

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 06 Issue 5 Wednesday, May 9, 2012



The Home Designer ...read on page D7

Life on the Creeks

By Sophie Braccini

Lamorinda resident Martin Spittler probably described it best, “Creeks are really ‘Beauty and the Beast’ for most homeowners.”

Beauty for the sylvan quality of the environment they nurture, but potential beasts if storms overwhelm local drainage systems. A creek in a back yard can be a wonderful feature, but it is part of a natural or engineered drainage system that the individual homeowner rarely controls. Still, most of these homeowners would choose their piece of property again.

Many Lamorinda residents live near a creek – some a permanent feature that creates challenges, others ephemeral subsidiaries that run in winter and are often less trouble. Those who live close to the open space that surrounds Lamorinda have to take charge of potential hazards.

When Tom and Virginia Steuber bought their Lafayette home that borders Briones Regional Park, they knew that the beautiful natural creek meandering down from the surrounding hills could flood their property. They hired an engineering firm to build a collection and piping system large enough to catch the worst storms.

What they did not anticipate was that mud and brush would come down with the water, instantly clogging the drain entrance. “I will always remember that morning of New Year’s Eve in 2005 when we woke up and discovered our



Wild creek coming down Briones toward Virginia and Tom Steubers' home.

Photos Andy Scheck

entire backyard and two-thirds of the swimming pool buried under four to 18 inches of mud,” says Steuber. Since then, her gardener installed rows of poles that catch the debris along the way.

To balance the tempestuous nature of the creek in the back of her prop-

erty, Steuber created a peaceful artificial creek in front, with a pond. The serene atmosphere of that decor is very close to what Zoe and Jim Klippert experience in Moraga with a garden bordering an ephemeral creek.

“It’s never gone any higher than the

base of the little redwood,” says Klippert pointing to a young tree in the lower tier of the bank of the creek. Their creek is quite tame; it drains some adjacent open space and joins shortly after the Klipperts’ property to the larger Moraga Creek. ...continued on page D4

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded



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DRE#01390784



**For Sale 44 Lucille Way, Orinda
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**Sale Pending, 20 Birch Ct, Orinda
Representing Seller**



**Sale Pending, 94 Devin Dr., Moraga
Representing Buyer**



**Sale Pending, 255 La Espiral, Orinda
Representing Buyer**



**Sale Pending, 234 El Toyonal,
Orinda, Representing Buyer**



**Sold, 136 Spring Rd, Orinda,
Represented Seller and Buyer**



**Sold, 17 El Camino Moraga,
Orinda, Represented Buyer**



**Sold, 9 Wanflete Ct,
Orinda, Represented Buyer**



**Sold, 122 Lombardy Ln,
Orinda, Represented Buyer**



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City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	23	\$450,000	\$2,150,000
MORAGA	9	\$173,500	\$1,615,000
ORINDA	10	\$472,500	\$1,400,000

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

- 3361 Betty Lane, \$450,000, 3 Bdrms, 1154 SqFt, 1954 YrBl, 4-2-12;
Previous Sale: \$176,500, 07-08-86
- 25 Billington Court, \$1,049,500, 5 Bdrms, 3366 SqFt, 1979 YrBl, 3-30-12;
Previous Sale: \$1,095,000, 03-08-00
- 426 Castello Road, \$746,500, 6 Bdrms, 3069 SqFt, 1953 YrBl, 3-30-12
- 18 Del Rio Court, \$650,000, 4 Bdrms, 1685 SqFt, 1963 YrBl, 3-29-12;
Previous Sale: \$550,000, 07-09-02
- 663 Glenside Drive, \$830,000, 4 Bdrms, 2162 SqFt, 1949 YrBl, 4-3-12
- 3289 Helen Lane, \$871,000, 4 Bdrms, 2131 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 3-30-12;
Previous Sale: \$750,000, 08-17-04
- 3269 La Canada, \$850,000, 2 Bdrms, 2298 SqFt, 1941 YrBl, 3-30-12
- 2 Leeward Glen Road, \$1,400,000, 5 Bdrms, 3285 SqFt, 1975 YrBl, 4-6-12
- 790 Los Palos Manor, \$2,150,000, 7 Bdrms, 6985 SqFt, 1950 YrBl, 4-3-12
- 730 North Pond Court, \$700,000, 4 Bdrms, 2483 SqFt, 1997 YrBl, 3-29-12;
Previous Sale: \$965,000, 05-28-08
- 754 Old Jonas Hill Road, \$1,350,000, 4 Bdrms, 2510 SqFt, 1958 YrBl, 4-5-12;
Previous Sale: \$930,000, 08-26-09
- 1136 Orchard Road, \$1,150,000, 4 Bdrms, 2504 SqFt, 1952 YrBl, 4-5-12;
Previous Sale: \$560,000, 08-26-08
- 3819 Palo Alto Drive, \$1,475,000, 2 Bdrms, 3469 SqFt, 1964 YrBl, 4-3-12
- 2577 Pebble Beach Loop, \$555,000, 4 Bdrms, 1894 SqFt, 1963 YrBl, 4-11-12;
Previous Sale: \$295,000, 04-15-97
- 3398 Ridge Road, \$848,500, 4 Bdrms, 2088 SqFt, 1958 YrBl, 3-29-12;
Previous Sale: \$770,000, 06-24-09
- 3040 Rohrer Drive, \$827,500, 4 Bdrms, 1728 SqFt, 1960 YrBl, 4-3-12
- 3565 Silver Springs Road, \$1,571,000, 4 Bdrms, 2246 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 4-11-12;
Previous Sale: \$1,675,000, 11-21-08
- 800 Solana Drive, \$1,165,000, 4 Bdrms, 3509 SqFt, 1949 YrBl, 4-5-12
- 3969 South Peardale Drive, \$1,230,000, 3 Bdrms, 2280 SqFt, 1950 YrBl, 4-3-12
- 27 Southampton Place, \$965,000, 4 Bdrms, 2924 SqFt, 1973 YrBl, 3-30-12;
Previous Sale: \$475,000, 12-22-95
- 3283 Theresa Lane, \$650,000, 4 Bdrms, 2463 SqFt, 1960 YrBl, 4-6-12
- 1062 Via Baja, \$1,340,000, 4 Bdrms, 2947 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 3-30-12;
Previous Sale: \$970,000, 05-23-02
- 4 West Creek Court, \$527,500, 3 Bdrms, 1427 SqFt, 1975 YrBl, 4-11-12;
Previous Sale: \$589,000, 11-01-04

MORAGA

- 2135 Ascot Drive #13, \$295,500, 2 Bdrms, 1539 SqFt, 1969 YrBl, 4-3-12;
Previous Sale: \$485,000, 10-27-06
- 1973 Ascot Drive #B, \$173,500, 2 Bdrms, 964 SqFt, 1971 YrBl, 4-2-12;
Previous Sale: \$125,000, 08-29-91
- 34 Campolindo Court, \$805,000, 4 Bdrms, 2029 SqFt, 1972 YrBl, 4-6-12
- 29 Francisca Drive, \$355,000, 2 Bdrms, 1211 SqFt, 1985 YrBl, 4-10-12;
Previous Sale: \$150,000, 07-31-86

... continued on page D7



Patricia Battersby

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Ashley Battersby

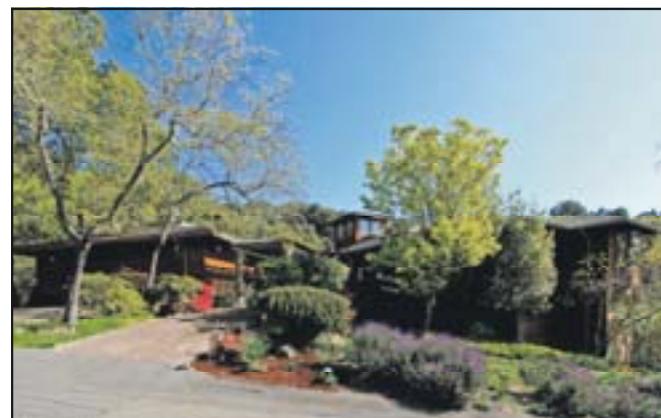
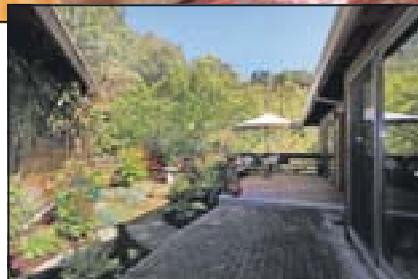
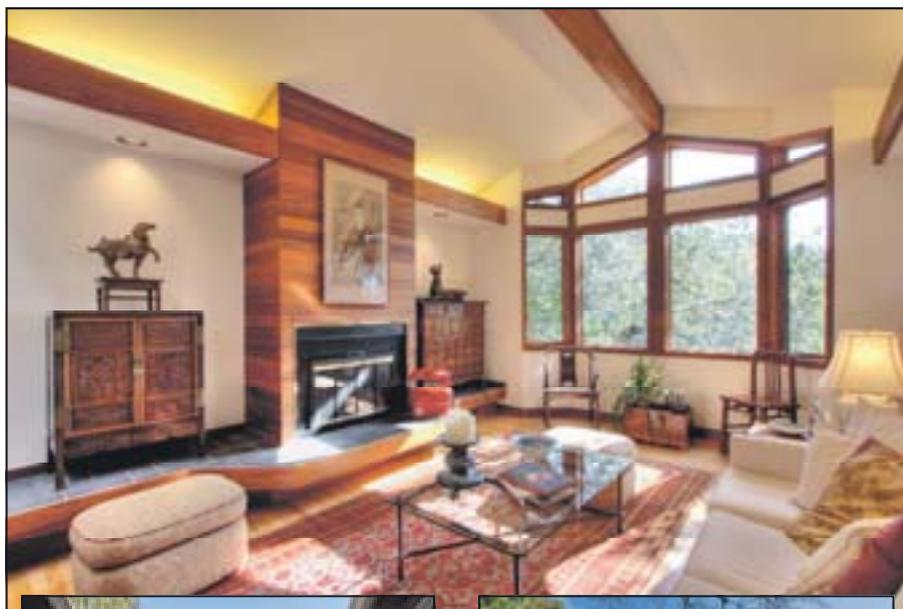
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Natural Beauty in Happy Valley

110 Camelia Lane, Lafayette

3,888 Sq. Ft. .69 Acre

5 Bedrooms + Study/Office

4 Baths

2 Family Rooms

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, 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 & patio, deck with seating, decks for barbecue & 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+ cat.

Life on the Creeks

...continued from page D1



Al Steuber shows where the creek erodes the bank in his garden

In this setting, property owners own both sides of the creek. Forty years ago, their neighbor decided that it was wasted space and built a culvert with the advice of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and flattened the whole backyard; a rare move for someone with a creek, but that has proven quite harmless to the property.

This radical way of controlling a creek is rare for individual homeowners, but according to Spittler, it was done extensively when the cities were developed. He still remembers the Orinda creeks he played in with his friends that now run through concrete tunnels under shopping centers or freeways.

As far as homeownership is concerned, maintenance of the creeks mostly means stabilizing the banks. "You can see that where the creek turns, the outside bank gets eroded much more quickly," says Lafayette resident Al Steuber (Virginia's father-in-law) pointing to a portion of the year-round creek that borders his property. The natural tendency of the creek would be to go straight, so especially when the volume of water is high, consistently hitting that curb slowly erodes the side. Planting native trees so roots hold the bank and in-

stalling large rocks on the side are some things that help. That's what Klippert did and in the process, he opened a beautiful area in his backyard.

Once nature is stabilized and hopefully controlled, the fun part of integrating the natural water feature into the garden begins. The Prestons in Moraga had a non-accessible bank riddled with ivy and blackberry. "We didn't 'discover' the creek until we were remodeling in 1999," remembers Bobbie Preston. From the start the Prestons wanted to restore and use their side of the creek the natural way.

"We had 30-plus truckloads of tree chips dumped on the hillside to create a plantable area," she says. "The Watershed Creeks Council helped us replant the creek side with natives such as nine-bark, flowering currant and willow, and we also added Cleveland sage, and California fuchsia." Tom Preston built the stairs, terraces and decks that are used by the three generations who come to their home. "He used recycled wood from our neighbors' fence for the terrace, bricks from our old fireplace for the path," says Preston. The result is charming.

What Spittler did with his ephemeral



A simple flight of stairs built by Tom Preston accesses the creek bank planted with native grasses.

creek is equally appealing, offering to the eye and the meditative visitor a natural oak and pine woodland where local wildlife loves to come.

The Lebermans in Orinda also rave about the uniqueness of having a creek on their property. Their challenge is that they must cross the creek and a bridge shared by three homes to reach their house. "We rebuilt it together five years ago," explains

Susan Leberman. "It was quite a project, but you don't want to end up with your car at the bottom of the creek." The Libermans have a second pedestrian bridge on their property.

All these homeowners agree that having a natural water feature in your yard is as wonderful as the abundance of wildlife that comes with it – whether they are owls and bats, or deer and raccoons.



Natural beauty abounds in backyard creeks.

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FHA Loans: What Are Those?

by Andi Peterson Brown

Quite a few friends and clients have recently asked me to explain what FHA loans are. The term is always thrown around, but it oftentimes isn't accompanied by any sort of explanation. Given that FHA loans are becoming increasingly popular here in the Bay Area, it is an important concept to know.

FHA loans are not loans made by the FHA but rather loans that are insured and guaranteed by the FHA. The Federal Housing Administration is not a lender. It is a federal government agency that offers mortgage insurance on loans originated by agency-approved lenders. This insurance protects the lender in case the borrower defaults on the loan.

FHA loans are known primarily for their low down payments. A borrower need only put down 3.5% and can borrow up to \$729,750 in high-cost zip codes such as our own. Many people think FHA loans have tougher standards than regular loans, but that is typically not the case. Because of the insurance, FHA loans have upfront and annual premiums that conventional loans do not have, but these added costs can be folded into the monthly payments. Current FHA interest rates are under 4%.

FHA loans are always fuel for debate. Should a borrower have more skin in the game than 3.5%? Some say yes, some say no. Regardless, these loans have existed since the 1930s. For well-qualified borrowers who don't have the conventional down payment, they can be a great option.



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The Home Designer

Interior Style Just Steps Outside

By Brandon Neff

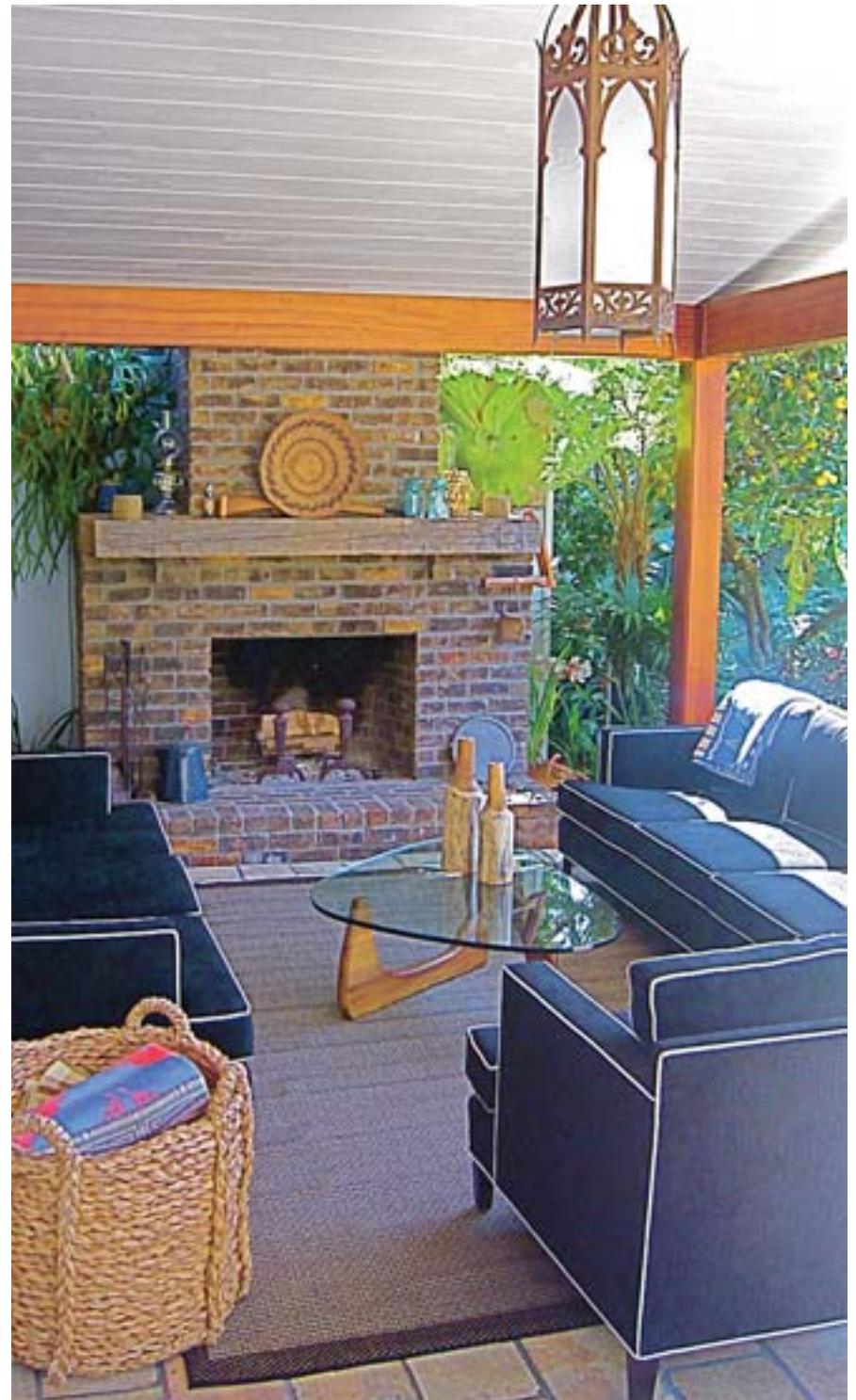
It's official! Summer is almost here. And with the season comes the joy of taking life outside. Somebody hand me a frozen cocktail! If you're like me, you love the longer days, the warmer nights and the prospect of savoring more outdoor time with friends and family.

In recent years, I've seen a trend in clients asking for my help to create more comfort and luxury in their backyards, patios and poolside. In fact, I just finished designing an outdoor room for a client complete with a reclaimed brick fireplace, antique Castle stone paver floor and a roof enclosure inspired by a Hawaiian lanai. He's thrilled to have an outdoor space for casual entertaining while adding valuable square footage to his home's equity. Once just an eyesore dividing his family room from his pool, his new enclosed patio is a feature that stands alone as a focal point drawing guests year-round.

Exterior room enclosures, for example, have come a long way since those corrugated plastic lean-tos and jerry-rigged solariums that littered every home throughout the last half of the last century. Today, enclosures, and even patio covers come in a wide variety of options including either full coverage or lattice styles, French doors, electrical raceways for lights and ceiling fans, insulation, skylights and even low-E vinyl windows. The key is to assess your space and budget, and to be clear about how you want to use the new room.

An enclosed sunroom went from ho-hum to holy cow! with the addition of a custom banquette, sisal rug, window treatments and a wrought iron chandelier.

... continued on next page



Vintage meets modern: reclaimed brick, French pavers, durable fabrics and an antique ceiling pendant come to life in this outdoor living room.

Photo Brandon Neff Design

Now my client, in her lovely Lafayette cottage with views to the creek, has a glamorous space to entertain rain or shine, or to simply relax in with a good book.

Given that we're bathed in good weather more days than not this time of year, I'm surprised more people aren't living large outside. The biggest reasons most homeowners don't take advantage of their existing outside living space are that they're either poorly designed, don't offer protection from the sun or don't incorporate any of the standard creature comforts abundant inside. I'm here to tell you that a well-planned sunroom, enclosed porch or patio cover will change how you live in your home. When choosing what type of enclosure or addition would work best for you, here are a few things to keep in mind:

Maintenance. Do you want low, or no maintenance? There are many types of building supplies out there – reclaimed wood, synthetic and recycled materials, as well as embossed aluminum styles

that offer long-lasting durability. Some products even come with a limited lifetime warranty. Additionally, find out which options are best at lowering your energy costs and if any qualify for home energy efficiency improvement tax credits.

Climate Control. Whether you're looking for an open-air or an enclosed space think about ambient room air and how you'll control the temperature. A simple ceiling fan will afford you, and your guests, a cool breeze even on those hottest of days. Additionally, if you're looking to create an environment for entertaining large groups within an enclosed solarium, perhaps consider adding functional skylights that serve to add both natural light, and venting.

Hardware & Software. Never before have there been more choices in easy-to-care-for furniture, fabrics and upholstery designed specifically for outdoor use. Furniture made from sustainably harvested teak or all-weather wicker offer maximum style with minimal care. Also, look for exciting fabrics this

summer from dozens of manufacturers offering sun resistant, mildew hampering and stain repellent choices in more colors and patterns than you can imagine. Innovations in decking materials make it easier than ever to extend your living space. Vinyl, recycled, composite, pressure treated and Ipe are leading the way in providing lower cost, higher performing products for homeowners across the county. Never heard of Ipe? I suggest you check it out. Ipe is a hardwood harvested in South America that offers long-wearing beauty with minimal maintenance – a simple power washing can restore its natural good looks, and it has been awarded a Class A product rating.

Hit The Deck. Gone are the days of having to re-seal and re-stain your deck. Today, we have synthetic materials made to look like wood that offer the homeowner year-round function with minimal headache. These products are great for the environment and great for the pocketbook. With everything you need to create a custom look from rail-

ings, balusters, stairs and posts, modern decking can be a great do-it-yourself project.

Truly, living well outside is one of the great pleasures of life in California, so customizing your outdoor room is key to making the most of it. Now, where's that cocktail?



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

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded ...continued from page D2

MORAGA

301 Lakefield Place, \$1,615,000, 5 Bdrms, 3962 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 4-10-12; Previous Sale: \$730,000, 07-12-95
 471 Millfield Place, \$1,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 3644 SqFt, 1966 YrBl, 3-29-12; Previous Sale: \$1,335,000, 07-14-06
 7 Moraga Valley Lane, \$1,160,500, 4 Bdrms, 2802 SqFt, 2001 YrBl, 4-11-12; Previous Sale: \$1,591,000, 09-16-05
 230 Sheila Court, \$760,000, 5 Bdrms, 2290 SqFt, 1968 YrBl, 4-5-12; Previous Sale: \$68,400, 01-03-74
 1753 Spyglass Lane, \$850,000, 3 Bdrms, 2828 SqFt, 1985 YrBl, 3-29-12

ORINDA

40 Camino Don Miguel, \$625,000, 3 Bdrms, 1620 SqFt, 1955 YrBl, 3-29-12
 12 Del Mar Court, \$1,170,000, 3 Bdrms, 2656 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 4-9-12; Previous Sale: \$1,300,000, 07-13-05
 8 Los Arboles, \$530,000, 2 Bdrms, 1108 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 4-4-12
 11 Orchard Road, \$1,232,000, 4 Bdrms, 2788 SqFt, 1940 YrBl, 4-10-12; Previous Sale: \$975,000, 09-08-08
 52 Rheem Boulevard, \$1,071,000, 3 Bdrms, 2502 SqFt, 1949 YrBl, 3-29-12
 49 Robert Road, \$1,400,000, 5 Bdrms, 3840 SqFt, 1978 YrBl, 3-30-12; Previous Sale: \$502,000, 07-25-97
 78 Sleepy Hollow Lane, \$925,000, 5 Bdrms, 1818 SqFt, 1950 YrBl, 4-5-12
 136 Spring Road, \$472,500, 2 Bdrms, 1667 SqFt, 1950 YrBl, 4-10-12; Previous Sale: \$720,000, 01-03-05
 100 Underhill Road, \$562,000, 3 Bdrms, 1887 SqFt, 1964 YrBl, 3-30-12
 50 Valley Drive, \$1,015,000, 4 Bdrms, 2195 SqFt, 1952 YrBl, 4-10-12; Previous Sale: \$183,000, 07-19-79

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

Moraga Boulevard, 94549, BWI Limited, 04-02-12, \$561,000, 1504 sf, 3 bd
 Willow Drive, 94549, RWW Properties, 04-09-12, \$595,197, 2234 sf, 3 bd

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21 Knickerbocker Lane
Cul de sac location w/serene views. Beaut 3bd/2ba updated w/decorator touches. Hdwd floors, dual pane windows, remodeled kitchen & baths. Flat lot & cozy decks. Close to town.

Offered at \$794,500



71 Ardilla Road
Country cottage charm of exceptional character. Enjoy a beautiful tranquil wooded pvt setting. Truly special 3bd/2.5ba w/updated kitchen, sunroom, formal LR & DR. A real gem!

Offered at \$869,000



221 Hall Drive
4bd/3ba 3000+ sf home with 2 family rooms, great .6 acre site. Fabulous opportunity! Update and reap the benefits.

Offered at \$929,000



50 Donna Maria Way
Freshly remodeled & enhanced 4bd/3.5ba approx. 2790 sf home. Grand scale "Great Room" w/spectacular deluxe modern kitchen, hdwd flrs, dual panes. Lg master, great outdoor living w/decks & patios.

Offered at \$1,295,000



109 Bear Ridge Trail
Dramatic 4bd/2.5ba contemp by award-winning architect, uniquely pvt wooded setting. Unobstructed views everywhere. Unequaled indoor/outdoor excitement w/more than 1800 sq ft of decking on 3 levels.

Offered at \$1,850,000



6 Rich Acres Road
Uncompromising quality in this 5bd/5ba new construction. Elegant architecture & exceptional attn to detail. Almost 1 ac of pvt park-like lot w/lawns & oak trees.

Offered at \$1,999,000



502 Miner Road
Beaut remodeled 5bd/3.5ba trad hm in one of Orinda's finest neighborhoods. Park-like 1 ac lot w/fruit trees, roses, lawns, rock garden, gazebo, blt-in BBQ, sports court.

Offered at \$2,389,000



1 Tappan Way
Simply exquisite custom built 5bd/3.5ba home with hardwood floors, 10 ft ceilings, chef's kitchen, French doors, many upgrades all in a private setting.

Offered at \$2,495,000



18 Las Piedras
Meticulous attn to detail in this 4bd/4.5ba Craftsman retreat on 1+ ac. Over 5700 sf incl det 1bd/1ba guest house. Hi ceilings, cherry cabinets, granite, hdwd, study w/pvt deck, theater.

Offered at \$3,300,000



26 Ross Drive
Turnkey 4bd/2ba cul de sac rancher w/hdwd floors thruout, gourmet kitchen/fam rm combo w/island, updated baths, fenced bckyd w/lawn & deck. Top schools!

Offered at \$859,000



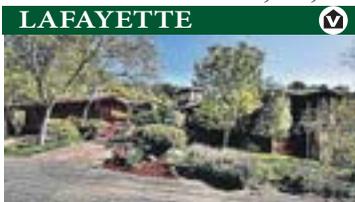
567 Merriewood Drive
Beaut remodeled & expanded 4bd/3ba 2600 sf rancher in Burton Valley. Extensive upgrades & fab features. See photos at www.567MerriewoodDr.com.

Offered at \$1,225,000



8 Hawks Hill Ct.
Absolutely stunning pano views of Mt. Diablo, hills & Carquinez straits. Custom built in 2006 w/master suite, LR, DR, FR on main level, 3 more bdrms & 2nd fam rm downstairs.

Offered at \$1,389,000



110 Camelia Lane
Serene country retreat in Happy Valley. Stunning 5+bd/4ba contemp w/expansive windows, glass flrs, numerous decks w/natural outlook. Cook's kitchen, lg 2nd fam rm, hi ceilings, hdwd flrs.

Offered at \$1,395,000



3946 So. Peardale
Updated desirable 2400+ sf 3+bd/3ba lovely Upper Happy Valley ranch style hm w/designer touches on beaut lot. Open beam ceilings, formal dining, fam rm. Qtr sawn white oak floors.

Offered at \$1,395,000



1225 Monticello Road
Desirable Happy Vly Glen contemp 5bd/3.5ba on pvt 1.31 ac. Entertainer's delight, Tuscan style kitchen/fam rm, 3 view decks, gorgeous pool. Tastefully remodeled thruout. Ofc w/sep ent.

Offered at \$1,795,000



1937 Beacon Ridge Court
Gated Beacon Ridge townhome. 3bd/3 full baths, kit w/adj fam area. Prem ct loc. End unit w/pano views backs to open space. Beaut light home, grt floor plan, hi ceilings. Pool/tennis.

Offered at \$649,000

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