

APRIL 2013

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®



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REALTOR®

NATIONWIDE OPEN HOUSE W E E K E N D

More April Happenings...

The ABC's of Zoning

License Renewal

SCCP: Affordable Housing

Notary Public Class & Exam

Key & Tour Bills - Due April 30

Free MLS Training!

There's Power in Numbers!

*Join the nation's largest open house campaign
Saturday and Sunday April 20 & 21!*

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

REALTOR®

THE VOICE FOR REAL ESTATE IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

REALTOR® is the official monthly newsletter of the Santa Cruz County Association of REALTORS® provided as a member service to inform, educate and update REALTOR® and Affiliate members on local, state and national news, as well as the Association's calendar of events.

Santa Cruz County Association of REALTORS®
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"We can save a bundle on property taxes if we move to Cyberspace and live at our web address."

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

REALTOR®

THE VOICE FOR REAL ESTATE IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Message From The President

John Hickey
2013 SCCAR President
Monterey Bay Properties
831-476-9661 |
johnhickey@montereybayprop.com



April is proving to be a busy time once again. The spring selling season has gotten off to an early and strong start. The same is true with the Association of REALTORS®. As we turn the corner into spring here are a few events to look forward to in April.

The National Association of REALTORS® will have their 3rd annual Nationwide Open House Weekend this year on Saturday and Sunday, April 20th -21st. SCCAR has teamed up with NAR and Associations across the country for this event. Look for opportunities for special promotions and signage available through the Santa Cruz County Association of REALTORS® at www.mysccar.org/noh. This event has been well received and attended by the public over the last couple years.

In April look for the updated forms release from the California Association of REALTORS® via ZipForms®. There are a substantial number of form changes including changes to both the residential listing agreement (RLA) and the residential purchase agreement (RPACA). Log on to www.car.org for a look at the changes and don't forget to update your ZipForms® library in April.

Locally, the Santa Cruz County Association of REALTORS® has a full calendar of classes and events. The 1st annual [Affiliate Appreciation Luncheon](#) will be held on Wednesday, April 3rd from

11 am – 2 pm and will be the venue for the 2013 Housing Market Update presented by Sara Sutachan, C.A.R. Senior Research Analyst. It will be a great way to stay informed about real estate housing trends and give our affiliates some well deserved recognition.

Our monthly networking social 'Thirsty Thursday' will meet at the Seabright Brewery on April 18th from 4-6 pm. A new class 'The ABC's of Zoning and Entitlement Law' is scheduled for April 17th from 10 am – 12 pm and the fourth class in our SCCP (Santa Cruz County Pro) Series on Affordable Housing will be held on April 24th. For more information about these and other events, please visit www.mysccar.org.

As we all run around putting deals together and closing escrows this month, please don't forget about the ongoing support and resources that are always there for you at your Association of REALTORS®.

Make a Difference at YOUR Association!

SCCAR is now accepting applications to serve on the 2014 Board of Directors.

Now is your opportunity to be an integral part of the decision making process for the Santa Cruz County Association of REALTORS® by serving on it's Board of Directors.

Interested REALTOR® members of SCCAR are encouraged to fill out and submit an [application](#) no later than Monday, April 1, 2013.

If you have questions, please call the Association Office at 831.464.2000 or email kathy@mysccar.org



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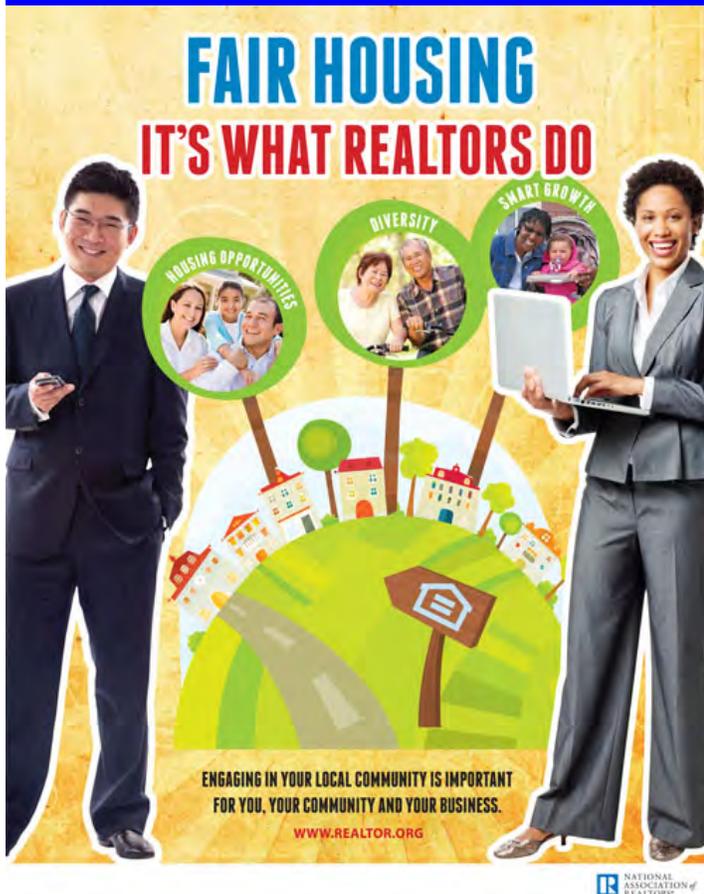
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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER



APRIL IS FAIR HOUSING MONTH

This year marks the 44th anniversary of the 1968 landmark Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or handicap.

Each year REALTORS® recognize the significance of this event and reconfirm our commitment to upholding fair housing law as well as our commitment to offering equal professional service to all in their search for real property.

Show your support by displaying the Fair Housing Focus [Poster](#) in your office or the REALTOR Fair Housing [Declaration](#)

Visit <http://www.realtor.org/programs/fair-housing-program> for more program information, videos and a new mobile app.

You may also learn about the history of fair housing at http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/aboutfheo/history.

REALTOR® Fair Housing Declaration

I agree to:

- + Provide equal professional service without regard to the race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin or sexual orientation of any prospective client, customer, or of the residents of any community.
- + Keep informed about fair housing law and practices, improving my clients' and customers' opportunities and my business.
- + Develop advertising that indicates that everyone is welcome and no one is excluded; expanding my client's and customer's opportunities to see, buy, or lease property.
- + Inform my clients and customers about their rights and responsibilities under the fair housing laws by providing brochures and other information.
- + Document my efforts to provide professional service, which will assist me in becoming a more responsive and successful REALTOR®.
- + Refuse to tolerate non-compliance.
- + Learn about those who are different from me, and celebrate those differences.
- + Take a positive approach to fair housing practices and aspire to follow the spirit as well as the letter of the law.
- + Develop and implement fair housing practices for my firm to carry out the spirit of this declaration.



HOA Cannot Recover Attorneys' Fees Even When A Homeowner's Lawsuit Is Found to Be Frivolous

Teresa V. Rein
Bosso Williams, APC

*Real Estate
Legal
Matters*

The case of *That v. Alders Maintenance Corporation* (2012) 206 Cal.App.4th 1419, is an example where the Davis-Stirling Common Interest Development Act may have gone too far in protecting the interests of homeowners. In this case, the Court of Appeal concluded that a homeowners association cannot recover attorneys' fees, even where a homeowner's litigation was found to be "frivolous."

The Homeowner's Frivolous Actions

In the *That* case, Dinh Ton That ("Homeowner"), strongly disagreed with the results of a recall election conducted by his homeowners association ("HOA").

Representing himself, the Homeowner first brought a small claims action, then a writ of mandate, and then a long series of other superior court and appellate writs, motions and actions, asserting various (and often spurious) legal theories to support his claims.

The key issues before the Court of Appeal were:

- 1) whether an alleged violation of the HOA's election procedures resulted in a violation of California's Unfair Competition Law ("UCL") (Business and Professions Code Sections 17200 et seq.), and
- 2) whether the trial court's decision to grant the HOA's motion for attorneys' fees in the amount of \$15,020.50 pursuant to Civil Code Section 1363.09 (b) was proper. The trial court had found that the Homeowner's actions, including filing a complaint barred by the statute of limitations, were "frivolous."

UCL Claim

The Court of Appeal stated that the UCL codified in Business and Professions Code section 17200 prohibits any "unlawful, unfair or fraudulent business act or practice." The UCL's purpose is to protect both consumers and competitors by promoting fair competition in commercial markets for goods and services. The Court found that a homeowners association is not a business under the UCL. The Court noted that homeowners associations are not generally involved in commercial markets and that the Davis-Stirling Act adequately covers the conduct of association elections. (Civ. Code, § 1363.03 et seq.)

Attorneys' Fees

Next, the Court of Appeal considered whether the award of approximately \$15,000 in attorneys' fees to the HOA was appropriate. The statutory basis for the claim for attorneys' fees is found in Civil Code Section 1363.09 (b), which states:

"A member who prevails in a civil action to enforce his or her rights pursuant to this article shall be entitled to reasonable attorney's fees and court costs, and the court may impose a civil penalty of up to five hundred dollars (\$500) for each violation, except that each identical violation shall be subject to only one penalty if the violation affects each member of the association equally. **A prevailing association shall not recover any costs, unless the court finds the action to be frivolous, unreasonable, or without foundation.**" (Emphasis added).

In an unpublished portion of the decision, the Court of Appeals reversed the decision of the trial court relating to the award of attorneys' fees.

The Court of Appeal agreed with the trial court's conclusion that the Homeowner's decision to file the lawsuit was indeed frivolous. However, the Court of Appeal also agreed with the Homeowner that the plain language of the statute does not support an award of attorneys' fees to the HOA, "as unfair as that may seem." Civil Code Section 1363.09(d) is drafted only to allow "costs" to the HOA if a homeowner files a frivolous claim, and "costs" do not include attorneys' fees.

The Court "sympathized" with the HOA's position on this issue and suggested that the legislature should amend the statute to create an entitlement to attorneys' fees for an association if an action is "frivolous, unreasonable or without foundation."

Terry Rein is a transactional real estate attorney at Bosso Williams in Santa Cruz. This article is published for educational purposes and with the understanding that the information contained herein does not constitute legal advice.

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Nominate a Good Neighbor



ENTRY DEADLINE MAY 20

Good Neighbor nominations are accepted in the spring, with this year's deadline falling on May 20, 2013. Winners are named each October. Anyone can nominate a Good Neighbor (a colleague, co-volunteer, spouse, AE), but the nominee must be a member of the National Association of REALTORS®.

Here's what you need to know to nominate someone:

- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Rules](#)
- [Grants and Prizes](#)
- [2013 Entry Form](#)



Do you know someone who is deserving of REALTOR® Magazine's Good Neighbor Award? Or do you volunteer in your community? NAR wants to hear from you!

Good Neighbor Award Winners receive \$10,000 grants for their charities, as well as national and local publicity for their cause. Winners will also be flown to the National Association of REALTORS® annual conference where they will receive their award in front of thousands of fellow REALTORS®. Past winners all report that their charity benefitted from additional donations and volunteers as a result of the exposure.



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There's Power in Numbers! 2013 REALTOR® Nationwide Open House Weekend

Open houses open doors to buying opportunities! So what could be better than a weekend full of open houses, encouraging people to tour homes and learn more about the benefits of home ownership. That's the promise of the 3rd annual REALTOR® Nationwide Open House Weekend. Plan to be a part of the campaign, hosted by SCCAR and participating state and local REALTOR® associations on **Saturday and Sunday, April 20 - 21.**

The Nationwide Open House Weekend offers buyers a stress-free way to visit homes for sale in different neighborhoods where they might want to live. For sellers, the weekend provides a high-visibility effort to promote traffic and drive home sales.

What Can You Expect?

Plan to join this historic event by holding open houses on April 20 & 21. REALTOR® efforts will be advanced by:

- > Promotional support from SCCAR, including advertising, media relations, related outreach efforts.
- > Blue REALTOR® balloons to display at your open houses to increase their visibility (Refer to local sign ordinances [here](#) for proper usage).
- > Open House advertisements at greatly reduced rates in the Good Times and the Sentinel

Brokerages will be encouraged to:

Rally widespread interest among their agents, to increase the scope and power of the nationwide open house event.

Support agents' efforts with promotional materials, such as hand-out maps of participating open houses.

Review tips for safe and successful open houses.

Promotional materials and resources are available for REALTORS® participating in REALTOR® Nationwide Open House Weekend. Visit <http://www.mysccar.org/noh>. For more information on how to get involved, contact Andrea Harbert at the Santa Cruz County Association of REALTORS® at 831-464-2000.



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From the desk of Dale Gray

Government Affairs Director

Measure S - School Parcel Tax

“Something To Talk With Your Clients About”

Students in Soquel Union Elementary School District receive a quality education. With excellent teachers, an emphasis on core academic subjects like reading, writing, math and science and strong parent support, SUESD student test scores on statewide exams continue to climb. However, they can't rely solely on State funding through Proposition 30 to support the quality academic programs and retain highly qualified teachers our students need to continue to climb.

To maintain strong educational programs and retain highly qualified, experienced teachers, the Soquel Union School District Board of Trustees voted unanimously to place Measure S, a \$90 annual parcel tax on the all-mail May 7, 2013 ballot. All registered voters in SUESD will receive a ballot in early April—there would be no polling places in the election. Measure S is not affected by Proposition 30. Measure S does requires a 2/3 vote. All funds would benefit our neighborhood schools and could not be taken away by the State.

The proceeds of Measure S will:

- Protect academic programs in reading, writing, math and science
- Maintain advanced math and science programs for high-performing students
- Attract and retain highly qualified teachers
- Support smaller class sizes
- Keep schools clean and well-maintained
- Retain school libraries and librarians
- Maintain art and music programs
- Have an 8 year sunset provision
- Exempt seniors

Mark Your Calendars For Legislative Day 2013

Legislative Day, the annual event in which REALTORS® from all over California come to Sacramento and meet with their elected officials to discuss critical legislation that can affect REALTORS®, homeowners and private property rights, is slated for Wednesday, May 1. SCCAR members are encouraged to participate in this one-day event in Sacramento.

Once members arrive in Sacramento they will receive a special briefing from California Association of REALTORS® lobbyists and REALTOR® leadership, and receive legislative updates. Following the briefing will be a joint luncheon with the Watsonville, San Benito County, and Monterey County Associations of REALTORS® with special legislative guests.

After lunch there will be select visits with some of our legislators for our \$148 RAF contributors. There is also the C.A.R. Member and Director Forum where you will hear important real estate issues, such as private property rights, legal reforms and housing opportunity policies. Following the meetings is the annual Capitol Reception. Open only to REALTOR® Action Fund \$148 contributors, the Capitol Reception allows REALTORS® and elected officials to interact on a more personal level. Cocktails and Hors d'oeuvres are provided.

There is limited space, which will be available on a first-come first-served basis. REALTORS® who plan to attend Legislative Day should register for the event by calling SCCAR at (831) 464-2000.



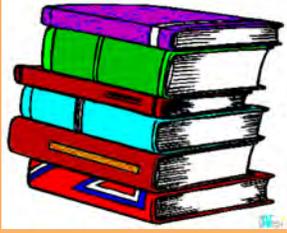
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Duane Gomer's License Renewal

Friday, April 5, 9 am - 12 pm
Cost: \$79 SCCAR Members, \$89 Nonmembers. Get the course on CD and save \$10!

All students will receive the 3 hour mandatory courses of agency, ethics, trust funds, fair housing, risk management and two 15 hour consumer protection courses by textbook or CD. You will test on the 3 hour courses at the site and will receive passwords to test online later on the additional courses. All testing in accordance with current DRE rules. To test on the five 3-hour courses this day you must receive materials by Wednesday, April 3rd.

The ABC's of Zoning and Entitlement Law

Wednesday, April 17, 10 am – 12 pm
Cost: \$7.50 SCCAR Members, \$15 Nonmembers

This seminar is designed to provide a clear overview of basic concepts of land use law so that you can provide a better service to your clients. Learn how to help clients envision projects, identify opportunities and spot Issues for buyers and sellers.

Essentials of Matrix

Friday, April 19, 10:30 am – 12 pm
Cost: Free
Instructor: MLS Listings, Inc.

This 90 minute course will provide you with the basic skill requirements for the Matrix search application. Upon completion you will have learned: application navigation, inputting search queries, map search, reporting & results options, driving directions, adding search fields, saving searches, emailing & printing.

Mastering Matrix

Friday, April 19, 1 – 2:30 pm
Cost: Free
Instructor: MLS Listings, Inc.

This course will provide you with advanced skill levels for the Matrix search application. Upon completion you will have learned: sorting results, statistics from results, CMA's from results, area statistics, customizing results, building Hotsheets, emailing results, auto emailing.

Notary Public Class & Exam

Friday, April 26, 8:15 Check in, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm with time for lunch
Cost: \$99.99
Instructor(s): Duane Gomer, Inc.

This seminar is being presented by Duane Gomer Inc. an approved Notary Education vendor with the Secretary of State. With a Notary Commission you will be able to give clients better service, promote yourself in a different way and it's simple, quick and inexpensive. The State test is given the same day as the seminar. ****Important**** [Please print this page](#) as it gives you detailed instructions on what to bring to the seminar and training materials

Matrix Customized

Monday, April 29, 10:30 am – 12 pm
Cost: Free
Instructor: MLS Listings, Inc.

In this 90-minute course, you will learn ways to customize Matrix by using custom display, exports, and multi-level sorting and how to organize by using carts, setting custom defaults, customizing your dashboard, and using map and search templates. You will also learn how to use speed bar shortcuts, as well as, finding online training options.

TWO NEW ANGEL INVESTORS

SCCAR welcomes our newest Angel Investors, Tootsie Torres and Sally Bookman, Keller Williams -The Sally Bookman Team! It is with their consistent generosity that we are able to help low income first time homebuyers in our county. Thank you Tootsie and Sally!



Unless otherwise stated, all Education & Professional Development offerings are held at the SCCAR offices at 2525 Main Street, Soquel, CA 95073

E for C

Event for Charity at the Shadowbrook



Dine at the award winning Shadowbrook Restaurant and help low income first time homebuyers in our community at the newest Event for Charity (E for C). On Tuesday, April 9th, the Shadowbrook will generously donate 30% of the evenings sales to the SCCAR Housing Foundation. These proceeds help fund our Closing Cost Grant Assistance Program whose monies help make the dream of homeownership a possibly for those in need.

If you are making a reservation for dinner please tell the Shadowbrook your group affiliate is the SCCAR Housing Foundation. You can also enjoy appetizers and cocktails in their Rockroom by letting the server know your group affiliation as well. For more information about Housing Foundation programs, visit www.sccarhf.org.



Tuesday, April 9, 2013

Shadowbrook Restaurant
1750 Wharf Rd., Capitola, CA
831-475-1511
Hours 5- 8:45 pm



Ph 831-464-2881
WWW.SCCARHF.COM



SCCAR's Extreme Games



Held at Neptune's Kingdom on March 14th, SCCAR's Second Annual Extreme Games was a total blast! Thank you to everyone who participated and made this such a fun event!



MLS UPDATE

ON-MLS: Options for Managing Listing Exposure

Robert Bailey,
Bailey Properties
2013 Chairman,
MLSListings Inc



As debate continues to heat up about off-MLS listings, MLSListings Inc is spearheading a [forum for discussion](#) about the issue, where agents and brokers can share their opinions with one another and MLS leadership, learn about regional efforts, and receive the latest data about the prevalence of off-MLS listings and its impact on the marketplace.

We have heard from many of our subscribers that seller privacy is the main concern. While the MLS provides many options for an agent to limit a listing's exposure and address the seller's concerns, our most recent survey revealed that 30 percent of respondents are unaware of these options. Some of these options are new additions or changed recently.

Broker's Requirement to List

According to MLSListings policy as determined by its cooperating brokers, all subscribing real estate brokers must list their seller client's properties on the MLS, so that other brokers can serve their buyer clients.

However, occasionally a seller may prohibit the agent from publishing the property on the MLS for personal reasons. The MLS has several options to satisfy the requirement to cooperate while still protecting the wishes of the seller, including

- Property exclusion form
- "Internet-NO" option in My Listings
- Managing the use of the lockbox
- Setting 'by appointment only' conditions

MLS Exclusion Form

The Exclusion form alerts the MLS that a signed listing agreement is in place, yet the seller does not wish to list the property on the MLS. The property then is not required to be entered into the MLS for the specified time, and it cannot be viewed or distributed in the MLS. [Forms are available](#) from the MLS or other real estate forms provider.

Distribution Options: "Internet-NO"

When an agent does list on the MLS, the listing is available to all agents who have access to the MLS system, and also is distributed to our syndication partners, subject to the permissions determined by the broker. The intention is to achieve maximum exposure to potential buyers for the listing.

In My Listings, agents can simply select "Internet No" to prevent the property from being distributed outside the MLS. In this case, only agents with MLS access can view the listing; however, if the broker publishes listings internally or on its company website, the listing still may be exposed.

Distribution Options: Broker and Agent Permissions

Agents also can select to send the listing only to some internet sites; for example, a listing may be opted out of Realtor.com, but still go to other sites. Some exposure decisions belong to brokers, and others to agents. Permissions set by the broker will vary for each office. Agents and brokers should review the exposure permissions in both the Broker Center and My Listings.

Third-Party Exposure

Agents also should be aware that excluding listings from distribution by the MLS does not necessarily prevent distribution by other parties, and must also confirm with their brokerage that the brokerage does not have its own process for sending content out to the web. This also includes services like video tour providers and suppliers of marketing material.

MLS System Options: 'Medium-exposure'

The MLS offers selection options for managing the presentation of the client's home including:

- Shown by appointment only – the agent and seller control when the property can be visited by buyers
- No lockbox present – the "electronic box" that holds the key is not required
- Publish only one photo (of street view)
- No video tours
- No open houses
- No broker tours
- Publish no address to the web, or only a partial address.

Becoming familiar with the latest listing exposure options is a great way to tailor the power of the MLS to the unique needs of your client, and set you apart from your competition.

Prices Ending in 9 Cast a Spell on Luxury Buyers

Sellers of high-priced goods such as hotel rooms tend to price their offerings with round numbers, but research indicates they should take a lesson from grocers and create prices ending in odd numbers — especially 9.

In a study of tourists, Sabine Kleinsasser of Vienna University of Economics and Udo Wagner of the University of Vienna found that even when it comes to expensive goods, consumers prefer prices ending in 9. In food retailing, **60%** of prices end in 9 and **90%** end in either 9 or 5.



MLSListings Market Indicators Report: Feb. 2013

(Monterey, San Benito, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties)

February Housing Update: Low Inventory Stifles Home Sales, Fuels Prices

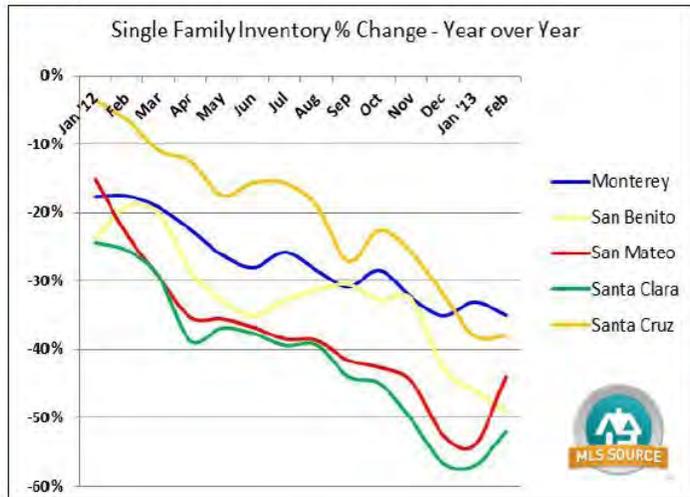
Inventory has dropped each month from the prior year for 24 consecutive months in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, 21 months in Santa Clara County, and 20 months in both San Mateo and San Benito Counties. With the busiest selling season just around the corner, there is no indication that this trend will reverse in the near future. Booming demand for homes and lack of inventory negatively affected potential sales in four of the five Home Counties in February. Sales in both Santa Clara and San Benito Counties were down 16% from the same month last year; Monterey County sales were down 8%, and San Mateo sales dropped 5%. Santa Cruz County sales were up just 2%. Median home sale prices continued to grow in all Home Counties except in Santa Cruz where it dropped 10%.

Month-over-month comparisons show better inventory gains in most of the Home Counties, as well as a solid increase in closed sales in most counties. However, historically January tends to be the slowest month for activity. The next few months of data will provide a better indication of market trends. Data for month-over-month comparisons can be found on www.mlslistings.com.

Local Jobs Snapshot – December 2012

Total Civilian Labor (thous.)		Percent Unemployment	
Dec. 2012	Nov. 2012	Dec. 2012	Nov. 2012
San Jose – Santa Clara – Sunnyvale MSA			
953.5	950.7	↑ 7.6	7.8 ↓
Santa Cruz – Watsonville MSA			
155.1	155.9	↓ 11.0	9.6 ↑
San Francisco – Oakland – Fremont MSA			
2,324.6	2,313.8	↑ 7.3	7.6 ↓
Salinas MSA			
222.6	233.3	↓ 13.1	9.5 ↑

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics as of 3/13/13



Year over Year

Single Family - February 2013 vs. February 2012															
County	Inventory			Closed Sales			Median Price			Days on Market			New Listings		
	2013	2012	% Change	2013	2012	% Change	2013	2012	% Change	2013	2012	% Change	2013	2012	% Change
Monterey	859	1320	-35%	196	212	-8%	\$305,000	\$265,450	15%	76	112	-32%	270	385	-30%
San Benito	124	242	-49%	41	49	-16%	\$330,000	\$260,000	27%	50	75	-33%	43	76	-43%
San Mateo	660	1182	-44%	260	275	-5%	\$800,000	\$589,000	36%	48	77	-38%	462	499	-7%
Santa Clara	1350	2831	-52%	582	689	-16%	\$712,250	\$540,000	32%	41	79	-48%	1003	1195	-16%
Santa Cruz	468	754	-38%	124	122	2%	\$449,000	\$499,950	-10%	69	114	-39%	182	217	-16%

Condo/Townhouse - February 2013 vs. February 2012															
(Side note: Some months, San Benito County has no sales of condos/townhomes which makes it impossible report the data fields)															
County	Inventory			Closed Sales			Median Price			Days on Market			New Listings		
	2013	2012	% Change	2013	2012	% Change	2013	2012	% Change	2013	2012	% Change	2013	2012	% Change
Monterey	93	133	-30%	28	28	0%	\$205,000	\$200,000	3%	60	54	11%	27	41	-34%
San Benito	0	11	n/a	0	2	n/a	n/a	\$227,500	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	0	3	n/a
San Mateo	168	374	-55%	75	80	-6%	\$490,000	\$375,000	31%	57	80	-29%	118	138	-14%
Santa Clara	419	1146	-63%	253	299	-15%	\$401,000	\$310,000	29%	30	72	-58%	382	404	-5%
Santa Cruz	155	238	-35%	38	29	31%	\$397,500	\$240,000	66%	91	103	-12%	47	53	-11%

Note: MLSListings data is tabulated from the 5th of the month to the 5th of the following month, primarily to account for late corrections and additions by agents; these updates often are not included in most market reports. MLSListings' Market Indicators report reflects the most current information on the day the reports are generated.





Affiliate Expert's Corner

More Than a Pretty Picture: Maximize the Impact of Your Virtual Tours



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We all know the adage “a picture is worth a thousand words.” This is especially true of internet marketing. According to the National Association of REALTORS®, 90% of home buyers search online during the buying process. A virtual tour is a powerful sales tool and, when done correctly, your virtual tour will be a great way to optimize your selling potential.

As a real estate professional, you understand the value of professionalism. When creating virtual tours, why not work with a professional in this specialized field of internet marketing?

A virtual tour should be more than just “a pretty picture.” For maximum efficiency, the tour itself is just one component of successful internet marketing, and even the most beautiful photos are useless if they are not well positioned to attract attention.

To get full value from your virtual tours, partner with a virtual tour company that makes the fullest use of the internet and today’s technology. Look for a company that specializes in Search Engine Optimization (SEO), provides optimal syndication, and offers comprehensive analytics.

What is SEO? SEO is a process of getting internet visitors

from “free” listings on search engines. Every major search engine produces search results where web pages and other content –including virtual tours—are shown and ranked based on what the engine finds most relevant. A company that specializes in SEO helps to move your listings toward the top of an internet search by using White Hat techniques (keywords and keyword analysis, backlinking, and link building) to improve link popularity

Syndication is a process where website material is made available to multiple other sites. Maximum syndication results in your listing and your brand showing up in front of millions of potential buyers. As you know, more interest can lead to a higher closing price for your seller.

Analytics are statistics and reports which demonstrate usage. For virtual tours, analytics enable you to see how many people are visiting your homes online, how they are finding your tours, and what, specifically, they are looking at.

To maximize the impact of your virtual tours and optimize your internet potential, seek out a virtual tour company that specializes in Search Engine Optimization.

WHEN ALL THE PIECES COME TOGETHER...

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Santa Cruz County Housing Statistics

February 2013: Santa Cruz County - Single Family Residential

City/Area	New Listings	Current Inventory	Closed Sales	Average DOM	Average Sales Price	Median Sales Price	% LP Rec'd	Total Sales Volume
Adult Village (199)	0	4	2	17	\$ 194,750	\$ 194,750	97.64	\$ 389,500
Amesti / Green Valley Road (54)	6	15	6	145	\$ 300,000	\$ 295,000	97.99	\$ 1,800,000
Aptos (49)	17	38	8	65	\$ 615,775	\$ 668,100	98.80	\$ 4,926,200
Ben Lomond (36)	9	15	2	79	\$ 203,500	\$ 203,500	93.20	\$ 407,000
Bonny Doon (32)	3	5	1	52	\$ 750,000	\$ 750,000	100.0	\$ 750,000
Boulder Creek (34)	19	43	7	41	\$ 290,571	\$ 300,000	101.08	\$ 2,034,000
Capitola (44)	8	14	6	28	\$ 579,083	\$ 544,250	97.04	\$ 3,474,500
College Road (55)	0	0	2	66	\$ 421,000	\$ 421,000	102.68	\$ 842,000
Corralitos (53)	6	17	2	128	\$ 587,950	\$ 587,950	98.41	\$ 1,175,900
Davenport (31)	1	2	0	0	\$ -	\$ -	.0	\$ -
East Santa Cruz (42)	9	19	7	97	\$ 719,666	\$ 609,250	97.08	\$ 4,318,000
Felton (37)	5	9	7	69	\$ 346,253	\$ 325,000	97.66	\$ 2,423,775
La Selva Beach (51)	3	24	1	31	\$ 215,000	\$ 215,000	100.0	\$ 215,000
Larkin Valley (52)	2	8	6	36	\$ 580,666	\$ 330,000	93.81	\$ 3,484,000
Live Oak (45)	11	33	10	50	\$ 718,231	\$ 515,000	96.63	\$ 7,182,310
Lompico-Zayante (38)	3	12	3	51	\$ 312,000	\$ 280,000	90.10	\$ 936,000
Los Gatos Mountains (23)	17	46	4	200	\$ 852,125	\$ 658,750	95.38	\$ 3,408,500
Rio Del Mar/Seascape (48)	18	41	7	120	\$ 850,172	\$ 889,000	98.88	\$ 5,951,210
Scotts Valley (39)	5	13	3	25	\$ 691,933	\$ 750,000	96.64	\$ 2,075,799
Seacliff (47)	5	11	0	0	\$ -	\$ -	.0	\$ -
Soquel (46)	9	22	6	85	\$ 820,791	\$ 644,500	96.68	\$ 4,924,750
Unincorporated Santa Cruz/ Scotts Valley North (41)	4	20	6	133	\$ 510,666	\$ 467,500	101.23	\$ 3,064,000
Unincorporated Santa Cruz/ Scotts Valley South (40)	6	10	6	32	\$ 694,166	\$ 640,000	101.27	\$ 4,165,000
Watsonville (56)	14	32	15	21	\$ 325,186	\$ 325,000	102.65	\$ 4,877,800
West Santa Cruz (43)	12	35	7	68	\$ 718,214	\$ 702,500	103.99	\$ 5,027,500
Summary	192	488	124	69	\$ 551,648		98.48	\$ 67,852,744

February 2013: Santa Cruz County - Common Interest Development

City/Area	New Listings	Current Inventory	Closed Sales	Average DOM	Average Sales Price	Median Sales Price	% LP Rec'd	Total Sales Volume
Amesti / Green Valley Road (54)	1	1	0	0	\$ -	\$ -	.0	\$ -
Aptos (49)	4	6	8	37	\$ 462,107	\$ 464,430	98.50	\$ 3,696,861
Boulder Creek (34)	1	1	1	71	\$ 173,200	\$ 173,200	99.26	\$ 173,200
Capitola (44)	2	14	6	112	\$ 336,333	\$ 336,500	100.15	\$ 2,018,000
East Santa Cruz (42)	1	4	4	78	\$ 425,250	\$ 435,500	99.60	\$ 1,701,000
La Selva Beach (51)	5	22	2	156	\$ 715,500	\$ 715,500	89.55	\$ 1,431,000
Live Oak (45)	5	16	2	40	\$ 417,500	\$ 417,500	101.33	\$ 835,000
Rio Del Mar/Seascape (48)	10	27	5	192	\$ 476,300	\$ 410,000	99.77	\$ 2,381,500
Scotts Valley (39)	6	9	2	35	\$ 325,000	\$ 325,000	95.03	\$ 650,000
Seacliff (47)	0	20	1	40	\$ 507,500	\$ 507,500	94.86	\$ 507,500
Soquel (46)	3	4	1	353	\$ 389,500	\$ 389,500	97.62	\$ 389,500
Watsonville (56)	2	11	3	44	\$ 216,666	\$ 200,000	99.40	\$ 650,000
West Santa Cruz (43)	7	20	3	56	\$ 245,333	\$ 241,000	98.68	\$ 736,000
Summary	47	155	38	91	\$ 399,198		98.01	\$ 15,169,561

Data provided by MLS Listings, Inc.



Dennis Spencer
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Affiliate News



The Home Inspectors Guide to Smooth Transactions

Spring is here! Spring is here! Flowers are blooming, the days are longer, kids are out on Spring Break, and the busiest time of year for REALTORS® and Home Inspectors is right around the corner. As we all know the Santa Cruz housing market has really heated up. Gone are the days of houses sitting on the market for six months with inventory exceeding demand. Now listings are moving, and moving fast!

To keep those transactions moving forward to a quick and successful close, I'd like to offer some advice from the perspective of a busy Home Inspector. Following is a list of items and tasks a home seller can address prior to the physical and pest inspections that can result in a smoother transaction and reports with fewer findings. The list is intended to be easy to complete, and is based simply on my observations over hundreds of home inspections. They follow in no particular order of importance.

Provide Access: How many times have you had to reschedule and incur additional expenses because the inspector could not gain access to the attic, crawl space, or other systems of the home? Suggest to your client that they remove any obstacles or stored items that prohibit access prior to the inspection.

Verify Smoke Detectors and Carbon Monoxide Detectors: This should be done prior to the appraisal. Many appraisers charge for a return visit which costs both time and money.

Verify Compliance of Low-Flow Toilets and Shower Heads: The toilets in Santa Cruz County are required to use 1.6 gallons of water or less per flush, and shower heads are required to use 2.5

gallons per minute or less. The seller is often responsible for meeting this requirement.

Trim Vegetation Away from the Structure and Clean the Gutters: This relates to access as well. If we can't see the walls or gutter interiors we can't evaluate them and we must state these areas may have conditions that could not be seen.

Change the Furnace Filters: Dirty heating system filters give the impression that the system has been neglected. Installing new filters and cleaning any debris from the furnace cabinet provides a positive impression on the inspector and potential buyers.

Have the Fireplace Cleaned and Inspected: The fireplace flue cannot be fully evaluated without being cleaned first. Cracks in the flue cannot be seen when covered in soot or ash. Most home inspectors recommend further evaluation and cleaning of fireplaces simply because of this fact.

Verify that all Utilities are on: I know this seems self-evident; however, it happens more often than one would expect. If the gas, electricity, or water isn't on, multiple items or systems cannot be evaluated. Perhaps letting your client know the utilities should remain on and in their name until the close of escrow would help.

That's my very short list and I hope you find it helpful. Spring is here, summer is coming, and homes will be listed, inspected, and sold. Having your sellers be pro-active in the inspection process can definitely help the transaction to proceed smoothly. Good luck and happy selling!



Affiliate Spotlight

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Tamar has a diverse professional background spanning over 20 years. Her experience in Title and Escrow, Business Development, Human Resources, and Recruiting lend to her strong work ethic and passion for impeccable customer service.

She is a consummate professional with a great love of family, the outdoors and health and wellness. Tamar prides herself on working hard to earn your business not just asking for it.

SCCAR-April 2013

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3 Affiliate Appreciation Luncheon & Housing Market Update 11 am - 2 pm Housing Foundation 2:30 pm	4 Tour Marketing Meeting - 8:30 am Taco Truck at Tour!	5 Duane Gomer's License Renewal 9 am - 12pm LGR Committee 8:30 am	6
7	8 Budget & Finance 8:30 am Events & Community Relations 11 am	9 Events for Charity Shadowbrook 5 - 8:45 pm	10	11 Tour Marketing Meeting - 8:30 am	12 Board of Directors 8:30 am	13
14	15	16	17 The ABC's of Zoning 10 am - 12pm	18 Tour Marketing Meeting - 8:30 am Thirsty Thursday at Seabright Brewery 4 - 6 pm	19 Matrix Essentials 10:30 am - 12pm Mastering Matrix 1 - 2:30 pm	20 Nationwide Open House Weekend 
21 Nationwide Open House Weekend 	22	23	24 Budget & Finance 8:30 am SCCP: Affordable Housing 9 am - 12 pm	25 Tour Marketing Meeting - 8:30 am	26 Notary Class and Public Exam 8:15 am - 4:30 pm	27
28 Matrix Customized 10:30 am - 12 pm	29	30				

Break Through the Clutter : Come Out with a Bang

How do most presenters open their presentations? Usually they say something like, "Thank you for having me here. It is so great to be among such honored guests. This is a great day for me." At that point the audience thinks, "Who cares?" What we have to understand about online and offline communicating is that the first 30 seconds is critical to our success. Within the first 30 seconds of a speech, your audience realizes whether or not they want to hear more.

In social media circles, you actually have less time because your audience members have more choices available at their fingertips. Within the first few sentences of text or the first few seconds of your video, your prospects will decide whether or not they want more. The key to your success is to come out with a bang.

Here are some ways you can come out with a bang using social media:

- With blogs your bang is often your provocative title for the post. Your titles should be like the headline in a newspaper that lures your readers into your first line of text. This is why questions make great titles. Your readers will want to know the answer.

- With videos and audio clips, immediately jump into a story. Once people get mentally into a story, it is in their DNA to stick around to see how it ends. Most marketers take way too long to begin their story. That is a costly mistake. You come out with a bang when you tell your story from your very first words.

The bottom line in social media is all about building the confidence others place in you.

When people get to know, like, and trust you, you automatically cut through the clutter of information they receive and stand out as someone they want to follow. Bringing old, outdated marketing techniques into the new social media world is a recipe for disaster. Instead, join the conversation that is already taking place, and add value to it.

Social media is the wave of the present and the future, so do more than dip your toes in it. Jump in fully and immerse yourself. When you emerge as the go-to person in your field of expertise, you can enjoy the lucrative business that is sure to come.

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