Pamorinda OUR HOMES



Lamorinda Weekly Volume 06 Issue 3 Wednesday, April 11, 2012

Attracting Birds to the Native Backyard

By Sophie Braccini



A Bewick's wren in Al Kyte's garden

Photos Al Kyte

couple of chickadees fed to their little hearts' content on a suet feeder, unaware of the couple of humans, Bill and Claire Gilbert, observing them from their breakfast

They flew away, soon to be replaced by a woodpecker and later a nuthatch. Pigeons arrived at the nearby bog for their daily baths. A hawk (Sharp-shinned) was once spotted bathing in that gravelfilled bog. Attracting birds to a backyard is a constant source of pleasure and awe for those who know how to do it. Three local garden owners, featured in the May 6 Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour, share a conviction that a native landscape is the most favorable to attract our winged friends.

"Thirty years ago I went to a class on birds taught at the UC Berkeley Extension," reminisces Moraga gardener Al Kyte.

... continued on page D4

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For Sale 20 Birch Ct, Orinda
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For Sale 44 Lucille Way, Orinda
Offered at \$649,999



Sale Pending, 17 El Camino Moraga, Orinda, Representing Buyer



Sale Pending -234 El Toyonal, Orinda, Representing Buyer



Sale Pending,255 La Espiral, Orinda , Representing Buyer



Sale Pending, 136 Spring Rd,Orinda, Representing Seller and Buyer



Sale Pending, 4075 Poplar Ave,

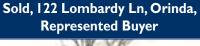
Concord, Representing Buyer

Sale Pending, 127 Warren St, Martinez, Representing Buyer



1-

Sold, 9 Wanflete Ct, Orinda, Represented Buyer







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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT
LAFAYETTE	12	\$275,000	\$1,699,000
MORAGA	10	\$196,000	\$1,475,000
ORINDA	4	\$786,000	\$1,195,000

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

3649 Boyer Circle, \$275,000, 2 Bdrms, 1014 SqFt, 1940 YrBlt, 3-15-12

1676 Foothill Park Circle, \$1,135,000, 6 Bdrms, 3119 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 3-16-12; Previous Sale: \$1,210,000, 09-26-06

693 Glorietta Boulevard, \$725,000, 3 Bdrms, 1648 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 3-9-12; Previous Sale: \$1,025,000, 04-06-07

1117 Hillcrest Drive, \$749,000, 5 Bdrms, 2947 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 3-15-12; Previous Sale: \$380,000, 07-17-96

1142 Martino Road, \$1,140,000, 3 Bdrms, 2800 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 3-9-12; Previous Sale: \$945,000, 04-28-03

881 Moraga Road, \$513,000, 3-19-12

3211 Palomares Avenue, \$750,000, 5 Bdrms, 2260 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 3-5-12; Previous Sale: \$1,075,000, 06-06-07

1089 Rahara Drive, \$1,699,000, 4 Bdrms, 3448 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 3-15-12; Previous Sale: \$1,905,000, 05-26-05

3376 Ridge Road, \$615,000, 3 Bdrms, 1728 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 3-13-12; Previous Sale: \$235,000, 12-20-96

1167 Sierra Vista Way, \$515,000, 3 Bdrms, 1406 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 3-14-12; Previous Sale: \$311,000, 06-20-97

1108 Sunrise Ridge Drive, \$1,185,000, 5 Bdrms, 3102 SqFt, 1996 YrBlt, 3-15-12; Previous Sale: \$710,000, 01-14-00

40 Terra Teresa, \$950,000, 5 Bdrms, 2877 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 3-19-12; Previous Sale: \$1,150,000, 09-30-03

MORAGA

2063 Ascot Drive #216, \$196,000, 2 Bdrms, 1106 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 3-6-12; Previous Sale: \$139,000, 06-03-98

936 Augusta Drive, \$765,000, 3 Bdrms, 2470 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 3-19-12; Previous Sale: \$950,000, 11-21-05

675 Carroll Drive, \$685,000, 3 Bdrms, 1392 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 3-8-12; Previous Sale: \$876,000, 06-03-05

798 Crossbrook Drive, \$975,000, 4 Bdrms, 2471 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 3-16-12; Previous Sale: \$1,162,000, 10-12-07

123 Donald Drive, \$540,000, 3 Bdrms, 1344 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 3-5-12

330 Draeger Drive, \$1,475,000, 4 Bdrms, 2991 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 3-14-12; Previous Sale: \$1,375,000, 09-04-03

485 Kingsford Drive, \$1,060,000, 4 Bdrms, 2275 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 3-15-12; Previous Sale: \$599,000, 10-28-99

1825 St. Andrews Drive, \$931,500, 3 Bdrms, 3424 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 3-15-12; Previous Sale: \$655,000, 08-04-99

26 Whitethorne Drive, \$803,500, 4 Bdrms, 1790 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 3-15-12; Previous Sale: \$830,000, 05-11-09

14 Willow Springs Lane, \$1,225,000, 3 Bdrms, 3031 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 3-9-12; Previous Sale: \$680,000, 08-10-93

ORINDA

3 Donald Drive, \$1,195,000, 3 Bdrms, 2359 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 3-9-12; Previous Sale: \$100,000, 10-15-04

567 Miner Road, \$1,100,000, 3 Bdrms, 2083 SqFt, 1937 YrBlt, 3-8-12; Previous Sale: \$799,000, 06-27-01

42 Tarry Lane, \$860,000, 4 Bdrms, 3326 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 3-12-12; Previous Sale: \$1,425,000, 08-23-06

9 Williams Court, \$786,000, 4 Bdrms, 2640 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 3-14-12

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

MORAGA

Wickham Drive, 94556, RWW Properties, 03-06-12, \$834,200, 2820 sf, 5 bd





The Kurt Piper Group Recent Sales and Listings





3497 St. Mary's Road, Lafayette

Downtown Delight. Newly completed TOTAL remodel offers a like-new feel in this traditional single story 4 bedroom 2.5 bath home with a long list of gorgeous features. Professionally landscaped flat 1/4 acre lot. Just steps to town, trail & schools. www.3497StMarys-Road.com. Offered at \$1,150,000



663 Glenside Drive, Lafayette

Opportunity knocks! Rare pancake flat half acre with Lafayette Trail access. This spacious 4 bedroom, 2 bath, 2150 sq. ft. home has "good bones" and ideal expansion potential. Sold for \$830,000



3155 Indian Way, Lafayette

Beautifully remodeled and expanded ranch style home offering 4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths with fabulous 2700 sa. ft. single level fl oor plan. Andersen windows. gourmet kitchen, hardwood fl oors and exposed beam ceilings. Steps to elementary school, swim clubs and Lafayette Trail. Offered at \$1,349,000



960 Hawthorne Drive, Lafayette

Trail Neighborhood charmer! Single level 3 bedroom. 2 bath traditional home on lovely oak-studded .25 acre lot just steps to town, trail and schools. Offered at \$679,000



15 Candlelight Lane, Lafayette

As close as you can come to new-construction. Custom built 5 bedroom, 3.5 bath single level craftsman style home. Incredible 3417 sq. ft. f oor plan. Private .74 acre lot on quiet cul-de-sac. Close in location.

Offered at \$1,495,000



3376 Ridge Road, Lafayette

Recently remodeled 4 bedroom, 2 bath home with upgrades galore. Surrounded by natural beauty and heritage oaks, this home offers 1728 sq. ft. of living space

Offered at \$649,000



Kurt Piper Broker Associate 925-818-8000

Kurt@kurtpiper.com www.kurtpiper.com DRE #01130308



Marianne Greene **Broker Assistant** DRE #00852567



Christine Gallegos Licensed Assistant DRE #00852567

Connect with Kurt @









Attracting Birds to the Native Backyard

... continued from page D1

"The presenter said that the native plants are the best environment for birds to come to gardens. It made a lot of sense to me, and that's how my passion for gardening with native plants began." Kyte is a veteran advocate and teacher of native gardening who's been featured in the Tour for years. He believes that there are a lot of elements to attracting birds to a backyard.

Water is essential according to Lafayette resident Bill Gilbert. "Probably the biggest attractant has been the waterfall, bog, and pond we had installed," he said. "The year-round source of drinking water is very important to birds, especially during the dry summer months when water sources are few and far between." Gilbert and his wife Claire observe that the sound of falling water seems to act as a magnet for some bird species, especially warblers.

Bird feeders are also a must to please the winged guests (in different forms and with different feeds depending on what is to be attracted); one can also procure nesting boxes, but that is not enough.

"The overall design of the plantings may be the most important element," says Kyte. "A design that provides a wide variety of nesting sites, cover, and feeding options has the potential for bringing in the most species." Kyte has worked to develop a backyard concept of an oak and pine woodland with some areas of open space. "Oaks and pines each attract species that might not otherwise come, and dense shrubbery offers protection from predators and weather and draws reclusive birds, such as Spotted Towhee and Hermit Thrush," he said. "The berries from certain shrubs attract additional birds, including Cedar Waxwings and robins. Low flowering plants bring hummingbirds as well as ground-feeding birds. Providing some open ground is critical to quail, doves and bluebirds."

Orinda gardener Elizabeth O'Shea says that thinking about how plants flower is also important. "There are lots of things that bring birds to gardens. We are lucky to have a large lot bordering Moraga Creek, near open space," she says. "We have planted native plants over a twenty year period. We do try to have plants that flower over long periods and that hold seeds for a while. We also have water for the birds, bird nest boxes and feeders. We spend a lot of time watching the bird with binoculars."

Gilbert agrees. "Of course, vegetation on a property is very important to birds for natural food, natural nesting sites, and cover to avoid predators. We have documented Nuttall's Woodpeckers nesting in natural cavities in our Valley Oaks, and other cavity nesters likely also have nested," he says. "Regarding value as a food source, studies have shown that when non-native shrubs and trees are planted in an area, far fewer species of insects come to them than to the native shrubs and trees." And less insects, mean less birds.

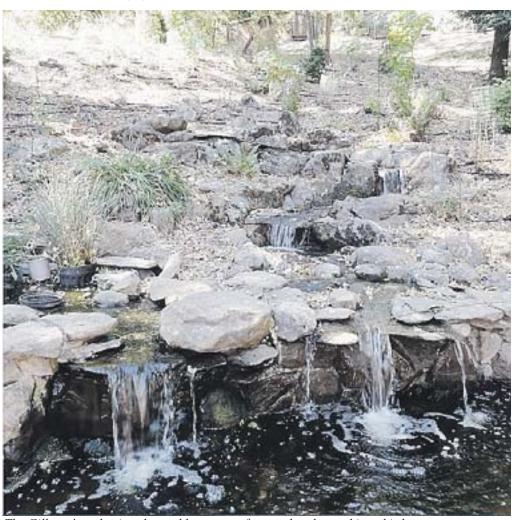
To find out more about the gardens and the birds, go to Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour web site at www.bringingbackthenatives.net. The Tour is on Sunday, May 6, registration ends mid-April. The Tour is free, but donations are appreciated.



A bird rests in Elizabeth O'Shea's garden Photos courtesy of the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour



A quail with her chick



The Gilberts' garden is enhanced by a water feature that draws thirsty birds





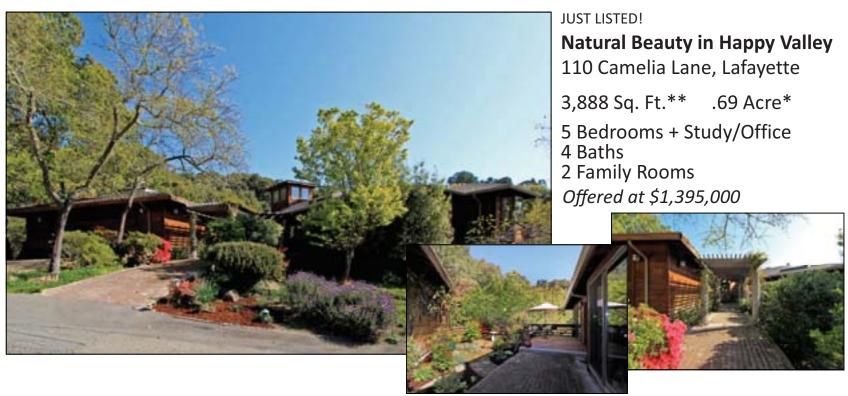
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A private and serene country retreat surrounded by natural beauty in highly desirable Happy Valley. Just minutes from the Lafayette Reservoir, vibrant downtown Lafayette, and SF Bay Area commute connections, this stunning contemporary home offers California living at its best in a premium location. With an inviting courtyard entry, expansive walls of glass and numerous decks, every room has a beautiful, natural outlook. The "Crow's Nest" landing on top offers magnificent 360 degree views of majestic oaks, surrounding hills and the Las Trampas Range.

Inviting gated courtyard entry with wisteria draped trellis
Generous sized living and entertaining areas
Flexible floor plan, spacious and thoughtful design
Dramatic living room with soaring ceiling
Large, lovely dining room
Chef's kitchen with state-of-the-art appliances
Adjoining eating area and family room
Master suite with private dressing area and bath
Cozy study with extensive built-ins and glass door to
courtyard
2nd bedroom/bath nearby

A large second family room in the heart of a second bedroom area 3 additional bedrooms and two baths (one a private bedroom suite) Separate laundry room, wine cellar closet

High ceilings, skylights, hardwood floors, generous storage and built-ins Brick pathway and patio, deck with seating, decks for barbecue and viewing

Spectacular .69 acre setting with stately oaks, fragrant bay trees, mature holly, and planting areas for the resident gardener Forbes Magazine listed Lafayette #3 in the Nation in 2011 for BEST SCHOOL DISTRICTS FOR YOUR HOUSING BUCK in the \$800,000+ category. (Top category)

**Per Appraisal *Per Public Records

Page: D6

Make Way for **Multiples**

by Andi Peterson Brown

s I've written about in previous Columns this year, the Lamorinda real estate market is heating up. The combination of lower inventory, lots of buyers, and growing confidence in the marketplace has increased competition for many homes. As a result, many buyers and sellers this spring have found themselves in a multiple offer situation, which requires a different level of strategy.

For buyers, it is important to ask if the listing agent has set a specific date and time to review offers-you may need to act quickly. In addition, write your best and cleanest offer up front. Minimize contingencies and asking for little extras, and find out what's important to the seller. Have your financing preapproval letter attached, as well as a summary of terms for easy review. Most importantly, try not to fall completely in love with the house.

For sellers, it is important to know which factors are your highest priority. An all cash, quick close offer may be more appealing to you than one with a higher price but more uncertain financing. If a few offers seem like they might work, submit a counter offer to them and see who can step up to the plate and strengthen their terms. Always remember to weigh your options-you have them and that is a great place to be.



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The Real Estate Quarter in Review

By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS

he first quarter of 2012 showed a huge increase in activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate with supply way down, pending sales way up, closings up and the average sales price higher in Moraga and Orinda and about the same in Lafayette versus the period a year ago.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from Jan. 1 through March 31, 2012, 43 single-family homes closed in Lafayette which was an increase from 36 closures last year. Sales prices ranged from \$275,000 to \$2,950,000 and averaged 41 days on market versus 70 days in the first quarter of last year, and 65 days in 2010. The average sales price was \$971,889 which was nearly identical to the first quarter of 2011 of \$973,341.

There were 21 single-family closings in Moraga, down only one from 1Q2011 when 22 closed. Prices ranged from \$540,000 to \$1,400,000. The average sale price was \$959,857, a huge increase from a year ago when the average was \$894,892. The average marketing time was 72 days, down from 85 days a year ago.

Single-family closings in Orinda were down to 24 from 35 a year ago. Sales prices ranged from \$335,000 to \$1,680,000 with an average price of \$934,541, compared to \$894,857 last year. It took an average of 67 days on the market to sell a home versus 58 in the identical quarter in 2011. (There was one sale of a property listed at \$2,125,000 where the sale price was not reported to the Multiple Listing Service and that sale is not reflected in these statistics.)

So far this year, on an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette detached single-family homes sold at \$384 per square foot, Moraga homes sold for \$388 and Orinda was at \$379, compared to last year's figures of \$384, \$374, and \$366 respectively.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had two closings at \$345,000 and \$415,000, Moraga had 13 ranging from \$110,000 to \$596,000 and Orinda had two—a low of \$215,000 and a high of 249,000 (both on Brookwood).

As of April 5, there were 127 homes under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined with asking prices of \$149,000 to \$3,690,000 compared to 92 pending properties at this time last year. It should be noted that there are 23 "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. Six of the pending sales are REOs (bank owned properties.)

Inventory, however, has decreased dramatically to the current supply of 115 properties. (Supply was 180 in early April 2011; 215 at this There are only 61 properties on the market in Lafayette. There were 80 properties on the market in Lafayette in April, 2011 and 114 properties on the market at this time in 2010. Asking prices in Lafayette currently range from \$420,000 to \$8,498,000. Of these, 11 are distressed sales—attempted short sales or REOs. In Moraga, buyers have their choice of only 19 homes or condominiums listed between \$325,000 and \$3,600,000. A year ago at this time there were 45. There are no short sales currently on the market in Moraga and only one bank-owned property.

In Orinda there are 35 on the market, down from 55 last year, and 75 in April, 2010. The list prices range from \$489,000 to \$6,195,000. Only three are bank owned or short sales.

As is the case nearly every quarter, the most active properties are in the more affordable price range. At the high end, only two homes sold above \$2 million in the three communities combined. Both were in Lafayette. A year ago there was one sale in the \$2 million-plus range in the first quarter—in Lafayette. There are 20 currently available above this amount in the three communities combined.

Interest rates continue to be attractive and many corporations continue to relocate families both in to and out of the area. The third piece of the real estate market puzzle—the bank owned property segment--is appearing less often in Lamorinda but continues to be high 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 43 sales that closed in Lafayette in the first quarter of 2012, 13 sold at or above the list price. In Moraga, 11 of the 21 sales were at or above the asking price and in Orinda, eight of the 24 sold at or above the final listing price.

This will typically happen when a house goes pending in the first week to ten days on the market. There are 128 currently pending sales in the three Lamorinda communities combined and of these, 51 went pending in ten days or less—pointing to a high likelihood of a continued trend in homes selling above the asking price.

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SPRING IS IN THE AIR

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but for your landscape! The trees and plants in the yard need to be inspected for water damage, remove dead or dying branches which may have been injured by disease/severe insect infestation or storm damage.

We also want to prune for improved plant appearance, tree and plant size to ensure all around health for your landscape.

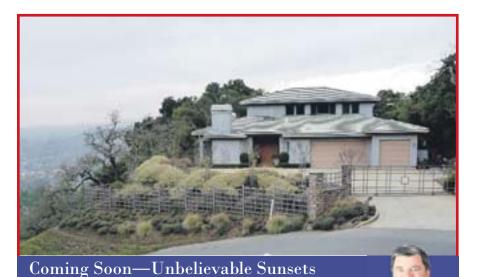
So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by a Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping to make your yard a summer STAYCATION.

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COMING SOON!

1225 MONTICELLO ROAD LAFAYETTE

In the desirable Happy Valley Glen neighborhood and just up a short and winding driveway you arrive in maybe one of the most perfect settings in all of Lafayette. This contemporary single level 5 bedroom and 3.5 baths home built in 1987 on 1.31 acres offers privacy and a peaceful natural setting with panoramic views of Briones Regional Park, Las Trampas Hills and Majestic Oaks. An entertainers delight whether setting outside on one of 3 redwood view decks, by the gorgeous pool, or around the Tuscan style kitchen and adjacent family room. This home has been tastefully remodeled throughout. It has ample 7 car garage parking and a large office with a separate entrance.

Offered at \$1,795,000



COMING SOON!

614 HUNTLEIGH DRIVE, LAFAYETTE

This fabulous 4 bedroom and 3 bath home is ready to move right in! It truly has the best of all worlds with incredible privacy and terrific views and still right in the heart of highly sought after Burton Valley and top rated Lafayette schools. This light and bright home has been remodeled throughout. The fabulous setting and gorgeous lawn and gardens are perfect for outdoor entertaining. You'll love the wonderful remodeled kitchen with large open floor plan with great room and vaulted ceilings and the newly remodeled bath with all the great touches that make this a very special place to live. **Offered at \$1,179,000**



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74 La Encinal

Very well maint hm down pvt lane just mins to town. Incredible views across Orinda to San Pablo Reservoir, Lovely lg rms w/ big windows & high ceilings. Tons of appeal w/ez living convenience.

Offered at \$999,000



659 Cross Ridge Court

Lovingly maint 3bd/2ba 2356 sf trad in Orindawoods. Rarely avail 1-story; frml LR & DR; master w/lux bath; fam rm w/frplc; wall of windows & slider to pvt deck/garden.

Offered at \$1,150,000

Offered at \$2,795,000



Rare newer construction! Custom 3bd/2.5ba Craftsman circa 2008. Gourmet kit opens to lightfilled din area/fam rm, ofc, fab mstr suite w/pvt patio, flat grassy area in backyd, views of hills.

Enjoy a fantastic location & access to top-rated schools

w/this spacious updated 1620 sq ft, 2bd/1.75ba condo

at the far, quiet end of popular Woodminster. Updated

kitchen w/lg pantry. Views of the quaint trail and open

MORAGA

544 Woodminster

MORAGA

45 Merrill Circle

Fabulous estate setting, beaut remod

Offered at \$1,289,000

Offered at \$499,000



Totally renovated & expanded sgl lvl 4bd/4ba trad on exceptional .63 ac lvl lot. Exquisite workmanship, showplace kitchen, fam rm, ofc, hdwd flrs, dual pane windows, close to Bart,

Offered at \$1,775,000



284 Rheem Blvd.

Tranquil setting - fabulous landscape & beautiful gardens. Charming 4bd/2ba trad hm offering vaulted wood ceilings, remod kitchen & baths,

Offered at \$829,000



3766 Mosswood Drive

Adorable single level duplex (ea. 2bd/1ba) in excellent condition. Walk to town from this beautiful setting complete w/hardwood floors, specimen maple trees & white picket fence.



110 Camelia

Private & serene contemp 5bd/4ba country retreat on .69 acre in desirable Happy Valley. Expansive walls of glass & numerous decks w/beaut, natural outlook. Magnificent views from "Crow's Nest" landing on top. *Offered at \$1,395,000*

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ORINDA

109 Bear Ridge Trail

Beautiful gated 4bd/2.5ba custom-blt contemp w/3863 sf on 1.24 acres in tranquil country setting. Updated kitchen w/direct access out to pool & 1800 sf of decks for exceptional outdoor living. Spacious master w/fiplc., lux spa bath. Offered at \$1,850,000



407 Kingsford Drive

Fully remodeled 4bd/3.5ba 2907 sf on .38 ac. Entertainer's/parents dream home. BIG kitchen/fam rm overlooking BIG backyard w/pool, lawn, patio & many sports options!

Offered at \$1,295,000



895 Las Trampas

Delightful 3bd/2ba 1275 sq ft cottage style with exquisite handcrafted finishes. Fully renovated with unparalleled appeal in convenient & sought-after area. Mostly level .40 acre parcel with great curb appeal.

Offered at \$719,000



This gorgeously appointed luxury home, designed by

Orinda's own Steve Kubitscheck, is tucked away on

.97 acres at the end of a private lane. The setting offers

panoramic views and exceptional privacy. Large wine

9 Moraga Valley Lane

1 Tappan Lane

Sonsara 3bd/2.5ba stunning 2583 sf home. Chef's kitchen/fam rm combo out to pvt patio & grassy yard. Spectacular views of MCC golf course & hills. Wine cellar, butler's pantry.

Offered at \$1,125,000



3497 St. Mary's Road

Complete remodel from top to bottom. Single level 4bd/2.5ba on professionally landscaped flat 25 acre lot. Walk to town, trails & top schools.

Offered at \$1,150,000



4+bd/3+ba w/quality detailing. Fr drs, crown

moldings, porch & more! Picturesque garden

614 Huntleigh

4bd/3ba Burton Valley charmer. Terrific open floor plan w/remodeled kitchen. Vaulted ceilings, maple hdwd flrs, remod baths, new roof, lvl yd w/views.

Offered at \$1,179,000

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