a lot of fun. I came over to Altabank about two years ago. I have such a great team of people there. Some of the folks have been there for over 20 years, and they know the programs inside and out. And it's really been a pleasure to work with them. It's fun because I got to wake up every morning and go rub shoulders with them and help service and meet our clients, and help them to achieve their dream. It's been a lot of fun. I've been in the industry for 23, 24 years, right around there. And I've done it all, everything from being a loan officer, to processing, to... Well, you name it, developments, construction, everything. It's been good. [crosstalk 00:01:49]. It's been a good career.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah. And as you know, I have a lot of fondness for your team. I think they're great. They're a lot of fun to work with. We're going to come back to what that 20 years of experience gets you.

Ben Pack:

Perfect.

Stan Sorensen:

Because I think that's a... That, I think is something we definitely want to talk about with folks. But to get started, let's set the stage, and let's talk about the Utah housing market.

Ben Pack:

Oh, boy.

Stan Sorensen :

How would you define it?

Ben Pack :

That's a million-dollar question right there because we have just witnessed one of the biggest run-ups in appreciation and values, increases in values that we've ever seen in history. And there's a lot of reasons behind that. In-migration into the state from other states is huge. We've already had a shortage of housing to begin with, but a very recent report that I just read showed that we are short over 44,000 units right now. That's a good thing and a bad thing. With that, there's lots of opportunity, a lot of the builders we work with, a ton of builders at the bank. And I mean, everybody's seeing townhouses go up everywhere, right?

Stan Sorensen:

Oh, just like we were talking about earlier, right outside the door here.

Ben Pack:

Yep, right outside the door. People see a lot of big, beautiful homes being built. Land is tough. But it's not just one area, it's from St. George up to Cache Valley. I mean, everywhere is a hotspot. Everywhere, people are looking for homes to move into. It's a great time to be a seller. The challenge is, once you sell it, chances are you need to buy something.

Stan Sorensen:

Well, yeah, that's... Yeah, how many people have you talked to just in your friend group that says, "Oh, I should sell my house today"?

Ben Pack:

Well, we were looking personally. We were looking last year, and decided to hold off because lumber prices were beginning to skyrocket, and which they've come back down quite a bit. Supply chain is catching up, which is good. That helps with demand in housing. We decided to wait. And we look at where we're at, and we love our house, we love our neighborhood, we've got great friends there. We were just looking to get a little further out and downsize a little bit. And it just did not make sense. We stayed where we had family that sold and made a lot of money, and then they turned around and bought and paid a lot of money. It's all relative.

Ben Pack:

But speaking back on the market for a minute, a lot of this run-up, we really saw gas thrown on the fire once the pandemic happened, and all the stimulus that came in. And it's been really good in a lot of ways. The hard thing is, a lot of our first-time home buyers are struggling to get in. You're seeing multiple offers. Even before homes are listed, the rumor mill starts and everybody starts calling. There's really some hard things that a lot of folks need to work through.

Ben Pack:

And I know we'll talk more about that, as far as what people can do and everything. But overall, the market's awesome, rates are low, people can afford more house, folks that aren't moving, that we've seen a lot of folks refinance over this last year. We see a lot of them right now realizing, "Oh, my goodness, I am sitting on so much equity. I'm not going to be able to build the home of my dreams, so let's remodel the kitchen."

Ben Pack:

People are refinancing, tapping into the equity that they have, and they're building their dream house in their current home right now. There's a lot of stuff happening, purchases, refinances, cash out, construction. It's all there, and it's all good. It's very healthy for our economy.

Stan Sorensen:

Right. Yeah, it's interesting to me that there's no single-focused hotspot right now in this state, that it really is everything north and south. And we're hearing some east, but not as much, but a lot now going out west.

Ben Pack:

Yeah, west and south. It's crazy to see the growth in Utah County. It's crazy to see the growth in the southern part of Salt Lake County, the western part of Salt Lake County, even Tooele. I mean, Tooele is exploding out there.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, I've had a couple of people telling me that's the next hotspot.

Ben Pack:

Yeah. We work with a couple of builders out there, and the demand at their open houses when they do them on the weekends, their homes are flying off the shelves. In fact, they're not even selling them at this point until they're completed.

Stan Sorensen:

Oh, wow.

Ben Pack:

Because one, the cost of materials right over the last six, eight months or last year has been really hard for them to set a price, and then not get killed with the increased costs, with supply and demand. But anyway, I keep going on different things like that, [crosstalk 00:07:14] but that's okay.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah. I'm going to touch... I just want to touch quickly on the refinance piece, because I know that that... We were very fortunate last year, as you know.

Ben Pack:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Stan Sorensen:

I mean, number one, we were fortunate as an economy that the interest rates were so low. We were fortunate at the bank because we did quite well, the number of customers coming to us. Is it safe to say that last year refinancing action was really about lowering interest rates and being able to lower your monthly payments and all that go along with it, but now, we are seeing that shift to refinancing in order to tap the equity?

Ben Pack:

Yeah. I mean, that's generally speaking, for sure. Last year, we broke every record as a company, as a bank. But as an industry, we set records that I don't think anybody would have ever guessed. And it was all based on rate and demand. We hit all-time lows, and that's where that government stimulus really put gasoline on the fire. This year, there are still folks that didn't refinance last year, whether it was maybe they were self-employed and hadn't quite hit two years, or they had various reasons why they weren't able to, or didn't take advantage of it last year.

Ben Pack:

But rates, especially over the last little while, has really dropped back down again. And we're not at all-time lows, but we are pretty darn close. There's a lot of folks that are just doing rate-and-term refinances, where they're not pulling cash out. Some of them are shortening their terms to a 15-year mortgage or a 10-year mortgage. I'll tell you one thing that's been really interesting, and this might be a little bit off-topic, but depending on where you're at in the state, every year, and it's usually in December, that's when it is, FHFA, which is a governing body over Fannie and Freddie, they decide what the new conventional loan limits should be. And they've increased them every year. This year, I actually think we're going to see a fairly big increase.

Stan Sorensen:

Really?

Ben Pack:

Yeah, I think we'll see a fairly big increase. And this is just me saying this, but Salt Lake County, they have an expanded market. Summit County, they have an expanded market. Believe it or not, Tooele County has an expanded market. Utah County does not have an expanded market, meaning, once you go above that limit, you're into jumbo territory. And that's really easy to hit that.

Stan Sorensen:

Right. Yeah.

Ben Pack:

That's where I think you'll see the government make that adjustment. But in the meantime, I will say that is one really good reason for working with a community bank. We know our marketplace. We are your neighbors, we are your friends, we know what's happening in real estate. And we also have the money and the programs, and I'm talking a portfolio program to service Utah County in this case, and not have them on a "jumbo" program. This portfolio product, we can go up as high as \$5 million. But it really fills a big need in counties like Utah County, where they may not have some of the expanded products that Salt Lake or Summit have. Anyway, a little side tangent there, but again, this is the value of a community bank. We make local decisions, we underwrite it, we fund it, we service it. It really does make a big difference.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah. You used a phrase, or used a couple of phrase, talked about conventional limits, and all. And I know that there are some folks out there. I mean, even people who have purchased a home, maybe have purchased their second home, sold their first home, purchased another home, they still get confused about the various programs. Maybe we can talk about that, conventional loan, jumbo loan, all the various programs that we have, because they're pretty extensive.

Ben Pack:

They are. And that's one thing that Altabank has done very well. And I'll probably use a couple phrases here that may confuse some folks, but I'll try to explain everything. Starting with first-time home buyers, there are programs out there. There are grants, Own in Ogden, for example. Some of the cities... West Valley City has a grant that so long as they have the money, because they do run out of funding, they have certain requirements that they require borrowers to go through. The West Valley grant, for example, you have to write a letter to your congressman. Kind of a funny requirement, [crosstalk 00:12:21] but it gets them involved, helps them to understand the process.

Stan Sorensen:

Do they say what you have to say? Because I can envision some of these letters perhaps not helping your cause. I don't know, that's with your congressman, I guess.

Ben Pack:

No, they just want you to send them a letter. You can talk about whatever you'd like, but at the end of the day, the cities give these grants. And some have to be paid back, some don't if you live there long enough, whether that's five years or 10 years. It's free money.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, wow.

Ben Pack:

But you can use that for your down payment. Most programs, unless you're a veteran, or you're in a USDA Rural Housing area, something out in the basin, for example-

Stan Sorensen:

Sure.

Ben Pack:

... or Tooele parts of Utah County, they can qualify for a USDA financing, which is a zero-down program. Veterans, I do want to talk about veterans for a minute.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, let's.

Ben Pack:

We absolutely love our veterans. Those men and women, those families, they sacrifice a lot. And I love that the government gives them a mortgage benefit. The sad thing is, when they leave the military, they get a one-hour or two-hour rundown of, "Hey, here's your benefits. There's the door. Thank you." And a lot of them don't understand you can buy a house without any down payment. That VA loan, quite honestly, is the best loan in the world. It has the best rates. There's no mortgage insurance premiums. You're just paying your principal and your interest. Of course, you have your taxes and your homeowners insurance, but there's no mortgage insurance, and they can get in with very little money down. They're also very lenient on credit scores. Jumping back to first-time home buyers, that's... One of the programs is FHA. It's very lenient on credit scores, and you're looking typically at a minimum 3.5%

down payment, 3.5% of the purchase price. They have great rates, but it does have mortgage insurance, and that can get pricey.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, it gets expensive. Yeah.

Ben Pack:

But on the conventional side, kind of moving down that line of different types of products and customers, there are programs with as little as 3% down on a conventional loan, where the mortgage insurance can go away down the road. If folks don't have 20% down, typically, you have to have mortgage insurance. But all of these programs are designed to help people at different stages, and it's all based on risk. The less [inaudible 00:15:03] in the game, the less down payment, the higher the risk is generally for the lender. The fact that the VA loan, and I don't mean to be bouncing around so much [Crosstalk 00:15:14] but I'm just trying to give good information here.

Stan Sorensen:

No, it's great.

Ben Pack:

The fact that the VA loan doesn't require a down payment, they have what's called a VA guarantee. The government guarantees whoever lends that veteran the money, that they're going to be protected up to 20% of the value of that loan, right?

Stan Sorensen:

Oh, right. Yeah.

Ben Pack:

If for some reason the veteran defaults, that the lender is protected. The government backs that loan. It's fantastic product.

Stan Sorensen:

Let me actually just ask for a pause real quickly on the veterans, because I remember as we wrote a piece that's on the internet about this last year, and I remember very clearly that it's not just for veterans, but active-duty military are able to qualify under a similar type program, if not that exact program.

Ben Pack:

Yeah, it is the same, and it covers all areas of the military, including the coast guard, right?

Stan Sorensen:

Right. Yeah.

Ben Pack:

No matter what branch you're in, you're covered. But to qualify for the mortgage benefit, you do have to complete a certain number of hours of service for the government. If you have somebody in the ROTC, their first year, really with the military, they're not going to qualify.

Stan Sorensen:

Sure.

Ben Pack:

Now, again, one thing that they may not know, survivors.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, I was going to bring that up too. Yeah.

Ben Pack:

Some of these military men and women that have paid that ultimate price, which again, thank you for your service. My hats go off to them. Their surviving spouse can still qualify and receive the same benefits, even if they never used it. Even if they used it before, you can use it again. It's not a one-time benefit. This is something for life. If they move to another state, if they get transferred, if something else happens, they can still use it time and time again. And the spouse, the surviving spouse, same thing, they're eligible.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, it's a fantastic program. Okay. And then of course, you mentioned jumbos as well with some of the-

Ben Pack:

Oh, we love jumbo loans. We really do. Jumping back just over a year with the pandemic, when that first happened, everything got pretty crazy. Everybody knows that, but in the lending world, a lot of banks had to pull back, including some of the largest banks in the nation. They pulled back on products. Some eliminated home equity lines of credit, others pulled back completely on jumbos. They were like, "Nope, we don't have the capital for it. It ties it up for just one person too much." There's a myriad of reasons why they pulled back on that product. We never did. In fact, we expanded our product. Jumbo financing is a fantastic loan. And again, working with Altabank, community bank, we know our market price, and we're very comfortable with jumbo financing. We keep that. We have places we can sell it in the secondary market, we don't. If we ever needed to, we could, but we love it. We like to keep that here locally.

Right. Yeah.

Ben Pack:

But generally speaking, the rates on jumbo, for a while, they were actually better than conventional rates.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, I remember that. I remember we talked about that.

Ben Pack:

Great, great product. We go up to as high as 5 million, but again, based on risk, you got to have a 20% down payment, but if you go up to 5 million, it's not going to be at an 80% loan-to-value writing. We're not going to give you 80% of what it appraises for, or what you buy it for. Those numbers will go down a little bit. But honestly, anything under a million and a half, 2 million, you can get up to 80% financing.

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Ben Pack:

... million and a half, 2 million, you can get up to 80% financing. Now, you got to have good credit. If your credit is suffering, it's going to be tough. There have to be some very big compensating factors, but generally speaking, the higher the credit score, it doesn't matter the program, right? The higher the credit score, the better the rate. The lower the credit score, the higher the risk, hence FHA, Fannie, Freddie, Jumbo. Everybody has what they call loan level price adjustments. This is some of the jargon that we deal with every day. But what that means is depending on the purpose of your loan, depending on the credit of your loan, they're going to make an adjustment to that rate.

Stan Sorensen:

Sure.

Ben Pack:

And every product has those adjustments. And each product, the adjustments will vary, but a credit score is one of those big, big ticket items that they really look closely at.

Stan Sorensen:

Okay. Yeah. And we're going to want to come back to that, right? Because obviously we're going to want to talk a little bit about that if you are... Whether you're a first time home buyer, whether you're looking to upgrade or even downsize, right? We're going to want to talk about the things that we recommend you do, in order to get ready to do that. Before we do that though, let's kind of go back to the market craziness. Okay. You and I were talking before we sat down a little bit about this being deja vu for me. Right? Because 20 years ago or so in Seattle as people that listen to podcasts know, that's where my roots are. And you know, I've witnessed all this. And one of the things that I still marvel at is the number of what I call unnatural acts that people went through, their homebuyers went through in order to secure that home. And we're seeing some of those things here now, aren't we?

Ben Pack:

We are. And again, going back to supply versus demand, right? And being short over 44,000 homes or dwellings. Anybody who's out there looking to buy a house right now, I feel your pain. I am sorry it can be so frustrating, but there are some things you can do to position yourself better. Right now, I'll tell you, I have a close friend of mine that has been helping his daughter get into real estate, helped her buy a townhouse. After about three months of every weekend, making offers, going back and forth with counteroffers. I thought they were going to throw the towel in. And they finally just pulled out all the stops and said, okay, this is what we're going to do. And they were willing to pay over asking price, willing to pay over appraised value. So there are a lot of different strategies and this is where it's so important to work with a really, really good real estate agent.

Stan Sorensen:

I was just going to say, that's going to make all the difference, isn't it?

Ben Pack:

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I've heard all the comments. I'm sure everybody has. You don't need an agent. They don't have to work right now. The homes sell themselves. That could not be further from the truth. They are working their tails off right now to represent their sellers. Even though there's multiple offers coming in, there's so much happening. And if you don't have somebody to hold your hand and help guide you through stuff, you're going to be leaving money on the table.

Ben Pack:

As a buyer, you need somebody who is representing your interests. Somebody who knows how to negotiate and how to assess true value. What to look for in a house. Do they have the network of home inspectors? I've got a great story on that one, by the way. So get with a good real estate agent. Altabank, we love our agents, and we work with some really good ones. So if anybody has questions, we can certainly make recommendations. We're not going to steer you. We're just going to give you a bunch of names and say, give them a call. And at the end of the day, you want to work with somebody you trust, somebody you have confidence in. And if you know the people that are recommending them from personal experience, that holds a lot of weight.

Ben Pack:

So jumping back to some of the creative offers that we're seeing-

Stan Sorensen:

Well, I just want to, for everybody listening, you notice the difference. Creative offers, unnatural acts. Just difference in vocabulary there. That would be the mortgage professional and me, the difference there. So anyway, please go ahead.

Ben Pack:

We have seen offers where the buyers are coming in saying, "Hey, Mr. Seller, we will pay all of the closing costs. We will pay all of your title fees. We will even pay your real estate commissions to your listing agent." We're seeing some crazy stuff like that.

Stan Sorensen:

Okay. That's one I hadn't heard all of that.

Ben Pack:

And that's where some of these agents are getting really, really creative. So again, working with a good professional, it makes all the difference.

Stan Sorensen:

You hear about the... I mean, we had talked about it as well prior to this, but you hear about the escalators, right? The automatic escalators. And you know, I remember in hearing stories in Seattle, the people that walked away from deals where somebody else who'd made the offer had an automatic escalator with no ceiling on it. Yeah. It's just, look, we'll pay \$10,000 over whatever the highest bid is

until we've basically made it impossible for anyone else to buy. So you hear about those. The waiving inspection is one that was really in vogue for a while.

Ben Pack:

A wary one.

Stan Sorensen:

I was going to ask about that. Are we seeing that?

Ben Pack:

We are seeing them where their offers are not contingent upon inspection. There's no out or no contingency for appraised value. I'll be honest. Some of the ones I've seen recently, especially for the first time home buyers, because they don't have as much money. They're really getting started. They may get some help from family or from a friend, but some will say, okay, we will pay \$5,000 over any offer that comes in so long as it does not exceed \$400,000 or \$10,000 above appraised value. I mean, there's all sorts of ways for these offers to be structured. So again, it comes down to having competent help, strong representation for the buyers themselves to win because you have out of state people coming, paying cash. Those are hard offers to pass up, where it's not contingent upon anything. And they can close immediately.

Ben Pack:

There are still people that are winning though. There are people that are writing letters saying, oh, we love this house. This is our family situation. They tug on the heartstrings. And they're winning some of these bids, but they have to be prepared. You need to get in with your mortgage loan officer way ahead of time. Before you even start looking at homes, get in, get your credit pulled, get pre-approved. I'm not saying pre-qualified. There's a big difference. And let me just talk about that difference for a minute. A lot of people back in the day, they just, oh, hey, call up, "Hey, Mr. Loan officer, here's my information. Please get me pre-qualified." Well, that's them running some numbers, right? Well, your debt ratio looks okay. You know, your credit looks okay, but having a true pre-approval where we verified income, we have verified the assets, where the money's coming from for the down payment.

Ben Pack:

We've gone through everything, including underwriting. They are approved. The only thing they need is a property with an accepted contract and appraisal and title report. Homeowners insurance too, for that matter. But in all reality, we can get loans done in as little as eight days. That is the fastest legal time limit you can do from start to finish to close the loan. There are protections in place there by the government for home owners. Back in the day, you would actually have some companies that would do a 24-hour close. That was before the big downfall. And that was before the big reckoning.

Stan Sorensen:

Right? Yeah. Yeah. So pre-approval, not pre-qualified. What does one need to do in order to become pre-approved?

Ben Pack:

Altabank, we've put a lot of work into technology. We have a really cool app.

Stan Sorensen:

You do have a really cool app.

Ben Pack:

I love it. You can go to Altabank.com. You can apply right there online. It'll send you a link, right to your phone app. You can do it from any mobile device, right? Any smartphone, any tablet, any computer. And I'm going to plug this for a minute, right?

Stan Sorensen:

No, go for it.

Ben Pack:

I'm very proud of it. We put a lot of time and resources into this to make this a very smooth process. And this is really going to help first time home buyers, right? The technology is awesome. It's super easy. It's an interview style application. It's not this five page legal sized document with a million boxes that you've got to figure out what you got to do. It's an interview style application. So it'll ask you your date of birth. It'll ask you your social security number. It'll ask you who you work for and if you are self-employed. And if you are self-employed, it's going to give you a different set of questions, right? If you're a veteran, it's going to give you a different set of questions.

Ben Pack:

So it's dynamic in nature. Right? And the cool part, and again, I'm going to just plug this again for a minute because it's so great. Your real estate agent can have access to the updates if they download the app and you can grant them access to it, so that when the appraisal comes back, boom, you're notified in the same moment that the loan officer gets it. You know it's there. The moment it comes out of underwriting and you're approved, you get the notification same time the loan officer does. The real estate agent does it. They love it. So they always know where it's at along the way.

Ben Pack:

So communication vastly improved. We outshine everybody in communication and a lot of that is thanks to the app. So it makes it really quick, really seamless, really easy. So getting pre-approved, having everything underwritten completely except for the property, except for the appraisal, that puts you in a really strong position.

Ben Pack:

Going back to my friend, helping his daughter buy a townhouse, I'm in communication with that real estate agent. She calls me and says, "Ben, we just put another offer in. Here's the name and phone number of the listing agent. Will you call them? We do." We call them and we talk up our borrowers. We help those listing agents know this just isn't any Joe Schmo. This is my borrower. We have put them through all the ringers, right? We verified everything. You know that by accepting their offer, this home is going to get sold. It's going to close on time. Your seller can move forward in confidence with whatever they're doing and it's done. So they love having that extra touch. So those are some of the things that customers can do to be pre-approved going, back to getting in early with your mortgage loan officer. If there's a challenge on credit, take the time to get it fixed, take the time. And we can get a lot of stuff done really quick.

Ben Pack:

We are not a credit repair company, but we have some models, that'll say, okay, if you can get stuff squared away, if you can pay down your revolving debt by \$5,000 or whatever it is, you could expect a score about here. The credit providers we use have these models that we can use. So we really try to help people set themselves up. And we really hate telling people, no, you're not approved. What we prefer to say is, hey, this is what we need to do to get you approved, to buy a house in three months from now or six months from now. We hate telling people no. And unfortunately that is part of the business. And we do have to do that every now and then, but we much rather go through and lay out a whole game plan of this is what you need to do to reach your goal of X, Y, or Z.

Ben Pack:

And we'll hold your hand through the process. It's so much better if we can do that before they're out looking for a house and their heart gets set on the model home with the builder that has all the upgrades that they can't afford. It's not really what they need to be doing based on where they're at in life. So we really do try to help set them up for success.

Stan Sorensen:

Well, yeah. So earlier we were talking a little bit about some of the really creative things that people are doing, but there are these fundamentals that you want to go in knowing as a first-time buyer or really as a buyer period, if you're looking to upsize or whatever.

Stan Sorensen:

Credit scores are very confusing to people. I know you've seen a lot of credit reports. I've seen a number of credit reports. They're about as clear as mud. So being able to sit down with someone who can say, look at where you are today with your income, your debt to income ratio, credit score, et cetera, the most we can approve you for is X, which means that the most house you can buy is to be in this price range.

Stan Sorensen:

I think you're right. That's a lot more helpful to somebody than having them come in and say, oh, I just fell in love with this great house that's sitting on top of a hill, with a view of insert name of valley or river or lake. And be being told, yeah, that's nowhere near affordable for you. And if we could make it affordable for you, it wouldn't be affordable for you in the long run because your mortgage payments are going to be too expensive and taxes and all those other sorts of things. Right? So that advisory role really is I guess what we're talking about.

Ben Pack:

Well, again, going back to first time home buyers, I love working with first-time home buyers. All of our loan officers love working with first time home buyers, because they're excited. They're teachable, right? One thing... Well, the worst thing any loan officer could do is approve somebody for a mortgage payment or a mortgage that they truly can't afford.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah.

Ben Pack:

Did they meet guidelines? Yes. But can they really afford it? Well, that's not for us to determine. But we love to give information. We love to sit down with them and review their budgets with them and talk about, okay, this is your situation currently. Now, based off of your current income, based off of your current situation and your goals, what is a mortgage payment you can comfortably, that's the keyword, comfortably afford? And they'll say 1,500, 2,000, whatever that figure is. Right? Well, that's what we work towards.

Ben Pack:

We want it to be comfortable. Now we'll give them the information. Here's the maximum you could qualify for. And if they determine that's the route they want to go, because they just have to have this house, we're not going to stop them. But our whole job is to give information. We want to help educate you so that you go into something eyes wide open, understanding the pros and the cons. Looking at, well, where do you see yourself in a year from now? What does income look like? What do careers look like? How long do you plan to live in this home for?

Ben Pack:

If somebody's looking at living there long term, well, the strategy is going to be different. Maybe it's worth buying down the rates, spending a little extra money because you save so much more over time, talking about that advisory role.

Stan Sorensen:

Right.

Ben Pack:

We really want to give them good, solid information. Once they have that, then they can make their decisions and be confident in those decisions. They can go and make offers. They can set out a game plan that, oh, no, this is going to be a starter home for us. We see ourselves being here three, four, maybe five years. And then we're planning to move back east, whatever the case may be. We try to match the best product, the best payment, the best rate, and the best maximizing their dollar, stretching it as far as we can, no matter who it is, we want them to get the best deal and match them according to what their goals and needs truly are.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah. And as you're going through those conversations, are you also talking to them about the fixed expenses of owning a home that don't fall into our umbrella, right? Our mortgage umbrella, where you're talking, property tax, utilities, all the things that I think sometimes I think people kind of forget about them?

Ben Pack:

Yep. Well, homeowner's associations, right?

Stan Sorensen:

Oh, yeah.

Ben Pack:

We use that in the qualifying debt ratio. You don't make that payment to us. You make that to the Homeowners Association, but those do change over time. We talk about different insurances. If you have a condominium or you're in a townhouse that has shared walls, the HOA's insurance policy is going to cover the structure on the outside, but you've got to cover paint to paint. You're not covered if you have stuff happen inside the house and that's not covered on the HOA policy. So we talk about that. We want to make sure everybody has a full understanding of the liabilities, the benefits, the correct coverages.

Ben Pack:

Even on homeowners insurance, you'd be amazed how many insurance agents are over insuring the properties.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah.

Ben Pack:

And that's okay. But when it's tight, that's not okay. We want you to make sure you have the right coverage. And you can use whoever you want. We work with them, but that's part of our review process. We want to make sure that you have the right sufficient coverage.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, and we should be clear as we talk about that. We are not insurers.

Ben Pack:

Right.

Stan Sorensen:

As you said, we'll work with whoever the buyer wants to work with.

Ben Pack:

That's correct.

Stan Sorensen:

We can certainly talk about things we've seen.

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Stan Sorensen:

We can certainly talk about things we've seen, but you know, we would stop short of course of saying, no, you really should have this added or you don't really need this over here.

Ben Pack:

The worst conversation to have, and this happened once in my career is flood insurance now-

Stan Sorensen:

I shouldn't laugh, but with the rain yesterday, how many people suddenly ears went up, oh wait.

Ben Pack:

Yeah, yeah. So every so often the Federal Emergency Management, FEMA, they go through and they reevaluate the federal flood plains, it may be a 20-year or a 100-year flood plain. They can change when flood insurance is required. We do a flood certification upfront, every lender does it, it's not unique to us. Every lender does that upfront. We get life of loan coverage, meaning that if FEMA changes that we get notified. One time in my career we've actually had to call the customer and say, FEMA change the floodplain maps. You are now in a flood plain, and you are now required to have flood insurance. That is not cheap insurance and that is not a fun phone call to have and I'm thankful it's only been one time my whole career.

Ben Pack:

But, again, these are the realities of home ownership. You want to pick the right location. And not that that flood insurance happens very often, but insurance in general, making sure you have adequate coverage. With all the fires that we're seeing across the nation right now, with all the fires even here in Utah and the smoke everybody's inhaling, fire hazards it's a reality for folks. So anyway, that's probably enough on insurance. I think everybody's probably sick of hearing about that at this point. [crosstalk 00:41:59]

Stan Sorensen:

Who knows. Well, and as you were talking about that with the flooding and all that, I remember when Washington mandated earthquake insurance at the state level, California did it at one point too when I was growing up. But yeah Washington mandated it. We could have a whole side conversation about earthquake proofing your house and everything else that goes along with that, with construction. It's fascinating, but we won't go there. Yeah. We won't go there, there's a lot of other stuff talk about. Yeah.

Stan Sorensen:

Talked about the first-time home buyer or you could even think about it as the person that's buying their second primary home. What about people that want to invest in rental properties or vacation homes, what are we seeing there?

Ben Pack:

[crosstalk 00:42:45] Great question. With the rise of Airbnb, with the rise of different styles of vacationing, this is becoming more popular than ever. Washington County, we're talking to you. I think everybody goes to St. George. Everybody loves to Airbnb. There are restrictions. There are certain zones where Airbnb is eligible. Outside of those zones you may find a grandfathered property, but we've seen a tremendous amount of people buying second homes or buying investment properties. There are some strict regulations on it, but those regulations have changed. The most recent change. And this is getting back to that real hard term loan level, price adjustments. Fannie and Freddie earlier this year limited, I guess it's always been there but nobody ever really paid attention to it. They limited the percentage of loans that we, as a lender, do that we sell to Fannie and Freddie that are second homes or investment properties, non-owner occupied properties. Those loan level price adjustments caused the interest rates to go up quite a bit when that's what the purpose of the loan is for. For that type of occupancy.

Ben Pack:

So buying an investment property is awesome, but it has gotten expensive. Here's the nice thing, we control ours where if we sell a loan off in the secondary market, and I'm just going to throw out a couple of big banks, because everybody's going to recognize the big bank name. Chase, Wells Fargo, US Bank, whoever. When lenders sell loans to those are called aggregators, those big banks, when we sell loans to them they set those loan level price adjustments, Fannie and Freddie have some and they're not changing those but the change in the rule this year is the lenders could then set their own loan level price adjustments on those. And in order to stay below that percentage, which was 7% it's gone down to 5%, they can't exceed that cap. So if they're below it, they'll lessen or ease up on those loan level price adjustments so the rate is more attractive. As they start to get close, to hit their capacity on delivering those loans, they'll Jack up those rates. Yeah. So lenders are in charge of those rates.

Ben Pack:

Nice thing is on our portfolio loan, for example, we control all of that and we aren't messing around like everybody else does. We work with a ton of self-employed borrowers. We work with a ton of investors and some of these investors have 30, 40, even 50 properties. Fannie and Freddie will only finance up to 10 properties for folks, including your primary residence. So how do you get past that? Well, again, working with the community bank, I don't mean to sound like a broken record, but this is the advantage we have. A mortgage broker, you're out of luck, you're capped at 10. Some of the mortgage correspondents or mortgage banking companies, you're out of luck. Unless they're going to keep it in service it, you're not going to get it. So having a banking relationship without the bank is huge for people. And when they know what they're doing and they're valued customers, all of our customers are valued, we don't want to lose anybody. We are very aware of our customer's needs, and we have created products to help support them in their goals. We don't ever want to lose a loan or a customer to go somewhere else. So we're very aggressive on rate, we have products that meet customer's needs, and we understand the customer's financial situation.

Stan Sorensen:

Well, and to add to that. We all work together, so if you do have an investor and they're hitting that limit and we have other products that work for them, but those are being managed by a different officer. I mean, it's easy for us to walk across the street, so to speak and introduce directly.

Ben Pack:

That's one great thing about Altabank. Every department within the bank, we work to support each other. Why do we do that? We want to take care of the customer. So if it's a construction loan, if it's a commercial loan, if it's a line of credit that they need, we're going to get you connected with the right person to make sure that you're getting the right product and you're taking care of. That's a great thing about Altabank.

Stan Sorensen:

No, yeah. It really is. It really is.

Stan Sorensen:

Well, so we've talked about a lot of things we wanted to cover, we've talked about the process and how to get yourself pre-approved, we've talked a little bit about some of the things that are going on in the market, et cetera. The final sort of business thing I wanted to talk about, we talked about refinancing

early on but we're also hearing about HELOCs and that HELOCs are still pretty attractive. I thought we could maybe talk about that a little bit, the pros and cons maybe, or things people might want to before they go down that path.

Ben Pack:

So where we're looking at near all-time low rates. We're looking at incredible appreciation that is forecast to continue, although it may not be as high double digit, we're still forecasted to continue to appreciate. Having access to someone's equity can be a game changer. Whether that's to remodel the kitchen, whether that's to buy a hot tub, pool, whatever the need is, pay for college for your children. We have products that meet it. The home equity line of credit is a fantastic product. Yeah. The pros of it, it's a revolving line kind of like a credit card but tied to the house, has a much lower interest rate.

Stan Sorensen:

I would hope so.

Ben Pack:

You can get with your CPA on deductibility of interest and everything else. But the benefits of it is quick and easy access to considerably large sums of money without draining your savings account. The way our home equity line of credit is set up, you have 10 years from the time you close on it, where you can use it, pay it off, use it, pay it off-

Stan Sorensen:

I was going to ask about that.

Ben Pack:

Yeah. For 10 years. And the minimum payment is the interest that accrues. That's the minimum payment during that 10-year period. Now at the end of that 10-year period, you've got to make some decisions. Do you still want access to a line of credit? Well, if you do we refinance it and do it all over again, you've got another 10 years. If you don't and you want to close it, it enters into another 10 year repayment period. Now here's the drawback to home equity lines of credit. Okay, we always want to talk about the pros and the cons.

Ben Pack:

So if you understand the marketplace, you can watch rates. We're at really low rates, so if you can refinance and cash out and get a lump sum of money and that's all you need it for is one time, you can get that locked in at a fixed rate, and you can pay that back over whatever the term is, 10 years, 30 years, anything in between. Home equity line of credit is a variable rate line of credit. So as the prime rate adjusts and that adjusts all the time, we make the adjustment once a month on the home equity line of credit. But, that can change daily if it wanted to. We do it once a month, so it can go up and it can go down and we've seen it both ways. There are caps in place-

Stan Sorensen:

I was just going to ask.

Ben Pack:

Yep. So if inflation just went crazy out of control and the government had to raise interest rates, it could never go above, this is going to be a really high number so, 18%. We aren't going to exceed that, that's the cap, the ceiling. And it'll never be lower than 3.99%. So I can tell you, we have actually an employee doing one right now, they're at prime plus a margin, everyone is, prime plus a quarter percent. Well, right now that would put them at a three and a half percent interest rate. And that may adjust next month. But there are three and a half percent. Well, we have a floor at 3.99. So even though it's at three and a half, the minimum is 3.99 [crosstalk 00:52:49] and that's where the bank makes their money. That's a very small price to pay and that is very cheap money at 3.99. So right now fixed rates, if you do a cash out refinance depending on credit score and all the other stuff you can be less than that on a fixed rate. So again, we try to connect people with the product that meets their needs and their goals. And for me, I love home equity lines of credit. I've always had one on my house even though we don't use it very often. For me, it is a tool. It's an emergency line when it needs to be an emergency line. If there's a big deal that I need cash very quick for, I have access to it. And I don't have to go through a loan process and run the risk of losing that good deal.

Ben Pack:

So anyway, there's a million reasons why people use them but home equity lines of credit, they're a fantastic tool but it needs to be looked at as a tool. And one thing I hate to see is people do that and then they throw all their credit card debt into it and then rack up their credit card debt again. And then digging themselves in, I don't want to see them do that. So, but these are the pitfalls and unfortunately life happens and some people don't have a choice, but at the end of the day, we really try to give them the education, the support, and match them with right product.

Stan Sorensen:

It's important to point out, I mean, for those who follow rates and rates standards and all, I want to just reiterate, we're pegging our home equity lines of credit to the prime, not to LIBOR or some other measure that's out there.

Ben Pack:

LIBOR's gone now.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah. That's kind of why I was bringing it up.

Ben Pack:

Most companies have their home lines of credit tied to prime and there's always a margin and that's where you shop. But I can tell you Altabank's HELOC is awesome. And one nice advantage, again, just like the jumbo portfolio product, this is something that we actually go to higher limits, have the ability to go to higher limits than a lot of credit unions or other lenders will go. We just cannot exceed an 80% total loan to value. But I know of some that have half a million dollar line of credit on their house.

Stan Sorensen:

Sure.

Ben Pack:

That's nice to have.

Stan Sorensen:

A really nice tool to have in your toolbox.

Ben Pack:

Exactly. It's a tool in the toolbox. They can get connected with, with some of our people there. They can go through and explore all of the options for them.

Stan Sorensen:

Well, and shameless product plug for us, we're going to make it easier to apply for those HELOCs in the next couple of months at the longest-

Ben Pack:

We're actually live. We're live on it now with the app. So you can now apply for your home equity lines of credit on the phone app.

Stan Sorensen:

So now I've got to go home and update the website for that. Thanks, Ben. I was wondering what I was going to do [crosstalk 00:56:13]-

Ben Pack:

A little bit of work for you there, but yeah it's live. It's live.

Ben Pack:

But again, we'll get you connected with the right people, make sure that you're taken care of. It's a very quick process and on the home equity lines of credit, there's zero cost for the customer. So we just ask that you keep it open for a minimum of three years. Yeah. If not, there's an early closure fee and it's not much, a few hundred bucks.

Stan Sorensen:

And again, I mean, if the reason to have it is so that you've got a buffer, you've got something you can tap into if you need to. Having it for three years it doesn't make sense not to, because it's not costing you anything if you don't tap it.

Ben Pack:

You bring up a good point actually, it's not costing you anything. If you had that \$500,000 line of credit, you're not paying interest on 500,000, you're only paying interest on what you use. So say bought a car and you needed \$30,000, well, that's all you're paying interest on. And if you decide to refinance to a car loan, you found a killer deal on KSL, you want to get the car right now so you can do it with the equity line. Then you can go back in and get your car loan.

Stan Sorensen:

And pay it off.

Ben Pack:

Yep. And we got great car loans too there's another shameless plug.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah. No, that's good. Yeah. I'm glad you mentioned that one as well, so. Oh, that's great. That's great.

Stan Sorensen:

So Ben, it's hard to speculate of course, but let's dust off the crystal ball a little bit. Let's kind of forecast, forecast might be a loaded term, but let's speculate a little bit on where we think the market's going and even touch a little bit on the dreaded I word, inflation.

Ben Pack:

Inflation. That's a dangerous word. Like I said, we have seen incredible growth here in Utah. We have supply and demand issues. We have supply chain issues that are getting better. The hard part in forecasting is so many things can change. A black swan event can happen, is what's going to happen with Afghanistan as things progress and what's going to happen with Taiwan as things progress with them and China. There's a lot of unknowns. What we do know is rates can't stay down as low as they are long-term. We know that at some point interest rates have to go up, we've already seen inflation increase and pretty quickly. For those that don't understand inflation, I think one of the best examples of it is Argentina. Argentina, Venezuela they've all experienced incredible inflation, mega inflation. So those are extreme examples.

Ben Pack:

But if you don't curb interest rates at some point, because that's how you curb inflation, you have to increase interest rates. If they don't do that at some point, things are going to get really, really expensive. I mean, you think homes are expensive now You just wait. So heading into next year, we continue to see home prices increasing. We continue to see rates at a low rate and I'm talking there are some programs you can get in the twos right now. We were hitting some investment properties are up in the fours. So I think we'll continue to have rates that are still very aggressive, but at some point they have to be increased. So for anybody... Not that I'm trying to give-

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Ben Pack:

... increased. So for anybody, not that I'm trying to give people pressure to do something right now, but if you are in a position to, I would encourage you to do it sooner than later, because we don't know at what point the fed is going to have to increase rates. We don't know what's going to happen if there are some Black Swan events that could really impact our economy.

Ben Pack:

So inflation, it's gone up. How high are they going to let it go before they start increasing interest rates? That's the part with my crystal ball at least, that that's really hard to forecast, but next year, we have a very healthy economy, especially here in Utah. We have an extremely strong housing market, that's not going to change. So if people are asking themselves the question, well, do we wait? Do we wait for the market to drop? I would not wait. There is too much demand in Utah. Get in now, take advantage of the

appreciation that is still going to happen. Get into what you can afford to get into. Don't overextend yourself, don't stretch yourself, because you're putting yourself in a bad position. But if people can take advantage of the market right now, it is just going to continue to go up, so.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, the thing I'd add to that too, and again, it comes back to the Seattle experience where the market continued to go up. It remains high, even though it's stabilized of course, but what we saw in Seattle where people, in order to get those affordable homes, they begin to move further and further away from the core of where they lived. Seattle, I used to say, Seattle planned all of their mass transit and freeway and transportation and all in the 1950s and then kind of forgot they did it and never updated it. So you'd get these multi-hour commutes, there's a reason they're top five or top six in the nation for traffic. I would just remind everybody, because we'll see some of that phenomenon here, I would imagine, right?

Ben Pack:

We are seeing it already.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, when you see people that work in Salt Lake that are buying for the north or west or south. I would remind everybody that one of the things that Utah has done very well is planned for that transit, plan that mass transit, and prepare for people living further away. Then of course, remote work and how the face of remote work or hybrid work has changed as well. I just think that that opens the playing field for people just a little bit more, which is great.

Ben Pack:

Well, it's great. We're in a very tech savvy society here in Utah. Silicon Slopes bringing in all sorts of businesses. You have companies that again, quality of life where we live, it's pretty impressive. People want to be here. Take advantage of it. My brother-in-law used to live out in Eagle Mountain and I'm talking, this 20 years ago, and that seemed like a forever drive out there. It's not, it's further out than where I live, but to drive out there, it doesn't take long. They've improved roads, there are so many people living out there. So many people moving South County, Utah, so many people moving out to Herriman, which we used to go rabbit hunting out there. You know what I mean? That was [crosstalk 01:03:35].

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, yeah, and that place is exploding.

Ben Pack:

Oh, it's huge, and it's beautiful, and there's tons of commercial going out there. You can get whatever you need wherever you want to be, but like you said, California, Washington, it gets to become an affordability issue where you have to move further away to be able to afford to buy a house. So get in, get in while you can, before it gets too far out there. Utah has a lot of space to grow to. We need some more infrastructure on a few things, especially water right now with the drought-

Stan Sorensen:

That'd be helpful, yeah.

Ben Pack:

... but in all reality, take advantage of it. In fact, there's a song that my son showed me and it's probably been a month or so, it's called Buy Dirt. Luke Bryan, I think is who it is. Awesome song, pull it up on your iTunes or your Spotify account. It's advice from a dad to a father and, or sorry from a dad to a son.

Stan Sorensen:

To a son, yeah.

Ben Pack:

He's talking about what's important, finding the people you love, creating your home, and talking about buying dirt, plant roots.

Stan Sorensen:

That's a good one.

Ben Pack:

It's a fantastic song, sorry.

Stan Sorensen:

Nope, that's all right. I'm listening to it on the way home now.

Ben Pack:

So, but yeah, get in if you can.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, great.

Ben Pack:

So as far as any other changes that we see coming with lumber prices dropping, with availability dropping, the builders are working overtime, right?

Stan Sorensen:

Oh yeah, yeah.

Ben Pack:

They're doing everything they can to build as many homes as they can to get people into them. Again, a really good time to jump in because where we're over 44,000 units shy, we've got more people than there are houses and we have more jobs than there are people to fill. So take advantage of it.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, most definitely. I actually, I have not checked the latest Ivory Homes database for the number of permits approved, which I usually do every quarter just to have it. I haven't looked lately, but

I'm going to wager that it's still pretty high. I mean, it was healthy the first two quarters or the first quarter, rather. So second quarter I'm imagining is quite high and you're right. It's availability, materials has gone up. You're not paying an arm and a leg for [crosstalk 01:06:07].

Ben Pack:

No, so supply chain's catching up. Again, hoping there's no Black Swan event that would interrupt supply chain. We are recovering well, and I see lots of opportunity for everybody going forward. We just want to position ourselves for it.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, agreed, agreed. All right, so let's shift off of the business stuff for a little bit and let's go to what we refer to as the lightning round. I'm going to just... For those who've listened, the previous podcasts, generally the person that we're speaking with,, our guest doesn't know what the lightening round questions are, but because I made a mistake in printing these for those at home, the piece of paper that was my guide. Here, see my guide, lightning round questions. Ben has the exact same document sitting in front of him. So he probably has already thought about the answers, but maybe we'll switch it up a little bit, just ad-lib, I don't know.

Ben Pack:

Go for it,

Stan Sorensen:

I think I mentioned previously, this is a question that I ask interview candidates. I'm genuinely interested in the answers people give to this question, which is, what books are on your nightstand?

Ben Pack:

Well, I love this, I'm a big book person. My daily routine, I actually listened to a few different books. At any given time, I'm three to four books that I'm reading. I start my morning drive to work. I listen to a lot of Audibles. I listened to something spiritual, start my day off. But from there as I go throughout the day, as I drive from branch to branch or appointment to appointment, I listened to a self-help book. Right now Dan Crenshaw's Fortitude, I've got about an hour left on that one. That is awesome, that is such a great, great book. I love the extreme ownership from Jocko which he was friends with Jocko, but I love how Dan really applies this to daily living. His own experiences, and for those that don't know, he's a Texas Senator, lost his eye in Afghanistan, has overcome some pretty significant adversity in his life, including losing his mom to cancer. But the theme of it is the fortitude, how we're building ourselves up. So that's a fantastic book, that's the one I'm in right now.

Ben Pack:

At the end of the day when I drive home, that's usually when I listen to something to have a mind dump. I love... This is going to sound so dumb.

Stan Sorensen:

No it's not.

Ben Pack:

I love some of the fairies, goblins junk that you would think as a teenager may like some of that. I love some of that stuff.

Stan Sorensen:

Some of that stuff's really awesome. I mean-

Ben Pack:

I also love the futuristic space stuff. I love, like the Gray Man series. I like it all, that's the problem. Gray Man series, it's all the spy stuff, military stuff. So I get a little bit of everything, but for me it's about the routine. Something spiritual, something that improves myself, and then some fun book as a mind dump. That's my daily routine, I love it.

Stan Sorensen:

No, that's great, that's really great. So you said Audible, so this is not on the... See, I told you, we're going to ad-lib a little bit too. So when you are not listening to books and as you know, I commute quite a way, so I listened to a lot of books and podcasts as well, but if you're actually reading, not listening, are you a device guy or are you a print guy?

Ben Pack:

I've done it all, when I'm not listening I prefer the feel of the book in my hand. So the really classic books like Richest Man in Babylon, or The Millionaire Next Door, or The Millionaire Mind, the follow-up to it. Love, like these are some of my all-time favorite financial books. I love to hold those in my hand. I've got notes in them, but for convenience, I burned through a lot of books on Audible every year, so.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, no, yeah, Audible's a game changer.

Ben Pack:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I enjoyed it.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, so, okay. So, so we did talk a little bit about some of the escapist, some of the escapist stuff that you read or listened to. If you had to recommend just one escapist book to somebody, what would it be?

Ben Pack:

That's a hard question.

Stan Sorensen:

I'll give you two or three, if you want two or three, it's okay. Yeah, okay.

Ben Pack:

Yeah, I'd love to hear what yours are. Tell me what yours are.

Stan Sorensen:

So I actually have books that I think everybody should read every three, four years.

Ben Pack:

Couple years, yeah.

Stan Sorensen:

Yep, and two that are on that list are, Dune.

Ben Pack:

I love that original movie-

Stan Sorensen:

everybody-

Ben Pack:

but not with a remake.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, coming out with a remake. Well, I'm going to declare a bank holiday so we can all go see it because it's going to be awesome. Yeah, I'd love Dennis Villeneuve as a director. Anyway, yeah, that's way off on a tangent, but yeah, but everybody should read Dune. Just the first one, don't have to read all the rest of them because it really is the Seminole science fiction book.

Stan Sorensen:

The other one, I believe everyone should read the Phantom Tollbooth and should reread that book about every five years-

Ben Pack:

Interesting.

Stan Sorensen:

... because it's just a good... First of all, for me, it takes me back to when I was a kid, and first read it in fifth grade. My boys have both read it a couple of times each, but it's just a fun reminder of sort of simplicity, but how to think about things a little bit differently.

Ben Pack:

So when I was younger in junior high, what got me started on the little magic and garbage stuff that I really do enjoy it. Terry Brooks, Sword of Shannara.

Stan Sorensen:

Shannara, yep.

Ben Pack:

That whole series I've probably read that series at least three times, and it's great, it's fun, but again, I like a little bit of everything. So I never want to get burned out on one particular thing.

Ben Pack:

So financial books, I would have to tell you, *The Millionaire Mind*'s a fantastic... it's the follow-up to *The Millionaire Next Door*, which I love, but that's... it can be a little boring, but if people really want to understand who the wealthy are, it's not the guy driving the Rolls-Royce, it's your neighbor who's been sacking money away. They may not make a half a million dollars a year, they may make 70,000 a year, but they have a really strong defense and are very careful on their offense on how they spend their money. So I love getting into the psyche of who those people are, what made them wealthy, what made them happy. It's not just about money, but quality of life, it's that mindset. So that would be my financial book recommendation.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, no, yeah, yeah, that's a good one, and knowing things like that as well also, I think helps as we work with our clients. It helps with the conversations we can have and things like that. Okay, so going from things that can improve the way that we think about things or change how we think about things, let's go to something that probably really doesn't improve anything except our overall enjoyment of sitting on the couch. What have you been bingeing lately on your provider of choice?

Ben Pack:

It's so funny, my wife every year... you know when you make new year's resolutions?

Stan Sorensen:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Ben Pack:

Her new year's resolution every year is to find something to watch. We cut cable, I don't know, it's probably been seven or eight years since we cut cable. I used to love the cooking shows on Food Network, but since we cut cable, it's mostly books.

Stan Sorensen:

Sure.

Ben Pack:

So, but I am a grandpa, I have a granddaughter that she just can't do anything wrong. She... I crave her attention. You know what I mean? She's at that point where she will turn away, but I, I love that, and I have two more on the way, so-

Stan Sorensen:

I didn't know, congratulations. I didn't know you had two more on the way.

Ben Pack:

I do.

Stan Sorensen:
That's awesome.

Ben Pack:
Yeah, both of my daughters are expecting and I'm super excited about that. So I've been getting my feel of Disney movies. So if I said I was binging, anything, Moana. Got to love Moana.

Stan Sorensen:
The animated or the live action?

Ben Pack:
The animated, yeah, the animated. Yeah, Maui is just, he's hilarious. So, but my daughter just loves it, loves the music, any of the musical ones. Frost, not frost.

Stan Sorensen:
Frozen.

Ben Pack:
Frozen, thank you.

Stan Sorensen:
Frozen, we can actually lip sync that if we want, the Let It Go. For the-

Ben Pack:
Yeah, poor son-in-law, he comes to our house and he just has to go in the other room because it gets turned on, and anyway, yeah, he's burned out of the music. So, but as far as binging it's Disney movies.

Stan Sorensen:
Disney, yeah, yeah. Nothing wrong with that at all. By the way, speaking of Frozen, if you ever just need pure entertainment value, just go out to YouTube and type lip sync Frozen and see all of the different organizations, like the Marines in their barracks.

Ben Pack:
Oh, really?

Stan Sorensen:
The college football team on their bus, the swim team on their bus, I mean-

Ben Pack:
Oh, that's funny.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, tons of those. That and Katy Perry Fireworks, everybody did that one for a while too, but the Frozen one is even better, especially when the Marines to it. All right. So yeah, so good binges, Disney?

Ben Pack:

Yeah.

Stan Sorensen:

Your Disney Plus subscription is getting well used.

Ben Pack:

Well used, for sure.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, good, yeah, as it should be. Remember, you can add ESPN Plus to that too, so you can get your sports fix. Just to, yeah. Not paid by Disney. It's not a paid endorsement. So I know we're sort of hopefully getting closer to the tail end of some pandemic stuff and it's going to become to the point we're not going to talk about it anymore, but I am going to ask whether you picked up any new hobbies or interests during the pandemic.

Ben Pack:

During the pandemic. So I would say hot tubbing.

Stan Sorensen:

That's a good one. I can, yeah, I'll go with that.

Ben Pack:

Right before the pandemic we bought a hot tub, the first one ever. My family during the pandemic, we lived in that hot tub. We would just go out and we would chat for hours, and music and everything. My family, anything water my family does, whether it's surfing, river rafting, it's all about water so the hot tub was the natural next step. But it's not much of a hobby, but the conversations we have and my little granddaughter, she's a fish. She just, she... If I even go to check chemicals, she's like tearing her clothes off, getting ready to jump in. She just loves it. So I would say that would be my hobby.

Stan Sorensen:

That's a good, yeah, that's a good one. That's a good one. Awesome, all right. So before we wrap, any parting thoughts, anything else you'd like to share with the folks at home?

Ben Pack:

I will tell you, I'm very thankful that we live in Utah. What a great place, even though we're dealing with smoke and thank goodness we have some rain today, but I feel very, very fortunate that we live, where we live, we have the four seasons that we have. I can see why everybody is moving to Utah. We have a very well-educated group of people that live here, people that are driven, people that are ambitious. I think that attracts a lot of eyes from across the country, so I'm very thankful to be here. The natural beauty here is awesome. I love the people I work with, I'm so glad I came over two years ago. Altabank, as things progress, there is so much opportunity ahead for all of our customers.

Stan Sorensen:

Agreed, yeah.

Ben Pack:

Our abilities are just expanding. So my parting thought is, I'm just glad to be part of the ride, so.

Stan Sorensen:

And it is a ride.

Ben Pack:

It is a ride, and it's a good ride. So I'm a pretty lucky guy.

Stan Sorensen:

All right, so that's going to do it for us. Ben, thank you again for coming in to talk to us today. It's always great, appreciate it.

Ben Pack:

Well, thank you. It's been my pleasure today, it's been fun.

Stan Sorensen:

Yeah, I think we shared a lot of really great information about the market, about mortgages and home loans, rates, et cetera. Hopefully that's going to be helpful to a lot of people out there listening. To everybody who is listening, I want to thank you for tuning in to Altabanking, and until next time, please be sure to subscribe to the show on Apple Podcasts, on Spotify, on Stitcher, Pandora or Google Podcast. We'll talk to you again, next time.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:19:57]