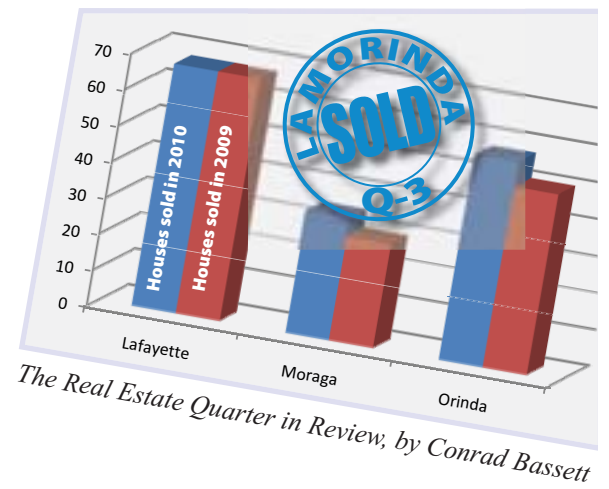


Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 04 Issue 16 Wednesday, October 13, 2010

Back Yard Bocce

By Lou Fancher



Alissa and Bill Scanlin play Bocce on their home court; their vineyard rises in the background.

Photos Andy Scheck

Italians, Romans, and even the Pope have played Bocce; and now, the sport with a touch of Italy is arriving in many Lamorinda back yards.

Constructing a home bocce court is not just a matter of pulling a few weeds, spreading a layer of sand, and inviting the neighbors over for a frame or two. Home courts involve landscaping, construction, design, and an experienced professional who understands your yard. Climate, sun and shade, drainage, maintenance, and the final touch, aesthetics, all weigh in to the equation.

This year, Alissa and Bill Scanlin embarked on a large landscaping project behind their sprawling Lafayette home. The Scanlins have had a vineyard since 1998, but wanted to expand the operation. Working with Mike McLane, of Michael's Landscape Construction, the couple decided a bocce court would be the perfect solution for the northeast corner of their yard.

"Whenever we played bocce, we always enjoyed it. Drinking a glass of wine and playing bocce: it's good entertainment," says Bill. "You can be talking about other things and still keep playing."

The sport's increasing popularity means many guests already know how to play, and even for the novices, the rules are simple, points out Alissa.

"The biggest challenge we had was making sure it didn't slide," Alissa says. "Because it's at the base of a hill." "We had drainage problems, with mud coming over the path before," Bill says, "but now, even the big rains don't cause trouble."

McLane says bocce courts are inherently simple, in terms of construction. "It's basically just building a rectangle. The most difficult part is to maintain a very fine level across the court." Most courts, without extensive grading issues like the Scanlins', can be completed within one week.

... continued on page OH4



819 Las Trampas, Lafayette

Enchanting Lafayette Retreat

Custom built **4 bedroom 4.5 bath 3500 square foot** home on a **one-acre** lot offers a fabulous floor plan including new gourmet kitchen and a beautiful park-like yard in the sought after Las Trampas trail neighborhood.

The outdoor living areas are exceptional and include gorgeous heritage oak trees, rolling green lawns, towering redwood trees and a private pool. Enjoy evening sunsets on the back yard deck and terrace or entertain friends and family in this simply stunning setting. If you like being close to town, you can't beat this wonderful location.

Just a short walk to the regional trail and easy drive to downtown Lafayette, new Lafayette Library and Learning center, BART and highway 24, **819 Las Trampas Road** offers the rare combination of city conveniences in a quiet country setting.

Offered at \$1,495,000.



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93 Moraga Way, Orinda

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

LAFAYETTE	Last reported: 7
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$959,500
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,800,000
MORAGA	Last reported: 7
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$410,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,544,500
ORINDA	Last reported: 7
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$630,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,830,000

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

- 3356 Betty Lane, \$595,500, 3 Bdrms, 1377 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 9-10-10
- 3548 Herman Drive, \$1,275,000, 3 Bdrms, 2839 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 9-3-10;
Previous Sale: \$800,000, 06-25-04
- 38 Jennifer Highlands Court, \$1,225,000, 5 Bdrms, 4163 SqFt, 1996 YrBlt, 9-8-10;
Previous Sale: \$632,000, 01-02-96
- 10 Julie Highlands Court, \$1,259,000, 4 Bdrms, 3813 SqFt, 1997 YrBlt, 9-15-10;
Previous Sale: \$630,000, 04-15-98
- 7 Lincolnshire Court, \$650,000, 3 Bdrms, 2595 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 9-8-10
- 1195 Pleasant Hill Circle, \$770,000, 4 Bdrms, 2089 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 9-16-10
- 725 St. Marys Road, \$1,800,000, 3 Bdrms, 3211 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 9-13-10

MORAGA

- 4 Benedita Place, \$410,000, 2 Bdrms, 1211 SqFt, 1984 YrBlt, 9-15-10
- 39 Buckingham Drive, \$740,000, 4 Bdrms, 1840 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 9-10-10;
Previous Sale: \$87,000, 09-15-76
- 4 Canning Court, \$450,000, 3 Bdrms, 1454 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 9-10-10;
Previous Sale: \$843,000, 04-24-06
- 1615 Del Monte Way, \$940,000, 5 Bdrms, 2592 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 9-10-10
- 7 El Camino Flores, \$715,000, 5 Bdrms, 2342 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 9-8-10
- 75 Jean Court, \$1,544,500, 4 Bdrms, 4080 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 9-3-10;
Previous Sale: \$2,000,000, 03-29-06
- 32 Maison Court, \$1,275,000, 4 Bdrms, 3163 SqFt, 2000 YrBlt, 9-15-10;
Previous Sale: \$1,272,500, 06-15-01

ORINDA

- 24 Camino Sobrante, \$1,028,000, 4 Bdrms, 2394 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 9-15-10;
Previous Sale: \$546,000, 12-08-99
- 70 Hillcrest Drive, \$630,000, 4 Bdrms, 1778 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 9-9-10
- 201 Ivy Drive, \$940,000, 4 Bdrms, 2275 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 9-3-10;
Previous Sale: \$1,150,000, 06-30-06
- 134 La Espiral, \$990,500, 4 Bdrms, 3728 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 9-8-10;
Previous Sale: \$1,355,000, 04-14-06
- 461 Moraga Way, \$712,000, 3 Bdrms, 1811 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 9-15-10;
Previous Sale: \$515,000, 08-01-01
- 20 Tarry Lane, \$1,830,000, 5 Bdrms, 3209 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 9-16-10;
Previous Sale: \$1,016,000, 12-16-03
- 311 Village View Court, \$1,550,000, 3 Bdrms, 2165 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 9-9-10;
Previous Sale: \$645,000, 02-28-97

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

ORINDA

- 618 Moraga Way, 94563, Deutsche Bank, 09-13-10, \$783,000, 2146 sf, 5 bd
- 76 Acacia Drive, 94563, First Horizon Home Loan, 09-17-10, \$745,960, 2220 sf, 4 bd

LAFAYETTE

- 3015 Bradbury Drive, 94549, ING Bank, 08-20-10, \$1,034,955, 2205 sf, 3 bd

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3798 Via Granada, Moraga



Single-Story Campolindo Home \$799,900
4 bed/2 bath with large level yard, hardwood floors & Mt. Diablo views.

32 Maison Court, Moraga



Stunning Sonsara Craftsman \$1,275,000
4 bed/3.5 bath w/designer finishes & views.

51 Sanders Ranch Rd., Moraga



Remodeled Sanders Ranch Beauty \$1,265,000
4bed/3 bath w/amazing kitchen/great room.

41 Lambeth Square, Moraga



One-of-a-Kind Rheem Valley Manor \$1,070,000
Mediterranean 3 bd/2.5 bath + bonus room & office. Pool & views.

632 Los Palos Drive, Lafayette



Vintage Burton Valley Rancher \$790,000
4 bd/3 bath + bonus room. Prime location.



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11 Bates Blvd, Orinda
Just Listed! Exquisite 4 bed, 2 bath on 1/2 acre lot. Magnificent remodel, everything new. Views, walk to town. **\$835,000**



862 Stonehaven, Walnut Creek
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3876 Quail Ridge Road, Lafayette
Happy Valley w/pano views! 4 bed, 2.5 bath on 1/2 acre lot. Quiet cul-de-sac, walls of glass, fabulous floor plan. **\$995,000**



3954 Quail Ridge Road, Lafayette
Over 5000 sf of luxurious living! High ceilings, hardwoods, 5 bed, 4.5 bath + library. 2.5 acres, level yard and views. **NOW \$1,678,000**



59 Meadow View, Orinda
BACK ON MARKET! Spectacular Rim Trail East Coast home. 3800 sq w/ 3 bed, 2 bath upstairs, 1 bed, 1.5 bath down, remodeled. **\$1,345,000**



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September 2010

Days on Market
Average Sold Price
Number of detached homes sold

	Lafayette	Moraga	Orinda
Days on Market	60	37	85
Average Sold Price	\$1,122,000	\$961,000	\$1,035,000
Number of detached homes sold	20	11	17



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A Member Of Real Living

Back Yard Bocce

... continued from page OH1



A French Drain, on the right, prevents drainage problems.

But selecting the correct materials and knowing where to save and where to splurge, has a dramatic affect on the bottom line. "Oyster shell materials are wickedly expensive," says McLane. "I used track fines—or "decomposed granite," which is the generic term—as the base material."

The fines, the sand-like material topping the Scanlin bocce court, is spread over compacted base rock. The border is a versalock block wall: a gravity wall system with no mortar. Decking material forms the inside frame, reducing the wear and tear on the bocce balls.

There's no way McLane could "construct" the court's fabulous view of Mount Diablo. But a strategically placed gazebo offers spectators an unobstructed view of both the court and the sweeping vista.

Jeanne HuangLi and Nathan Ogle moved to Orinda in August of 2009. Their home, built by architect Paul Hamilton in 1951, is nestled in a nearly-vertical hillside just north of Highway 24. On approach, it's difficult to picture anything being flat, let alone the fine-tuned leveling a bocce court requires.

Looking down from the balcony, the back yard court extends away from the house. Unlike the Scanlins, the HuangLi-Ogle family's court was already in place when they purchased the home.

"My first instinct was whether we could dig it up and make it a wading pool," HuangLi says. "But actually, it's been really popular."

The couple has discovered bocce adds to any gathering, from birthdays to the large alumni parties they host. HuangLi is the Senior Director of Development and Alumni Relations at the Haas School of Business in Berkeley. She's also the president of the University of Michigan's Bay area alumni chapter, boasting 15,000 members.

"We've hosted send-offs for new U of M students—all kinds of events. It's not

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dependent on athletic ability, so anyone can participate and be competitive," she says.

Ogle believes the court was installed in the early 1980's, when the water systems were moved from the yard to the road. "The leech field, where the sewer system went, was right there," he says, pointing to the court.

The entire family gets into the action when son Paul, 11 and daughter Luzia, 6, join in. Because the court has lights, evening play is frequent. "Paul here, he'll be a ringer," says HuangLi. "We have to say, 'Let the other guests play,' because he's so competitive. And Luzia, she likes to throw out the little white ball (also called the "jack," "boccino" or "pallina," depending on who you're playing with) to get things started."

Although they've now purchased a good supply of balls, their first balls were found amidst the overhanging oaks on the hills surrounding the court. The trees provide shade and make play more enjoyable, HuangLi says. And provide plenty of opportunities for raking, adds Ogle, with a laugh.

All four family members say having a court has added to their social life. They're planning a recruiting bocce party for a local boy scout troop and Ogle says being on the court reminds him of his beloved Virginia roots. "I've thrown a lot of rocks at a lot of critters in my day, and almost as good."

The response to the Lamorinda Weekly's call for home bocce court stories was overwhelming. Scott Bronsteen left a phone message about his experience, saying, "We've got 4 young kids and it just seems like the kind of thing where both sexes and all ages can participate. It's a good family thing, and entertaining for when you have couples over. Ours is smack under Redwood trees, so it gets more needles on it than I'd like to see on there, but otherwise, we really enjoy it."

Thank you to all who emailed or called. With the sport's booming popularity, we may even have to run a sequel.

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The Real Estate Quarter in Review

By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS

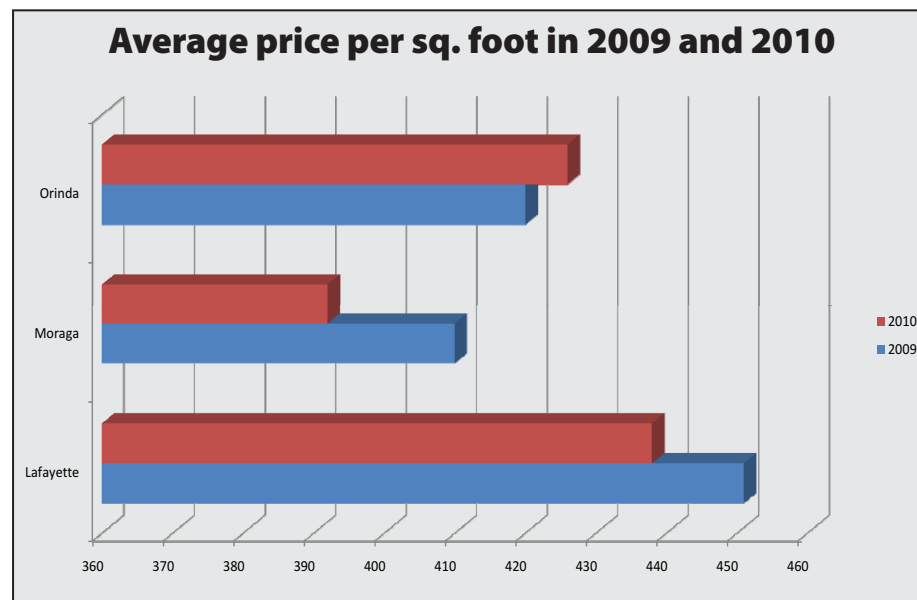
The third quarter of 2010 continued to show significant activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from July 1 through September 30, 67 single-family homes closed in Lafayette. This is exactly the same amount that closed in the same quarter a year ago. Sales prices ranged from \$527,500 to \$2,837,500 and the average number of days on market was 67 days. The average sales price was \$1,188,628. There were two other homes that closed during the quarter per the MLS but the sales prices were not disclosed. Both likely sold above \$2,000,000 so the average sales price would be around \$1,200,000 had the sale prices been disclosed. In the third quarter of 2009, the average sales price was \$1,085,962.

In Moraga the number of single-family closings was 34, with the prices ranging from \$500,000 to \$1,544,200. The average sale price was \$942,082. The average marketing time was 48 days. Looking back over the same quarter in 2009, there were only 28 closings and the average sales price was \$935,017.

In Orinda the number of single-family closings was 57 with a range of sales prices of \$500,000 to \$2,800,000 and an average price of \$1,091,208. It took an average of 60 days on the market to sell a home. In the third quarter a year ago, there were 50 sales at an average sales price of \$1,148,974 in Orinda.

On an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette homes sold at \$438 per square foot, Moraga homes sold for \$392 and Orinda was at \$426. In the year ago quarter these amounts were \$451, \$410,



and \$420 respectively.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had one closing at \$370,000; Moraga had 20 ranging from \$147,000 to \$740,000 and Orinda had none.

As of October 5, 2010, there were 95 homes under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined with asking prices of \$239,000 to \$2,600,000. It should be pointed out that there are 17 "Potential Short Sales" that are currently pending and were subject to lender approval. The time for short sales to be approved has shortened in some cases, but the waiting time often remains several months.

Activity has really increased in the last several weeks as well. Of the 103 pending properties, 59 received acceptable offers since the first of September so between the three communities we continue to see around two homes headed towards closing each day.

Inventory, however, has increased. There are currently 258 properties on the market in all of Lamorinda—numbers that have increased in every community.

There are 114 properties on the market in Lafayette (a year ago at this time there were 84) with asking prices of \$380,000 to \$10,750,000. In Moraga, buyers have their choice of 64 homes or condominiums listed between \$169,900 and \$1,995,000. A year ago at this time

there were 50. In Orinda there are 80 on the market priced from \$269,900 to \$5,500,000, while last year at this time there were 72 available.

Based upon current inventory, if no other homes were to come on the market there is a 21 month supply of properties available in Lamorinda. At the end of the second quarter of 2010, there was around an eight month supply up from a seven month supply on March 31, 2010.

On October 1, 2009 there was a 17 month supply.

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 \$2,000,000 in the third quarter in Lamorinda. Eight closed above \$2,000,000 in the three communities in the comparable quarter in 2009. Five are currently pending that are listed over \$2,000,000, two in Lafayette, two in Orinda and one in Moraga.

Interest rates continue to fall and are very attractive and many corporations continue to relocate families both in to and out of the area. Recently, several companies with offices on the mid-peninsula have had employees considering relocations to those offices ask for area tours of the East Bay—looking to balance a longer commute with better weather and schools with higher test scores.

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\$1,199,000

Got Gas?

By Lou Fancher



Maurice Williams

Photo Andy Scheck

If you could make your home and family less at risk from accidents involving gas leaks, would you do it?

Sure, you say, but that's impossible! I don't have the patience for a class action lawsuit or to wait for a new city council member to tell us exactly what lurks under Lamorinda's aging underground structures.

Lafayette's Maurice Williams, owner and operator of Leapfrog Plumbing since 1993, says you don't have to wait. "You can be pre-emptive: know how to shut off appliances or the gas main," he says, making it sound easy.

And it is.

Williams says homeowners and renters should ask



Gas meter with seismic valve

themselves, What gas appliances do I have? Water heater, stove, dryer, and fireplace are the most common answers.

"For each, you can learn where the shut-off valves are located," he says. "And make sure each has an operable valve. Test it and make sure you can adjust it."

William also recommends checking your tools, especially an emergency shut-off key to your gas meter. He's still amazed at how many homeowners don't know where, or even what, it is.

Because of that, Leapfrog and other companies will come to a home to provide a whole house inspection. "There's no charge," William says. "We recently put it in our ads and we've only had two calls. Maybe because a lot of people don't think gas lines are a part of plumbing, but we check those lines too."

For people who don't have or can't find their shut-off keys, he recommends contacting a plumbing hardware store to get one.

New construction requirements are tight, so proper valves on new homes are less of a concern. There's a seismic valve at the meter, but not excess flow valves at each appliance.

The San Bruno tragedy has made gas customers anxious. "We're vendors for PG&E, so they phoned us when that event occurred," Williams says. "This was the first time we've been on site at a catastrophic situation. They escorted us into the neighborhood and we replaced water heaters, gas flex lines and water lines."

The situation in San Bruno was rare, according to Williams. He thinks PG&E will have to work hard to regain the public's trust. He points out that the gas lines that exploded in San Bruno were large, 300-600 psi pressure pipes. Typical pipes approaching a home are low, 2-5 psi pressure

pipes. He says there are few fatalities or injuries when construction workers accidentally breach these lines, such as during the late night incident in Orinda on September 22nd when construction equipment hit a small pipe.

For William's part, educating homeowners is a priority; knowing what gas appliances are in your home and how to control the flow of gas is a must. New construction or renovation projects should be done with licensed companies and permits. Williams has seen homes where someone has built around or even directly over a meter, placing the shut-off valves completely out reach. Having and knowing how to use your emergency gas meter key is essential.

What does Williams advise if you do smell gas in your home?

- Get out of the area immediately.
- Do not light a cigarette or other ignition system.
- If a pilot light is on, leave it. Turning it off could cause a spark to ignite the gas.
- Dial 911.

Maurice Williams can be reached at Leapfrog Plumbing (925) 377-6600

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ORINDA



182 Ravenhill Road

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ORINDA



41 Vista Del Mar

3500 sf custom 4bd/3ba with attached in-law unit on mostly lvl .58 acre in top area with privacy, grassy lawns & total convenience. Warmly styled, architect designed.

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ORINDA



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ORINDA



179 Crestview Drive

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ORINDA



15 Van Tassel Lane

Splendid quality features in & out. Luxurious yet comfortable gated Sleepy Hollow 5bd/4.5ba estate hm. Exquisite details, top quality amenities, grassy yards, pool & gardens.

Offered at \$2,499,000

MORAGA



1392 Camino Peral

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Offered at \$455,000

MORAGA



1746 St. Andrews Drive

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Offered at \$699,000

MORAGA



1087 Sanders Drive

Home Sweet Home. Updated throughout. Kit/fam rm combo. Granite cntns. Sparkling new baths. New windows & doors & recent roof. Kid friendly area nr top-rated schools.

Offered at \$739,000

MORAGA



24 La Salle Drive

Fabulous pvt 1/2 ac knoll. Sheltered veranda opens to yard, sparkling pool & breathtaking views. Beaut renovated kitchen w/granite/SS applis. 5bd incl pvt mstr suite.

Offered at \$889,000

MORAGA



98 Brookfield Drive

Lovely 5bd/3ba on level desirable Moraga cul de sac. Updated kitchen & baths, hdwd floors, lawn, patio & pool. Very close to award winning K-8 schools.

Offered at \$999,000

MORAGA



1904 Russell Drive

Very special "Bluffs" 2675 sf home w/5bd/3ba. Lvl corner lot, stylish touches, remodeled kitchen and baths. Patio w/ pergola, master bath w/steam shower.

Offered at \$1,225,000

MORAGA



45 Merrill Circle North

Traditional estate beautifully remodeled w/finest quality French doors, moldings, plantation shutters, wrap around porch & more! Picturesque gardens, 2 waterfalls.

Offered at \$1,995,000

MORAGA



1350 Bollinger Canyon Road

Rare opportunity!! 33 acre gated estate w/vineyard & lots of usable land. Incredible views throughout this updated 4 bed + office home. Au pair/in-law set-up.

Offered at \$1,995,000

LAFAYETTE



612 Huntleigh Drive

Burton Valley beauty. Just remodeled 4bd/2ba sgl lvl ranch style home. Super clean, move-in ready, hdwd floors, new dual panes, beautiful front & back yards.

Offered at \$949,000

LAFAYETTE



819 Las Trampas Road

Enchanting Lafayette retreat. Custom blt 4bd/4.5ba 3548 sf home on gorgeous 1 ac lot in sought after Las Trampas. Country quiet yet steps to town/trail/school.

Offered at \$1,495,000

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 Margaret Zucker

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