

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 07 Issue 23 Wednesday, January 15, 2014

## Home Energy Audit Identifies Energy Inefficiencies

By Cathy Dausman

As Charles Warner famously quipped, “Everybody complains about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.” Mr. Warner, meet the Penneys.

Damian and Laurel Penney bought a 40-year-old ranch home in Moraga three years ago and have lived with its energy imperfections ever since. “We run the heater, and the house instantly cools down,” Damian Penney complained. “We want more bang for our buck.”

Tired of stashing blankets to snuggle under near living room chairs or raising the thermostat to stay comfortable (Damian Penney) only to see it lowered to minimize energy costs (Laurel Penney), the couple hired Eco Performance Builders to assess their comfort zone and establish project priorities.

The company sent Kyle Bosworth, who has two years on the job and is Building Performance Institute certified as an analyst. Bosworth set to work using a laptop, a blower door, infra-red camera and a digital measuring tape; he inspected attic and crawl spaces, hooked up a blower to run air flow tests, and measured the air cubic volume in each room. And since Bosworth teaches building analysis, he narrated his findings.

A home is a product of a dozen interconnected systems, he said; duct leakage and combustion safety are two common energy/performance failures. Unwanted heating or cooling losses always occur through the path of least resistance – for example, through single-pane windows, under-wrapped HVAC ductwork and under-insulated walls and attics. Skylights and attic knee walls sometimes lack insulation, which works best when it is sealed tightly to the surface.



Kyle Bosworth of Eco Performance Builders inspects the Penneys' home.

Photo Cathy Dausman

New construction insulation standards, expressed in “R” values, include R-6 for ducts, R-13 for walls and R-38 for ceilings. Windows are especially poorly insulated, and the Penneys knew their street-facing windows were only single pane. On the mild autumn test day the sun shone steadily through eastern and south-facing living room windows. The infra-red camera showed east facing walls heated to 88 degrees and south facing walls at 86 degrees.

“If it’s a really hot day we’ll run the air condition-



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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ing before we do infra-red testing,” Bosworth said.

HVAC returns are another item homeowners want properly sealed. The Penneys’ supply and return ducts efficiency averaged a lowly R1. “There are places where bare sheet metal shows through the ductwork,” Boswell said. Even heat registers should be properly sealed, using aluminum foil tape, not duct tape, because leaky returns present air quality issues in the house as well as energy loss.

...continued on page D4



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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	7	\$790,000	\$1,615,000
MORAGA	6	\$235,000	\$1,079,000
ORINDA	7	\$528,000	\$1,700,000

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

120 Greenbank Drive, \$1,315,000, 3 Bdrms, 3451 SqFt, 1978 YrBl, 12-6-13;

Previous Sale: \$437,500, 05-19-87

3189 Lucas Circle, \$1,350,000, 6 Bdrms, 2994 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 12-12-13;

Previous Sale: \$550,000, 04-22-99

1220 Monticello Road, \$1,244,500, 3 Bdrms, 1982 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 12-17-13

3758 Mosswood Drive, \$790,000, 2 Bdrms, 1897 SqFt, 1957 YrBl, 12-12-13;

Previous Sale: \$3,000, 02-27-78

2004 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,615,000, 5 Bdrms, 3650 SqFt, 1938 YrBl, 12-13-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,615,000, 04-26-13

3345 Rowland Drive, \$1,250,000, 3 Bdrms, 1566 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 12-12-13

3352 Walnut Lane, \$1,100,000, 6 Bdrms, 2512 SqFt, 1969 YrBl, 12-11-13;

Previous Sale: \$39,500, 06-21-71

### MORAGA

2059 Ascot Drive #108, \$235,000, 1 Bdrms, 713 SqFt, 1971 YrBl, 12-13-13;

Previous Sale: \$139,000, 03-14-11

122 Danefield Place, \$1,079,000, 5 Bdrms, 2800 SqFt, 1978 YrBl, 12-18-13

2121 Donald Drive #9, \$249,000, 2 Bdrms, 756 SqFt, 1963 YrBl, 12-10-13;

Previous Sale: \$270,000, 01-02-08

100 Natalie Drive, \$915,000, 3 Bdrms, 2256 SqFt, 1968 YrBl, 12-10-13

486 Rheem Boulevard, \$490,000, 3 Bdrms, 1322 SqFt, 1974 YrBl, 12-18-13;

Previous Sale: \$400,100, 09-12-08

22 Ross Drive, \$885,000, 3 Bdrms, 1566 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 12-5-13;

Previous Sale: \$665,000, 06-27-13

### ORINDA

138 Ardith Drive, \$1,325,000, 4 Bdrms, 2294 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 12-13-13;

Previous Sale: \$422,500, 09-18-92

392 Camino Sobrante, \$950,000, 2 Bdrms, 2391 SqFt, 1941 YrBl, 12-18-13

705 Ironbark Court, \$1,700,000, 3 Bdrms, 3858 SqFt, 1986 YrBl, 12-10-13

82 Underhill Road, \$528,000, 2 Bdrms, 1276 SqFt, 1961 YrBl, 12-6-13;

Previous Sale: \$480,000, 03-10-11

8 Via Floreado, \$897,000, 4 Bdrms, 1640 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 12-18-13;

Previous Sale: \$950,000, 08-10-07

19 Via Moraga, \$1,150,000, 4 Bdrms, 2881 SqFt, 1952 YrBl, 12-5-13;

Previous Sale: \$850,000, 09-29-00

18 Woodland Road, \$900,000, 2 Bdrms, 1281 SqFt, 1940 YrBl, 12-12-13;

Previous Sale: \$836,000, 07-17-07

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## Home Energy Audit

...continued from page D1

Bosworth blower-tested the air ducts, measured airflow and air temperatures at all the registers. He checked the furnace and hot water heater temperatures. Accessing the attic, Bosworth noted it contained 5-inch deep blown-in fiberglass insulation, far less than the 12 to 13 inches recommended, and the floor of the attic was not air sealed prior to insulating. A home needs a sealed air barrier next to its insulation barrier to be fully effective.

"If you go outside on a cold windy day in a wool sweater you will still be cold" unless you have a windbreaker, too, he said. The crawl space evaluation proved even more challenging; its sheet metal was crushed in many locations. Bosworth had his raw data in six hours; a week later the Penneys received their comprehensive (45 page) evaluation, complete with suggested upgrades.

Energy modifications were presented in a good, better, best format. The Penneys' wall batt insulation had an R-10.5 rating, which Bosworth called "mostly effective" but with some weak spots. HVAC ductwork lost 43 percent efficiency (statewide the average loss is 30 percent) due to poor R-1 insulation, and the boots (metal transition between ducts and heat vents) were asbestos wrapped. The heater and air conditioning unit was oversized at 4 tons (a 2 ton AC unit, would have been better).

Bosworth often sees this in homes he inspects. An oversized unit increases run-time cycling and decreases comfort and efficiency. Underneath the house, the crawl space was without insulation or a vapor barrier. So where to start?

"I'm glad we went through [the process]," Damian Penney said, explaining without the analysis he likely would have made changes he didn't need to do. He's convinced that installing dual pane windows is "a pretty good investment."

Initial whole-house energy upgrade estimates ranged from \$10,000 to \$25,000 in after-rebate project costs and payback would likely be measured in tens of years. EPB also refunds \$300 for its energy audit testing.

As he mulled over the reports, Penney said, "I haven't lived anywhere that long."

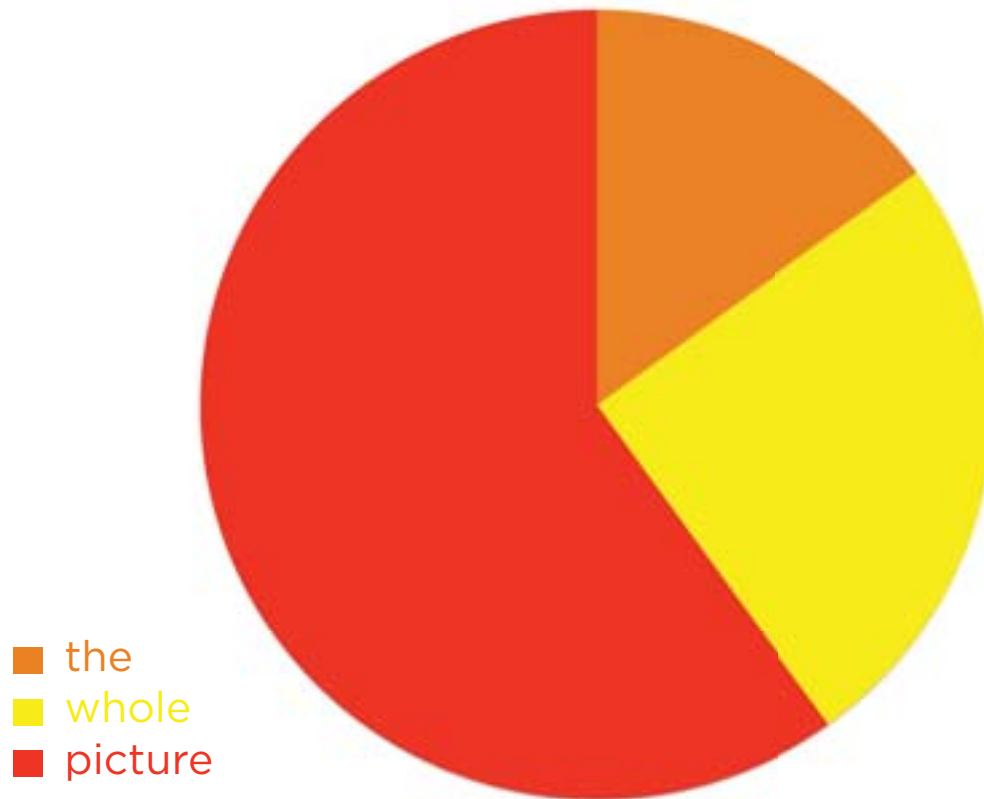
"It can take an extremely long time to get your return on investment," Bosworth noted, "but you're comfortable now... living in a home where you're not going to think about maintenance all the time."



Photo Cathy Dausman



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# The Real Estate Year in Review

By Conrad Bassett

Sales volume and the average sale price of homes increased significantly in Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda, making 2013 another interesting year for Lamorinda residential real estate. Homes stayed on the market for a limited time, similar to 2012, and prices rose as supply remained quite low throughout the year. There were also fewer short sales and REOs (bank owned properties) in Lamorinda communities. These types of properties continue to negatively influence other nearby communities on a larger scale.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported for closings Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2013, 314 single family homes closed in Lafayette versus 302 in 2012 and 245 in 2011. There were seven sales where the sale price was not reported to the MLS. For the 307 reported closings, sales prices ranged from \$407,900 to \$5.4 million and the average time on market was 31 days, about the same as the 32 day average in 2012. In 2011,

the average time on the market was 49 days. The average sales price was \$1,248,532 versus \$1,042,921 in 2012, \$1,040,014 in 2011, and \$1,097,749 in 2010. The average sale price was 102 percent of the final list price, versus 98.6 percent of the final list price in 2012. Of the seven unreported sales prices; the average list price was just under \$2.5 million, which would increase the actual average price in Lafayette somewhat. All seven of these sold in less than 90 days on the market, suggesting sales prices at or near the list price. There were 10 short sales and eight REOs among the total sales for the year in Lafayette.

In Moraga there were 136 single family closings in 2013; down a little from the 150 single family closings in 2012. There were 124 in 2011 and 102 in 2010. Prices ranged from \$470,000 to \$2.25 million. Of the 135 homes listed that showed a sales price, the average sale was \$1,147,207 versus \$991,469 in 2012, \$894,768 in

2011 and \$927,948 in 2010. The number of days on market in 2013 was 23, down from 30 in 2012, 40 in 2011 and 44 days in 2010. The average home sold for 103 percent of its last list price. Ninety-seven of the sales were sold at or above their listing price!

In Orinda the number of single-family closings was 262, up from 219 in 2012, 164 in 2011, and 179 in 2010. There were five properties where the sales price was not reported to the MLS. The reported sales ranged in price from \$260,000 to \$3.5 million with an average price of \$1,240,158 – a significant increase from 2012 when it was \$1,068,303, The average was \$1,021,751 in 2011 and \$1,060,798 in 2010. The average market time was 27 days, down from 44 days in 2012 and 50 days in 2011. The sales price was on average about \$4,000 above the final list price for the 257 reported sales. There were five short sales and seven REOs sold in Orinda in 2013. ... continued on page D9

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## Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

# Technology in the Garden

By Cynthia Brian

*“All through the long winter I dream of my garden.” – Helen Hayes*

By now most of us have made resolutions for the New Year. We pledged to become more organized, lose weight, be kinder, and enjoy life more fully. I want to add to these lofty goals by suggesting that we become enlightened, technological gardeners.

For millenniums, most of the tools of our trade were simple – trowels, shovels, spades, pruning shears, saws, wheelbarrows, and buckets. Designs were constructed with paper, pencil, string, and chalk. Modernization brought us gas and electric conveniences including lawn mowers, blowers, hedge trimmers, chain saws, nightscaping, and automatic irrigation. When we needed to learn more, we'd head to the library, buy books, read newspapers and magazines, or go to our local nursery for advice. When we had a major problem, the county farm extension became our best friend. In the last 10 years, if we were computer literate, finding information via an Internet search was just a few keystrokes away.

This year, technology is making planning and growing easier. With a download to our smart phones,

gardeners can simply access apps that will answer most questions, introduce us to new species, diagnose problems, and create the ultimate landscape.

Are you ready to experiment using technology in the garden? Begin 2014 with a tech bang by checking out any of these phone apps for your garden. Some are not quite ready for prime time, but they are a good beginning. If you are not a gardener, this short list of apps may convince you that nature rules. And to sweeten the deal, these apps are all free!

**Garden Compass:**

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/garden-compass-plant-disease/id605855033?mt=8>

This app allows you to shoot a picture of a pest or plant for submittal to a selective team of garden experts who will identify and provide specific product recommendations. This app is an easy way to solve a pesky problem.

**Garden Minder:**

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/gardenminder/id510434403?mt=8>



*If they weren't damaged by the freeze, naval oranges will be ready to pick at the end of the month.*



*Walk around a pond during the month for a dose of inspiration.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*

Want to design the perfect raised bed for edibles? This all-in-one app offers lists of vegetables from A-Z with simple directions on when and how to plant and cultivate.

**Garden Time Planner:**

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/garden-time-planner/id594225389?mt=8>

Including annual flowers in the database, this tool from Burpee will show you when to sow and when to reap your vegetables and fruit specific to your region to ensure a hearty harvest.

...continued on page D10



# The Real Estate Year in Review

... continued from page D6

There were two reported sales in Canyon in 2013. One was at \$390,000 and the other at \$725,000.

On an average price per square foot basis for reported sales in 2013, Lafayette homes sold for \$488.60 per square foot, an increase from \$431.45 in 2012. Moraga homes sold for \$455.90 per square foot, up from \$398.99 in 2012. And in Orinda it was \$489.85 in 2013, an increase from \$422.68 in 2012. In 2011, Lafayette homes sold for \$402.15 per square foot, Moraga homes for \$381.61, and \$423.17 in Orinda. In 2010, Lafayette homes sold for \$432 per square foot, Moraga homes for \$385 per square foot and Orinda was at \$408.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had 16 closings including two short sales. They had 14 closings a year ago and six closings in 2011. Prices ranged in 2013 from \$375,000 to \$750,000. Moraga had 70, up a little from 65 a year ago. Sales ranged from \$235,000 to \$899,000. This includes attached homes in Moraga Country Club. Orinda had only three sold, down from nine last year and 12 in 2011. They sold from \$850,000 to \$930,000.

It should be noted that there are also a few direct sales that do not go through the MLS and they are not reported here. These include some foreclosures that were sold at the courthouse as well as some sales between private individuals.

As of Dec. 31, there were 45 dwellings under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined, with asking prices of \$295,000 to \$3.15 million. There are eight "Potential Short Sales" that are currently pending. In each case, the anticipated closing date may be several months into the future as the sellers await approval of their particular lender or lenders. A year ago at this same time there were 17 short sales that were pending. As prices have risen over the last 12 months, more owners now have equity in their homes and have not had to go through the short-sale process.

A comparison of year-end inventory in the three communities combined versus a year ago shows 51 homes on the market versus 36 a year ago. At the end of

2011 there were 78 and on Dec. 31, 2010 there were 133 that were available. Typically the biggest inventory is in the spring and early summer, however this current number may point to another year with a combination of qualified buyers vying for a continued limited supply. There were only 24 homes on the market in Lafayette at year-end while 12 months ago there were 15. On Dec. 31, 2011 there were 34. The current asking prices range from \$550,000 to \$7.75 million.

In Moraga, buyers had a year-end selection of 11 homes and condos versus five at the end of 2012. List prices ranged between \$399,000 and \$3.5 million. In Orinda there were 16, similar to the 15 at the same time a year ago. Asking prices as of Dec. 31 ranged from \$799,000 to \$6.5 million.

As has been the recent story, the most active price ranges are the more "affordable" ones. However, 2013 showed that 40 homes sold above \$2 million in Lamorinda, up from 28 in 2012 and 17 in 2011.

Interest rates have crept up a little but are still relatively attractive to those with down payments of at least 20 percent. Corporations continue to expand and contract and also to relocate families – families who find the Lamorinda area attractive because of outstanding public schools, BART, and the close distance to San Francisco. The minimal amount of new construction helped keep supply and demand within a better balance than a lot of other neighboring communities. That will continue to change somewhat in 2014 as Orinda Grove and Wilder come further online as new construction alternatives in Orinda and condominium and townhome developments are built in Lafayette, such as the Taylor Morrison community at Pleasant Hill Road and Mt. Diablo Boulevard.

The trend in the three Lamorinda cities that began in 2011 continues today: sellers are receiving multiple offers and homes are being sold for above the list price. This, when coupled with an extremely low supply and a willingness by sellers to be realistic in their pricing, should continue to fuel a strong market.

## What to expect in 2014

By Andi Peterson Brown

The 2013 Lamorinda real estate market came in like a lion and out like a lion, with the median sales price up almost 20% as compared to 2012. As the market emerges from winter hibernation and we gear up for the 2014 spring selling season, we expect to see this momentum continue.

In addition, we can expect:

- **Buyers.** In 2013, there were buyers. Lots and lots of buyers. And believe it or not, there are still plenty of them ready to buy in 2014. The Bay Area economy is thriving, and the pool of well-capitalized buyers is growing every day.
- **Competition.** Like 2013, there is a high likelihood that buyers will find themselves in multiple offer situations. While many sellers have gotten the news that prices are up and their equity positions are improved, there still might not be enough inventory to meet the demand.
- **Interest Rates.** Interest rates are still historically low, but they are rising. Some economists are forecasting mortgage rates could rise a full percentage point before the year is over. We can expect the possibility of higher rates coming down the pike to push many buyers off the fence and into a home.
- **Quick Sales.** Sellers of properly priced and marketed homes should expect to see their homes sell quickly. Why? See the three bullet points above.

In addition, I'm happy to talk in more detail about the market if you have further questions.



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# Digging Deep

...continued from page D8

## Leaf Snap:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/leafsnap/id430649829?mt=8>

Have you ever been on a hike and found a leaf that you just had to know what it was? Leafsnap was designed by researchers from the University of Maryland, the Smithsonian, and Columbia University. Snap a photo of any leaf and the app will identify the species! This makes experts of us all.

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<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sample-submission/id669269520?mt=8>



*Yellow Narcissus*



*Potted cyclamen brighten a winter border or path.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*

Similar to the Garden Compass app, the Plant Diagnostic Sample Submission allows you to submit digital photos to a university diagnostic laboratory for identification of diseases and pests. No more need to wonder if you have spider mites or rust, this app could become a farmer's best friend.

Now that it is winter and we've put our gardens to bed, instead of just dreaming about the future, let's go into action and embrace the latest technology to help us become the best stewards of our yards as possible. Dream it! Do it! Start clicking!



*Don't miss the magnificent magnolias at the San Francisco Botanical Gardens.*



# Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

By Cynthia Brian

- **PRUNE** your roses towards the end of the month.
- **PLANT** bare-root trees, vines, and roses now.
- **VISIT** the San Francisco Botanical Garden, home to the most significant magnolia collection for conservation purposes outside of China during the annual Magnolia Bloom Jan. 15-March 31 to take advantage of docent and curator led daytime and moonlight tours plus family activities.  
<http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org>.
- **CLEAR** creeks running through your property of debris. Even though the weather has been dry, a storm could cause flooding if your storm drains are blocked.
- **JOIN** a garden club. If you live in Lafayette, I'll be speaking to the Happy Valley Garden Club on Feb. 3!
- **WALK** in nature at least once a week to restore balance to your life.

Wishing you a year filled with the gift of beauty, learning, and digging.  
Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



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## ORINDA



### 40 Dos Osos

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

**\$545,000**

## ORINDA



### 34 La Vuelta

Located on coveted street in OCC, this appx .37 ac parcel is surrounded by expensive homes & incredible opportunity to build on special location. Approved site plan w/stylish designed home comes w/purchase.

**\$569,000**

## ORINDA



### 20 Muth Drive

Beautifully updated contemporary ranch style, 4bd/2.5ba on spacious 3/4 ac lot. Hdwd flrs, slab counter kit. w/ breakfast area & formal dining rm together w/ big lawn & huge back patio w/spa are just a few of what this home has to offer.

**\$899,000**



## THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATES:

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## ORINDA



### 54 La Campana

Brilliant 1938 south facing lathe & plaster construction in heart of Country Club. 4bd/3ba with approximately 2608 sf. One of largest pools in Orinda, Trader Vics built BBQ poolside, gardens. A bit of TLC needed.

**\$1,000,000**

## ORINDA



### 1 Estates Court

Wonderful knoll location on private view .85 acre. Delightful home, circa 1939, apx. 2200 sf w/ 3bd/3ba incl. full "in-law" unit on lower level. Wood flooring, dual pane windows, modern baths. Open decks, lovely gardens, planting beds.

**\$1,025,000**

## ORINDA



### 9 Las Piedras

Picturesque private 6bd/3ba in park like setting w/panoramic views, level lawn & recreational pool. 3745 sf classic custom w/vaulted ceilings, walls of windows, hdwd flrs, den, workout rm, FR & well-appointed kitchen.

**\$1,349,000**

## ORINDA



### 1 Camino del Cielo

Sophisticated and stylish 4900+ square foot newer construction with four bedrooms plus office, three and one half baths, decks and views.

**\$1,599,000**

## MORAGA



### 137 Via Joaquin

Updated Moraga Townhome with Oversized loft, chef's kitchen, open floor plan, lots of windows, private setting. Inviting patio backs to open space. 75 Walk Score.

**\$645,000**

## MORAGA



### 127 Cypress Point Way

Light, bright MCC Plan 4, 3bd/2ba with huge patio, living rm, dining rm, kitchen/family rm combo w/ new pecan hardwood floors & carpet. Very desirable location on cul-de-sac: walk to clubhouse, swim, tennis, golf & town.

**\$749,000**

## MORAGA



### 1743 Spyglass Lane

Moraga Country Club Forest Hills model, updates throughout include new kitchen appliances, granite counters, updated bath, hardwood floors, new carpet, paint & lighting.

**\$950,000**

## EMERYVILLE



### 3960 Adeline Street #3

Commercial storefront w/open flexible retail, office or service space w/many hard-to-find features. 1000+ sf in Triangle District. Divided btwn open central office area, separate screening space or private ofc, kit. area & bath w/shower.

**\$345,000**

93 Moraga Way, Suite 103 • Orinda, CA 94563 • Phone: (925) 254-0505

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