

SOUND OFF *Patty McManus*

## What are options when falling behind on mortgage payments?



Everyone is aware of the influx of distressed and foreclosed properties over the past few years. What everyone does not know is that there are options for homeowners who have fallen behind on their mortgage payments or are facing foreclosure.

The first thing a homeowner should do is contact an experienced real estate agent in their area to assess the current market value of the property. The agent

will then be able to refer the homeowner to an attorney for a consultation; one who specifically handles real estate transactions of this type.

There are many options available to avoid the undesirable results of a foreclosure. Foreclosure is destructive to your credit, let alone the monetary consequence.

Some of the other options include a short sale (when the home is sold for less than the amount

owed on the mortgage), a loan modification (if the homeowner wishes to attempt to retain their home), a deed in lieu of foreclosure (the homeowner surrenders the title voluntarily to the lender) or bankruptcy. All of those options have a far less negative impact on the homeowner's credit thereby allowing the person to move on with their life and potentially purchase another property in the near future. The professionals that home-

owners choose to work with regarding this issue will greatly influence the outcome. There is no substitute for good advice, and no homeowner should ever feel backed in to a corner because there are options available to them — they just may not know about them. Education is key.

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