

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Q1

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 07 Issue 3 Wednesday, April 10, 2013

The Real Estate First Quarter in Review ...read on page E8

Indoor and Outdoor Entertaining Spaces Showcased at Miramonte Tour

By Cathy Tyson

With six unique kitchens and new this year - gardens - on the tour, the April 18 "Heart of the Home" fundraiser tour highlights a range of designs to enjoy and inspire - all for a good cause. Funds raised will go to the Miramonte Parent Club that supports many academic endeavors for all students. "Our goal is to raise money for core programs that have been the victims of state budget cuts," said co-chair Jennifer Lavis.

Orinda's generally mild weather lends itself to this year's focus on indoor and outdoor entertaining spaces. From contemporary to French country to traditional, these kitchens seamlessly blend form and function to create more than just ground zero for nourishment, but personify homeowners' intentions and vision.

Lindy and Gary Sitzmann are empty nesters who were looking for a low maintenance place to enjoy when they weren't travelling. Lindy had a vision of exactly what she wanted and had contractor McKenzie Gray bring the welcoming French-country inspired space to life. They completely gutted the kitchen, enlarged the deck and converted the three petite bedrooms into two more generous bedrooms. Aiming for a



The Sitzmanns' cozy patio area with fireplace and heat lamps.

Photos provided

comfortable open space, they tore down the wall that separated the kitchen and family room, and raised the ceiling. Enchanting Planting designed the inviting enclosed patio; two heat lamps and a fireplace keep fog and wind at bay. Another deck

was expanded with wind blocking and built-in heaters over the outdoor dining table. While they love the view from their Orinda Woods home and hardly notice freeway noise, sometimes their guests do; so they've installed two water features

on either side to help camouflage the sound.

The Legallets' very generous pocket doors, by Quantum Windows and Doors, are a key element that invites the outdoors in.

...continued on page E4



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	10	\$660,000	\$2,480,000
MORAGA	8	\$375,000	\$1,250,000
ORINDA	18	\$675,000	\$1,625,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

701 Glenside Circle, \$1,095,500, 3 Bdrms, 1990 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 3-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,085,000, 06-13-08

4145 Hidden Valley Road, \$660,000, 3 Bdrms, 1572 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 3-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$512,000, 07-02-02

11 Leslyn Lane, \$2,480,000, 4 Bdrms, 4215 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 3-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$2,175,000, 05-10-05

324 Lowell Lane #E, \$1,425,000, 4 Bdrms, 2570 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 3-1-13;

Previous Sale: \$64,500, 12-22-71

821 Mariposa Road, \$1,049,000, 3 Bdrms, 2408 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 3-7-13;

Previous Sale: \$340,000, 12-03-98

3135 Maryola Court, \$1,160,000, 4 Bdrms, 1759 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 3-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$698,500, 02-12-04

3745 Meadow Lane, \$2,094,000, 4 Bdrms, 3582 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 2-28-13;

Previous Sale: \$155,000, 12-02-77

1111 Sierra Vista Way, \$1,410,000, 5 Bdrms, 4041 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 3-1-13

3333 Victoria Avenue, \$1,065,000, 3 Bdrms, 1565 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 3-6-13;

Previous Sale: \$945,000, 06-23-10

1021 Walnut Drive, \$1,113,000, 3 Bdrms, 1535 SqFt, 1942 YrBlt, 2-28-13;

Previous Sale: \$950,000, 08-17-07

MORAGA

728 Augusta Drive, \$645,000, 2 Bdrms, 2079 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 2-28-13;

Previous Sale: \$775,000, 06-19-07

343 Calle La Mesa, \$933,000, 4 Bdrms, 2192 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 3-1-13

275 Deerfield Drive, \$1,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 2945 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 3-5-13

97 Miramonte Drive, \$375,000, 2 Bdrms, 1134 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 3-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$28,500, 01-11-77

3980 Paseo Grande, \$910,000, 4 Bdrms, 2341 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 3-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$959,000, 01-03-05

416 Tharp Drive, \$1,010,000, 4 Bdrms, 3546 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 3-6-13;

Previous Sale: \$37,500, 07-31-70

108 Warfield Drive, \$790,000, 3 Bdrms, 1756 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 3-7-13;

Previous Sale: \$136,000, 12-22-78

11 Wimpole Street, \$900,000, 4 Bdrms, 1987 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 3-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$384,500, 08-23-94

ORINDA

76 Acacia Drive, \$1,000,000, 4 Bdrms, 2220 SqFt, 2007 YrBlt, 3-5-13;

Previous Sale: \$785,000, 03-02-12

51 Berkeley Avenue, \$675,000, 3 Bdrms, 1346 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 2-28-13;

Previous Sale: \$319,000, 11-25-91

17 Cedar Lane, \$1,625,000, 4 Bdrms, 2809 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 3-1-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,300,000, 06-06-08

211 Courtney Lane, \$1,252,000, 5 Bdrms, 2538 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 3-5-13;

Previous Sale: \$689,500, 07-22-99

141 Crestview Drive, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 1183 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 3-5-13;

Previous Sale: \$646,500, 08-24-01

161 Holly Lane, \$1,201,000, 5 Bdrms, 3030 SqFt, 2007 YrBlt, 2-28-13;

Previous Sale: \$56,000, 07-15-05

16 La Cintilla, \$1,590,000, 6 Bdrms, 4415 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 3-1-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,585,000, 09-13-06

2 La Vuelta, \$1,490,000, 5 Bdrms, 2977 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 3-5-13;

Previous Sale: \$985,000, 03-15-00



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Indoor and Outdoor Entertaining Spaces

...continued from page E1



Tom and Suzanne Melohn's kitchen.

Marie Legallet credits their architect Jim Miller of Oculus Architecture and Design, for making the most of their updated, harmonious traditional rancher. The family purchased the home in 1997 and did the kitchen remodel about 10 years ago; their previous kitchen was white, but because the new kitchen is part of the great room, the family wanted to keep the feel of the overall space more of a living area, unified by natural materials like the wood floor, stone fireplace, and glowing raised wood breakfast bar.

Like many properties in the Orinda area, the back yard presented some challenges; it was not all flat, usable space. Steve Lambert of Garden Lights Landscape designed and installed stone retaining walls, a water feature and colorful plants along with plenty of patio space that effortlessly blends with the interior of

the home.

Tom and Suzanne Melohn tore their house down to the ground about four years ago and started from scratch. The original structure was a 1,400-square-foot ranch house from the 1950s. They worked with Moraga-based Bob McLaughlin of MRC Construction. Melohn describes his work as “amazing.” She had cut pictures out of design magazines as examples of what she was looking for, and McLaughlin made it happen. The family is very pleased with the fresh, traditional feel of the home. She and the tile installer took a field trip to the Walker Zanger showroom where she found a lovely serene blue/gray/green tile that is used throughout the home.

But wait, there's more: in addition to the complete house construction job, the back yard was totally raw when the property was purchased. McLaughlin

built the cabana that was originally meant to be a “man cave,” with a full kitchen and bathroom, and Alex's Garden Service designed and installed the blue stone patio and outdoor barbecue on the terraced hillside. While they are thrilled with the overall finished product, during the remodel process the family moved a total of four times, which was stressful, said Melohn.

Taking the Heart of the Home Kitchen and Garden tour will be the opposite of stressful; those looking for design ideas or garden inspiration can leisurely stroll through six unique Orinda homes. Co-chairs Lavis and Kathleen Metheny have some new ideas this year that include a pre-event cocktail party to thank homeowners who will graciously open their doors to the public and presenting sponsors, and a silent auction of sculptural works from talented Miramonte art students along with artwork from a group of Orinda painters.

...continued on page E6



The Melohns' backyard cabana with spacious patio on terraced hillside.



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Indoor and Outdoor Entertaining Spaces

...continued from page E4



Natural elements comprise Marie and Christopher Legallet's kitchen.



Another example of an outdoor entertaining space on the Heart of the Home kitchen and garden tour.

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David and Abbey Cook, Lafayette, CA - 2012



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The tour is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 18. Tickets for the tour are \$35. Tickets for the Garden Cocktail Party from 5 to 7 p.m. April 14 at the exquisite garden of Marci and Patrick Dunne are \$100 (includes two tickets to garden party and one tour ticket); space is limited. Both the tour and cocktail party tickets are available online at www.miramonteparents.com. Tour tickets can also be purchased at McDonnell's Nursery, Diablo Foods, Orinda Florist and the Lazy K House at Orchard Nursery.



Organizers want to thank presenting sponsors who came on board to support Miramonte High School through the kitchen and garden tour.

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The Real Estate Quarter in Review

By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS

The first quarter of 2013 showed continued fast-paced activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate with supply plummeting, pending sales way down, closings way up and the average sales price skyrocketing versus the same period last year.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from Jan. 1 through March 31, 55 single-family homes closed in Lafayette, up from 43 one year ago. Sale prices ranged from \$450,000 to \$3.19 million, averaging 40 days on the market compared to 41 days this time last year, and 70 days in 2011. The average sales price was \$1,283,618, up dramatically from the \$971,889 in the first quarter of 2012 and \$973,341 in 2011. One sold property listed at \$4.5 million was not reported to the Multiple Listing Service and that sale price is not reflected in these statistics.

There were 23 single-family closings in Moraga, consistent with the 21 in 1Q2012 and 22 in 1Q2011. Prices ranged from \$790,000 to nearly \$1.9 million. The average sale price was \$1,137,226, again a huge increase from the same quarter in 2012 when it was \$959,857, and from the \$823,931 in 1Q2011. Average marketing time at 34 days was less than half of last year's 72 days, and down from 85 days in 1Q2011.

In Orinda the number of single-family closings was 33 versus 24 in 1Q2012 and 35 in 1Q2011. Sale prices ranged from \$675,000 to nearly \$2.1 million with an average price of \$1,151,882. A year ago it was \$934,541. In 2011 it was \$894,857. It took an average of 28 days on the market to sell a home versus 67 in the identical quarter in 2012.

So far this year, on an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette homes have sold for \$440 per square foot, Moraga for \$424 and Orinda was at \$439. In the first quarter of 2012, Lafayette detached single-family homes sold at \$384 per square foot, Moraga homes sold for \$388 and Orinda was at \$379. In same quarter in 2011, these amounts were \$384, \$374, and \$366 respectively.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had no closings, Moraga had eight ranging from \$375,000 to \$710,000 and Orinda had one at \$850,000.

As of April 5 there were 88 homes under contract per the MLS in the three combined communities with asking prices of \$341,000 to \$3.95 million. A year ago on the same date there were 127 homes under contract with asking prices of \$149,000 to \$3.69 million. In 2011, there were 92 pending properties. It should be pointed out that there are 13 "Potential Short Sales" that are currently pending and were subject to lender approval and that number is way down from 23 one year ago. The time for short sales to be approved has shortened in many cases, but the waiting time often remains several months. Two of the pending sales are REOs (bank owned properties).

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Inventory, however, has decreased dramatically: 70 properties currently versus 115 properties on the same date in 2012. In 2011, there were 180 homes in early April and 215 in 2010.

There are “only” 31 properties on the market in Lafayette down from 61 on the market in April 2012. Asking prices in Lafayette currently range from \$755,000 to \$7.75 million. Of these, there are no distressed sales—attempted short sales or REOs – compared to 11 a year ago! In Moraga, buyers have their choice of only nine homes or condominiums listed between \$750,000 and \$3.65 million, compared to 19 a year ago and 45 two years ago. There is one short sale currently on the market in Moraga and not one bank-owned property.

In Orinda there are 30 on the market down from 35 a year ago, and 55 in April 2011. The list prices range from \$699,000 to nearly \$5 million. There are no short sales or REOs.

As is the case nearly every quarter, the most active price range is in the more affordable price ranges. At the high end, nine homes sold above \$2 million in the three communities combined. A year ago there were two and the year before only one in the comparable quarter. There are 24 currently available above this amount in Lamorinda.

Interest rates continue to be attractive and many corporations continue to relocate families both into and out of the area. The third piece of the real estate market—the bank owned property segment – is almost non-existent in Lamorinda and is also dropping in nearby communities.

Lastly, it is important to look at what homes are selling for versus their list prices. Often homes come on the market at unrealistic prices, and they do not sell, but in the first quarter of this year many homes have had multiple offers and have sold at or above the list price.

Of the 53 sales that closed in Lafayette in the first quarter of 2012, 29 sold at or above the list price. In Moraga, 13 of the 23 sales were at or above the asking price and in Orinda, 17 of the 33 sold at or above the final listing price.

This will typically happen when a house goes pending in the two weeks on the market. There are 88 currently pending sales in Lamorinda and of these, 50 went pending in 14 days or less. The actual average days on the market would be markedly lower but most agents are setting up marketing plans where they hold the home open to the public and to brokers and follow with an offer date in a week or so after exposing the property to the market—pointing to a high likelihood of a continued trend in homes selling above the asking price.

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Goodbye, Housing Slump

By Andi Peterson Brown

Dear Housing Slump of 2008 to 2012,

I must admit that it is with quite a bit of excitement that I write this parting letter to you. While I have genuinely taken to heart your lessons on sound fiscal policy, minimizing leverage, and curbing reckless real estate purchases, I must admit that as the years went by I began to feel very suffocated by you. You were constantly there, looming over me and casting murky shadows on every street and every house, even the good ones. And while I will never forget your back-to-basics lessons, I am happy to see that we are finally going our separate ways.

The 2013 Lamorinda real estate market is back in business and hotter than the bottom of this laptop right now. Q1 results are in, and we sold 122 homes this quarter, up almost 8% from 2012 YTD. Prices are up across the board, too. The median price in Lamorinda right now is \$1,035,000, up 35% from last year's \$765,000. The average price is \$1,140,000, up 24% from \$841,000. Our lack of inventory coupled with five years' worth of pent up buyer demand is creating multiple offer situations and pushing prices up.

And there you have it, Housing Slump. Parting is such sweet sorrow.



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The Home Designer Color Blind

By Brandon Neff

Nothing seems to freak out my clients more than choosing paint – color, finish, brand – you name it. It seems that for some, picking from myriad color chips and options turns a creative endeavor into a nightmare. My patent response to individuals struggling with the “paint” conundrum is, “Don’t panic – if you don’t like it, you get a do-over.” Paint is one of the least expensive ways to update any room, and is never permanent. With that said, I’m here to offer a bit of solace and help you get it right the first time. Here’s your paint primer (so to speak) – a few tricks-of-my-trade designed to guide you through one of the most gratifying elements of a room.

Color Me Mine. For many, color is subjective. Most people looking to make a change to their walls and ceilings gravitate toward either cool or warm hues – color hits us viscerally and in a very personal way. Some choose white (or a variation of beige), as a way to stay neutral and non-committal. However, it’s been my experience that deep down everyone has a passion for one color over another. But where to begin?

I often tell clients to look to their closets for inspiration – colors you wear in the world are colors you like to have around you at home. It’s no coincidence that denim jeans and the color blue are two of America’s favorites. I also like to use fabrics and rugs to help determine a wall color – a little trick is to search out the least dominant color in your pillows, bedding or area rug, and choose that as your wall color – an easy way to create continuity in your space.

Finish Line. Beyond color, choosing the right finish is essential to both the look you’re trying to achieve and for lasting results. Here are a few key things to remember: Flat Latex is best for living rooms, bedrooms and ceilings, or for anywhere you want a more matte finish. Flat emulsions offer a beautiful, “powdery” look to walls, and are the most flattering to walls with surface imperfections and cracks. However, flat paint offers only minimal protection against scuffs and scratches. Low Sheen (Eggshell) is great for rooms with higher moisture such as bathrooms and kitchens.



Deep blue walls add a warm and dramatic background in this art-filled living room.

Photos Brandon Neff Design



A rich wall color highlights both the leather chairs and mercury glass accents.

I also recommend low sheen paints for kids' rooms, family rooms and anywhere fingerprints and stains are more likely to happen because it's easier to clean. If your walls are heavily textured, or "orange peeled," I would suggest sticking to a flat finish. Semi Gloss (Enamel) is your hardest wearing – great for doors, window trims and mouldings. Enamel paints offer a durable hard shell finish that's easy to wipe clean and accentuates any interior architecture. And, don't think all trims must be bright white either – try a semi-gloss black for doors to add major drama to any room. High Gloss (Lacquer) is a proven winner for painted furniture, high gloss finishes also bring luminescence and depth to walls and ceilings. Since many layers need to be applied, and the walls need to be prepped properly, I recommend hiring a professional for this application.

Inside Job. Keep these insider tips in your back pocket when starting your next

paint project: To blur the lines of uneven walls don't be afraid to take the wall color up onto the ceiling – no one said all ceilings must be white. Wrapping the entire room in one color opens up a room and expands the space. Great for darker colors! Take a cue from the sky and add a touch of light blue or gray to your white ceiling paint – I figure if it works in nature it'll work in the home, as well. Looks especially sharp when combined with bright white crown moulding. For a dreamy, flattering light in a dining room choose a metallic paint for the ceiling. New colors in gold, silver and platinum are adding a candlelit look to rooms, and bathe you and your guests in a warm, romantic glow.

Brandon Neff is a Bay Area based Interior Designer. He can be reached at BrandonNeffDesign.com or at brandonneffdesign@yahoo.com.



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So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by a Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping to make your yard a summer STAYCATION.

Advance Tree Service

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Lamorinda's Leading Independent Real Estate Firm.



55 Oak Road
Build your dream home on this gorgeous oak studded lot with views of the hills. Terrific neighborhood of impressive homes close to town. Utilities/sewer at street.

Offered at \$219,000



38 Oak Ridge Lane
Large view lot just off of Tahos Rd. Large flat building pad with utilities on site. A great opportunity to do something special on a large private lot.

Offered at \$375,000



40 Dos Osos
Incredible Orinda, San Pablo Dam, Mt. Diablo views + abundance of nature surrounds this supersized parcel bordering EBMUD land. Exceptional beauty. Once in a lifetime opportunity raw land sale.

Offered at \$545,000



50 El Castillo
Dramatic contemporary nestled at end of a close-in cul de sac. Soaring ceilings, lovely views. Four bdr. incl. gorgeous master suite, large kitchen with central island & adjacent family room. Bonus detached guest apartment.

Offered at \$1,195,000



79 Rheem Blvd.
Charming 2642 sf, 3bd/2.5ba hm w/ large rms, formal LR/DR & family room, remodeled kit., fab mstr bdr. w/deluxe spa ba. Private Rim Trail setting provides beautiful landscaping, grassy yds & 250sf guest cottage w/ 1bd/1ba.

Offered at \$1,215,000



9 Las Piedras
Picturesque private estate in a park like setting. Views, level lawn and recreational pool. Classic custom home with vaulted ceilings, walls of windows, and hardwood floors.

Offered at \$1,595,000



35 Haciendas Road
Remodeled, turnkey 4bd/3ba, 2470 sq.ft. rancher on a level .24 acre lot with pool, patio & lawn. Gourmet kitchen with center granite island, HW floors, cathedral ceilings & more! Entertainers dream home.

Offered at \$2,150,000



201 Glorietta Blvd.
First time on market in 43 years! Stunning 4400 sq ft Spanish hacienda beautifully updated w/handmade tile roof, hdwd flrs, central courtyard. Fabulous granite & stainless kitchen. Gorgeous 1 ac w/sweeping lawns, terrace, pool.

Offered at \$2,195,000



65 La Espiral
Updated 4bd/4ba with beautiful custom features & amenities. Very well maintained. Majestic setting, lovely gardens, new pool + views/privacy, fully fenced. Tuscany ambience, European flair.

Offered at \$2,195,000



68 Singingwood Lane
Orinda Downs! Exquisite 6bd/5.5ba Architect's Home, cul-de-sac, over 5,000 sf, 1.7 acres, soaring ceilings, views, level lawn/patio, lush landscape. First time on market in 21 years.

Offered at \$2,750,000



349 Tharp Drive
Remodeled, turnkey 4bd/3ba, 2470 sq.ft. rancher on a level .24 acre lot with pool, patio & lawn. Gourmet kitchen with center granite island, HW floors, cathedral ceilings & more! Entertainers dream home.

Offered at \$1,050,000



1690 Reliez Valley Road
Fab 1+ acre ridgeline property with spectacular views of Mt. Diablo etc. Paved driveway to building site with utilities and sewer at property. Includes preliminary plans for 4900+ sq ft home.

Offered at \$650,000



1042 Sunnybrook Drive
Darling 3 bd/ 2 ba cottage in quiet Happy Valley neighborhood features a welcoming front porch, formal living room, spacious dining room, & darling open kitchen. Mostly level 1/4 acre creekside lot with grassy yard & new rear patio.

Offered at \$699,000



3402 Shangri La
Newly constructed in 2013 on .42 ac level lot, this custom one-story 5br/ 3.5ba, 3382 sf traditional features a great room w/state-of-the-art kitchen; LR & DR; luxurious baths; hwd flrs, crown molding; lrg patio, lawn & outdoor kitchen.

Offered at \$1,799,000



3949 South Peardale
Gracious Colonial in Happy Valley. All exquisitely remodeled extraordinary appointments, detail. Lafayette Juniors Kitchen Tour 2009. Fabulous Kitchen, Baths. Luxurious Master Suite. Beautiful living areas. Great neighborhood.

Offered at \$2,650,000



2050 Shell Ridge Trail
Northgate Vineyard Estate w/ Gated 1.08 Acres. Grand main house, gorgeous grounds, guest/party house w/movie theatre, diner style game room + newer salt-water pool, 5-car garage.

Offered at \$2,400,000

THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATES:

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