



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Feng Shui

Preparing your home for the Year of the Metal Rat



By Michele Duffy

This is going to be a wild, powerful, and intense year for all starting Jan. 25 as it scurries in with the Male Iron Mouse (Tibetan) Male Metal Rat (Chinese).

Rat year marks a new beginning, a new start and signifies a year of profound and practical renewal. Rat is a quick study, and will usher in greater vitality and a fertile ground for growth and success. The positive Rat qualities are many, including intelligence, survival, tenacity, shrewdness, resourcefulness, adaptability, charm, passion, ambition, quick-wittedness and frugality, all forming the energetic signature of 2020.

Rat is the first of the 12 zodiac animals and rules career and life journey, and so there will be many opportunities to earn

more money and advance in our career paths. In life we are asked to face challenges and cleverly turn them into opportunities and above all, to remain positive, resilient, and hard working. Using Rat's tenacity and speed toward our work will also mean we will all be very busy, so it's also important to practice 2019 Earth Pig's lessons of greater work-life balance. We will need to stay focused as well, so getting a grip on and better managing our exposure to social media and our screen devices is essential for our concentration and serenity.

Since Rat is social and warmhearted many committed relationships will deepen and experience positive renewal. We do well to focus on one's mates and their needs, and not just on oneself. There will also be many new opportunities for successfully finding new love in 2020, for those who are unattached. Family time will factor largely in 2020 and planning holidays and trips to spend time with family is favored in family-oriented Rat year. This will be an excellent year for marriage as well as a year for many births, since Rats reproductive prowess is significant.

Health will be good if we remember to keep moving, get regular exercise, and refrain from junk food and eat a more healthy diet. Equally important is our personal care, and countering the fast pace of the year with periods of rest, rejuvenation, deepening knowledge, and spending time with family.

The energetic signature of 2020 also includes Rat's love for learning and acquiring wisdom and then also offering guidance, and so if we, collectively, ignore the wisdom of science, climate responsibility and good

financial planning, we will be out of alignment with the nature of Rat which will create problems.

In general, if we also work to avoid Rat's shortcomings and faults such as greediness, stubbornness, wordiness, timidity, eagerness for power, deviousness, and gossiping we will have a decidedly successful, new beginning 2020.

While preparing your home for the New Year, first quietly calm your mind and create a clear intention of letting go, releasing anything from 2019 that no longer serves you. Next, visualize the new beginnings details of the specific prosperity, health and harmony you wish for yourself and your family. As you prepare and clean things out, do so with the motivation of releasing old energy and fully welcoming the new energy of the New Year.

How to prepare your home for the New Year (do before Jan. 25):

1) Before you begin cleaning, do a visual space clearing of your home and walk clockwise around the house either burning sage or ringing a bell to energetically remove stale, old energy and invite positive, fortunate, successful 2020 Qi in;

2) Next clean thoroughly every single surface and room, including moving and cleaning behind furniture;

3) Donate any old clothes and shoes, and tidy the closets;

4) Discard any old foodstuffs from the pantry and restock pantry items;

5) Open all the windows and doors for at least an hour and bring fresh Qi in;

... continued on Page D4

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Lamorinda home sales recorded

City	Last reported	Lowest amount	Highest amount
LAFAYETTE	7	\$1,150,000	\$2,500,000
MORAGA	5	\$350,000	\$1,600,000
ORINDA	8	\$620,000	\$3,300,000

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

1010 Almanor Lane, \$1,150,000, 3 Bdrms, 1898 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 12-04-19,
Previous Sale: \$312,000, 08-28-98

927 Carol Lane, \$2,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 3709 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-05-19

1946 Marion Court, \$2,155,000, 5 Bdrms, 4625 SqFt, 1984 YrBlt, 12-02-19,
Previous Sale: \$1,625,000, 10-15-13

948 Reliez Station Road, \$1,170,000, 2 Bdrms, 1950 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt,
12-11-19, Previous Sale: \$1,170,000, 08-24-15

1340 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,949,000, 4 Bdrms, 2716 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt,
12-06-19, Previous Sale: \$1,650,000, 07-25-16

3198 Stanley Boulevard, \$1,540,000, 5 Bdrms, 3070 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt,
12-12-19, Previous Sale: \$570,000, 05-27-15

3703 Sundale Road, \$1,325,000, 4 Bdrms, 2364 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 12-11-19,
Previous Sale: \$176,000, 08-28-15

MORAGA

2129 Ascot Drive #7, \$557,500, 2 Bdrms, 1314 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 12-06-19,
Previous Sale: \$419,000, 06-14-16

806 Augusta Drive, \$1,175,000, 3 Bdrms, 1842 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 12-05-19,
Previous Sale: \$1,185,000, 03-21-17

244 Calle La Montana, \$1,395,000, 5 Bdrms, 2632 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 12-06-19

7 Lisa Lane, \$1,600,000, 4 Bdrms, 2973 SqFt, 1986 YrBlt, 12-06-19,
Previous Sale: \$396,500, 08-01-87

651 Moraga Road #2, \$350,000, 1 Bdrms, 669 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 12-06-19,
Previous Sale: \$290,000, 04-19-05

ORINDA

285 Camino Pablo, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 1485 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 12-04-19,
Previous Sale: \$723,000, 03-12-15

112 Camino Sobrante, \$1,240,000, 3 Bdrms, 2303 SqFt, 1924 YrBlt,
12-06-19, Previous Sale: \$410,000, 10-01-86

19 Donald Drive, \$1,738,000, 3 Bdrms, 3294 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 12-02-19,
Previous Sale: \$1,335,000, 05-02-11

259 El Toyonal, \$620,000, 2 Bdrms, 1200 SqFt, 1944 YrBlt, 12-05-19

13 Gardiner Court, \$3,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 5137 SqFt, 2002 YrBlt, 12-06-19,
Previous Sale: \$2,525,000, 03-12-04

24 Los Amigos, \$1,225,000, 4 Bdrms, 2155 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 12-02-19,
Previous Sale: \$1,100,000, 05-18-15

40 Mariposa Lane, \$2,325,000, 4 Bdrms, 4098 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 12-03-19,
Previous Sale: \$517,000, 06-01-85

31 Oak Drive, \$1,215,000, 4 Bdrms, 1604 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-04-19,
Previous Sale: \$850,000, 07-24-19



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Feng Shui

Preparing your home for the Year of the Metal Rat

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6) Prepare special foods, sweets, and foods that Rats enjoy like cheese and nuts, and also be sure to include oranges, which welcome the “Wealth Gods” since they are round and shaped like coins and fruit is symbolic of abundance;

7) On the actual day of New Year’s do not clean or you will clean away the New Year’s blessings;

8) On New Year’s Day wear new clothes and something that is red and as opulent as your budget can afford since Rat loves luxury;

9) On New Year’s Day give red envelopes to children with money inside, give gifts to loved ones and have a celebratory beginning.

Happy New Year to all!

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Michele Duffy, BTB M.F.S. is an Orinda resident who, since 1999, enjoys creating “Space as Medicine” Feng Shui one space at a time, as well as hiking in nature, cooking, and spending time with her family; Canyon Ranch Feng Shui Master, International Feng Shui Guild (IFSG) Red Ribbon Professional. To schedule a professional 2019 Feng Shui Consultation, contact Michele at (520) 647-4887 or send an email to spaceharmony@gmail.com.



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la • mōr • inda = Lafayette/Moraga/Orinda
aka: Lamorinda

Locals term referring to these cities that share many characteristics. Often thought of as one big town.

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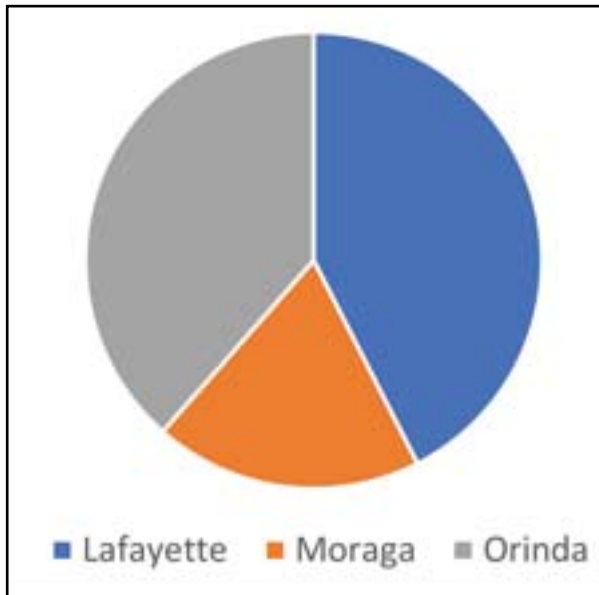
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The Real Estate Year in Review



Single family homes closed in 2019

By Conrad Bassett,

Licensed Real Estate Broker and CRP, GMS-T

This was another extremely strong year for sellers of residential real estate in Lamorinda. Sales volume was solid in 2019 with a minimal increase in supply matched by continued strong demand and average prices went up in Lafayette and Moraga, but slipped in Orinda.

Homes stayed on the market for a similar limited time as in 2018 and the majority of homes sold at or above their asking price.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported for closings Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2019, 288 single family homes closed in Lafayette versus 300 in 2018 and 322 in 2017. For the 288 reported closings, sales prices ranged from \$540,000 to \$5.85 million and the average time on market was 27 days, a slight increase from 20 days in 2018. The average sale price was \$1,789,012, up from \$1,736,519 in 2018 and \$1,625,636 in 2017. The average sales price was 101.5% of the final list price. There were two Lafayette foreclosures sold on the MLS.

In Moraga there were 129 single family closings in 2019, consistent with the 132 in 2018, which was down from the 164 in 2017. Prices ranged from \$925,000 to \$2.8 million. Only two homes closed in the MLS at less than \$1 million. The average sale price was \$1,486,327 ... nearly identical to the

\$1,485,713 in 2018. It was \$1,388,287 in 2017 and \$1,272,179 in 2016. The average number of days on market in 2019 was two, versus 16 a year ago. The average home sold for 101.0% of its last list price. There were no REO properties that closed on the MLS and no short sales.

In Orinda the number of single-family closings was 261, down a slight bit from the 280 in 2018. In 2017, it was 242 and 229 in 2016. The reported sales ranged in price from \$570,000 to \$4.85 million with an average price of \$1,629,030. This was a \$100,000 drop from 2018 when it was \$1,729,306. The average market time was 36 days, a slight increase from the 31 days a year ago. The average sales price was an average of just under 101% the final list price for the reported sales ... the same as Moraga. There was one REO (bank owned) sale in Orinda in 2019.

There were no reported sales in Canyon in the MLS in 2019.

On an average price per square foot basis for reported sales in 2018, Lafayette homes sold for \$671.90, down slightly from 2018's \$687.13, but up from 2017's \$642.46.

In 2019, Moraga homes sold for \$610.00 per square foot – an increase from the \$589.93 a year ago. The price in 2017 was \$565.37. In Orinda last year it was \$624.28, slightly down from 2018 when it was \$638.12. In 2017 it was \$609.13.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had 17 closings in 2019 in the MLS. This as a sharp drop from the 36 closings in 2018, which was an increase from 30 closings in 2017. This can be attributed to the lower number of new construction closings reported to the MLS. Resale prices ranged in 2019 from \$619,000 to \$1.425 million. In 2018 it was from \$600,000 to \$2.45 million. Moraga had 67 closed units, down from 85 in 2018 and similar to the 65 in 2017. Sales ranged from \$350,000 to \$1.12 million. This includes attached homes in Moraga Country Club. Orinda had six closings while in 2018 there were nine and eight in 2017. They sold from \$995,000 to \$1.125 million – all in Orindawoods.

There was one Below Market Rate (known as a BMR) sale in Orinda last year – for \$459,941 on Citron Knoll.

It should always be noted that there are also a few direct sales that do not go through

the MLS and they are not reported here. These may include some foreclosures that were sold at the courthouse as well as some sales between private individuals.

As of Jan. 13, there were 32 dwellings under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined, with asking prices of \$849,000 to \$2.35 million. It should be pointed out that there are no REOs and no short sales. Prices have continued to rise over the last few years and more owners now have equity in their homes and have not had to go the short-sale process or face foreclosure.

A comparison of year-end inventory in the three communities combined shows 53 homes on the market. Last January there were 47 homes on the market. Seasonally 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. The current asking prices range from \$580,000 to \$4.175 million in the three communities combined.

In Lamorinda in 2019, 137 homes sold for over \$2 million, compared to 163 homes that sold for over \$2 million in 2018 and 115 in 2017.

Interest rates have remained historically low although there has been some increase the last few months but they are still very attractive to those with down payments of at least 20%. Corporations continue to expand and contract and also to relocate families. The minimal amount of single-family new construction has helped keep supply and demand within a better balance than a lot of other neighboring communities.

The East Bay communities like Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda as well as Piedmont and several neighborhoods in Oakland and Berkeley, continue to benefit from their proximity to San Francisco where prices remain very high. Comparably speaking, the East Bay is still relatively more affordable.

The trend that began in 2011 continues today where in many situations in the three communities, the seller receives multiple offers and homes sell for above the list price. This, when coupled with a relatively low supply and a willingness by sellers to be realistic in their pricing, should continue to fuel a strong market in 2020.



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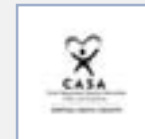
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- ✓ Make the process of buying and selling homes as smooth and easy as possible for my clients.
- ✓ Give back to our community by helping those in need.

In 2020 I am launching the **Local Giving Project** and will donate \$500 from each transaction to one of the following five local charities in honor of my clients:



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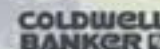
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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

2020 Garden Trends, Part 2

Dream green



Photos Cynthia Brian

Water lilies oxygenate a pond or water source.

By Cynthia Brian

“A dreamer dreams that everyone else in his dream must awaken before he can awaken.”

~ Ramana Maharshi

After my column, “The Power of RE” was published, I received numerous positive comments about how readers were implementing RE into their lives. It is gratifying to know that people read my articles, but I’ve always wondered what people do with the information they receive.

Orinda resident Kathy Boyle showed me. She wrote: “I was intrigued by your ideas in your Lamorinda Weekly article about the power of RE. As I was reading your article, I was envisioning those ideas in the context of gardening and recycling in my everyday life. But then that wonderful Cervantes quote inspired me to amplify the ideas to how I am trying to live my life, especially during these very odd times.” (“Take a deep breath of life and consider how it should be lived.” ~Miguel de Cervantes)

An elementary school resource specialist for 40 years, Kathy had learned the power and effectiveness of ideas being created as colorful bulletin boards for kids. Now in retirement, she uses doors, walls, windows, mirrors, and even the shower door as her special bulletin boards by designing colorful visual pages to inspire herself. She also crafts pocket cards to carry with her on her hikes in nature. Her innovations helped me re-imagine my dream for this second part in the 2020 Trends series. Thanks, Kathy for sharing your talents and for



Aloe is a plant that everyone needs as it heals burns and cuts.

reaching out. Your art has reinvigorated me.

Green careers are on the rise. From Boomers to Generation Z, people are finally understanding the call of the wild. From watering vacation gardens to talking to struggling plants, jobs are waiting to be filled. Horticultural therapy and plant blogging can become full-time careers.

As our climate warms and more natural disasters occur, it is time for everyone to wake up to dream green.

Growing up on our farm, to be “dirt poor” meant that we had plenty of land, but not enough money. I remember the first time I visited New York City when I was 19 and witnessed tiny bags of “dirt” being sold for \$5 and more. I telephoned home and told my Daddy that we could be rich if we packaged and sold our acres of dirt. He responded that there was a big difference between soil and dirt in our century. Healthy soil is rich in vitamins, minerals and organic matter. Dirt doesn’t have any nutritional value and isn’t valuable for growing anything. Unfortunately, today soil has been stripped of its nutrients. Erosion and deforestation have washed away one-third of the world’s topsoil. Crops are planted for yield, not for nutrition. According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, if this negative trend doesn’t retreat soon, organically rich soil will be eliminated by 2050.

We have to dream green.

By embracing regenerative gardening practices, changing methods of farming and forestry, we can mitigate carbon and reverse the damage. We need to rebuild soil with organic matter, restore degraded



Kathy Boyle’s creative poster for The Power of RE.

soil, and reduce runoff. By composting, cover cropping, and no-tilling practices we can conserve wildlife and return to native soil. People are waking up to sustainability and the importance of caring for our environment. Composting reduces household waste by 40%. By growing organically, we revitalize the soil naturally. Planting cover crops of alfalfa, clover, beans, and mustard will control weeds and add nutrients to the soil. When planted in lawns, clover adds nitrogen to the earth, eliminating the need for additional fertilizer.

What about the greening of indoor spaces? Houseplants are connecting people with nature while cleaning the indoor air. Many young people have less income and live in smaller spaces. Succulents, bromeliads, peace lilies, snake plants, aloes, and fiddleleaf fig are easy to grow and long-lasting. Taking a class, attending a seminar, or watching how-to videos on YouTube are all terrific ways to learn more about growing nature inside.

Pollution, pesticides, UV radiation, and climate change are all leading to the destruction of habitat for amphibians and wildlife. If your garden is silent, it is not healthy. We need the croaking of the frogs, singing of the birds, and the hooting of owls. They keep our gardens vital by dining on mosquitoes, beetles, snails, rats, gophers and other pests. Plant ferns near water sources to protect frogs, toads, and turtles. Submerge water lilies to oxygenate the water while providing cover.

...continued on Page D11

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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for January

BE AWARE of coyotes. I have had numerous reports of coyotes jumping backyard fences or digging under them to grab cats, chickens, rabbits and small dogs. Since the autumn fires, food is sparse and the coyotes are roaming neighborhoods.

READ this Asbestos and Natural Disasters Guide that covers the impact of wildfires on structures made with asbestos:
www.asbestos.com/asbestos/natural-disasters/
 California-specific: www.asbestos.com/states/california

DRY branches from tree trimmings for kindling.

BRIGHTEN your landscape, porch, or balcony by planting primroses which come in a variety of colors.

REPAIR broken pipes and irrigation systems while you have time.

PLANT bare root roses and fruit trees. Follow instructions on the packaging. Soak roots for a full 24 hours and cut off broken roots. Plant the bud union 3 inches above the ground.

REPOT potted plants you received as gifts of the holiday. Remove wrapping to allow for good drainage. Trim spent blossoms, water, and fertilize regularly.

REEDUCATE yourself about mulch:

www.akhomeshow.com/mulch-information-guide.php

REST. It is winter and time for a break. Sit by the fire on non-Spare the Air days. Drink hot cocoa or hot mulled wine. Dream a green dream.



The peace lily, also known as a sail plant, boasts a white flower that resembles a sail.



Red clover adds nitrogen naturally to lawns or wherever planted.



Ferns provide cover for frogs, toads, and turtles.

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

2020 Garden Trends, Part 2

Dream green

... continued from Page D8

Mushrooms are the trendy super-food of 2020. Some species of fungi eat plastic and could help with rapid plastic decomposition. Edible mushrooms can prevent or treat hundreds of conditions. Although you don't want to forage unless you are certain that a mushroom is not poisonous, if you want to grow mushrooms, inoculated logs can be purchased.

Being "woke" is a popular refrain these days. If we are going to dream green, we have to wake up to smell the roses. This is the year that we must conceive unique sustainable ideas so that we achieve a world where we can breathe, live, and enjoy.

Implement the power of RE and dream green.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



Rest and relax by the fire as Cynthia Brian does.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, raised in the vineyards of Napa County, is a New York Times best-selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are!® 501 c3.

Tune into Cynthia's StarStyle® Radio Broadcast at www.StarStyleRadio.com.

Buy a copy of her books, Growing with the Goddess Gardener and Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store.

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LAMORINDA'S LEADING INDEPENDENT REAL ESTATE FIRM

ORINDA



Pending

8 Charles Hill Circle
Large 4320 sqft 6 bed/
3.5 bath Orinda family
home with separate in-law
accommodations.
\$1,550,000

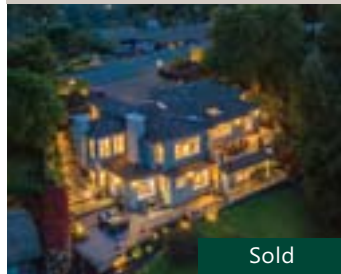
ORINDA



Sold

19 Donald Drive
Serene 3460 sqft garden oasis
with panoramic views, luxurious
interiors & numerous meditative
retreats.
\$1,795,000

ORINDA



Sold

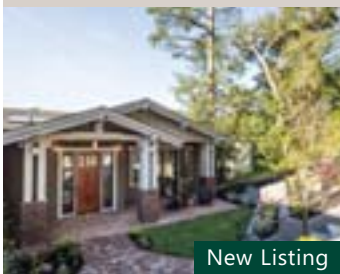
11 Crestview Court
Bold modern Mediterranean
inspired villa. Ideal for privacy &
luxury. Open floor plan &
panoramic views.
\$1,899,000

ORINDA



8 Moraga Court
Single level 5 bed/ 4 bath
home with pool & expansive
grounds. First time on market
in over 34 years!
\$1,995,000

ORINDA



New Listing

48 Oak Drive
Elegant 4 bed/ 3.5 bath two
level renovated home with
remarkable views from terrace
decks.
\$2,495,000

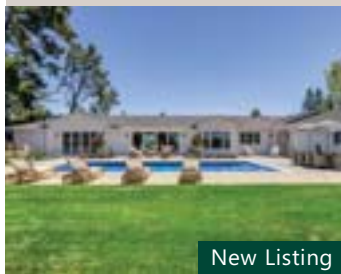
ORINDA



Sold

13 Gardiner Court
Custom craftsman home. 6 bed/
4.5 bath with spectacular views,
flat play areas, & stunning
infinity pool.
\$3,595,000

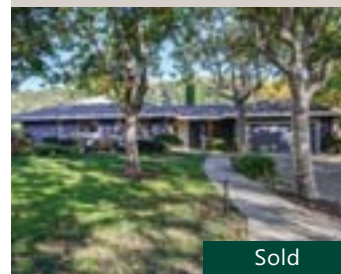
ORINDA



New Listing

57 Charles Hill Circle
A new SpringHill Homes mas-
terpiece! 5 bed/ 5 baths +2 half
baths with an open floor plan on
a .75 acre lot.
\$4,395,000

MORAGA



Sold

806 Augusta Drive
Updated single level 3 bed/ 2
bath home on Moraga Coun-
try Club golf course. Close to
schools & trails.
\$1,200,000

BERKELEY



Lease

7164 Buckingham Boulevard
Fabulous, furnished, light-filled 3
bed/ 3 bath home. Easy access to
Hwy 24, UC Berkeley, & the Caled-
cot Tunnel.
\$7,500/ mo

PLEASANT HILL



Lot

20 Whitfield Court
Great parcel at top of knoll with
views of Mt. Diablo. Ideal for
privacy. Investment opportunity!
\$1,375,000

WALNUT CREEK



Pending

1341 Leisure Lane #4
Beautifully updated, sought
after level-in Yosemite model, 2
bed/ 1.5 bath. Perfect for
privacy. Views!
\$499,000

WALNUT CREEK



Pending

1670 San Miguel
Spacious 2 bed/ 2.5 condo w/
remodeled kitchen, hardwood
floors, & oversized master w/
large closet.
\$699,000

The Village Associates:

Ashley Battersby
Patricia Battersby
Shannon Conner
Meara Dunsmore

Linda Ehrich

Emily Estrada

Joan Evans

Linda Friedman

Dexter Honens II

Erika Hood Kossut

Susan Layng

April Matthews

Hillary Murphy

Karen Murphy

John Nash

Altie Schmitt

Judy Schoenrock

Ann Sharf

Amy Rose Smith

Molly Smith

Jeff Snell

Lynda Snell

Steve Stahle

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Angie Evans Traxinger

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Village

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