

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 06 Issue 25 Wednesday, February 13, 2013



The Home Designer with Brandon Neff

...read on page D8

From "Fixer" to Farm Fresh

By Cathy Dausman

What's old is new again, thanks to an extensive tear-down remodel and upgrade for one Lafayette trail home. The home, at 663 Glen-side Drive, was purchased last April by Lafayette residents Beth Soto and her business partner Bob McClain. Although the asking price for the spec home has not yet been determined, both say it will be on the market this spring.

Architect James Wallace of Orinda drew the plans; La Pointe Company is framing the house. Soto and McClain are its general contractors. McClain said the house was originally built as a single story home in 1949. A recent Zillow website listing shows a four bedroom, two bath, 2,162-square-foot home on 0.48 acres at the same address.

McClain said a second story was added later and the most recent expansion was in the 1990s. Current construction will add 1,300 square feet of living space plus an oversized garage. With a total of nearly 3,600 square feet of living space, the five bedroom, three and a half bath home will feature high-end fixtures and lighting, an oversized laundry and crafts room and hardwood floors in common areas.



...continued on page D4

Beth Soto and Bob McClain at the job site.

Photo Cathy Dausman





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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	13	\$330,000	\$1,950,000
MORAGA	1	\$850,000	\$850,000
ORINDA	1	\$742,000	\$742,000

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

3073 Camino Diablo, \$330,000, 2 Bdrms, 1253 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 1-11-13;

Previous Sale: \$231,500, 10-28-97

3344 Las Huertas Road, \$1,950,000, 5 Bdrms, 3120 SqFt, 1936 YrBlt, 12-31-12

673 Jennie Court, \$640,000, 5 Bdrms, 2392 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 1-14-13;

Previous Sale: \$650,000, 07-18-00

4027 Mario Way, \$1,380,000, 5 Bdrms, 4572 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 1-10-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,090,000, 12-14-05

615 Murray Lane, \$1,372,000, 4 Bdrms, 3851 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 1-10-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,250,000, 05-24-02

633 Murray Lane, \$1,125,000, 4 Bdrms, 2813 SqFt, 1990 YrBlt, 12-31-12;

Previous Sale: \$900,000, 06-21-01

1619 Pleasant Hill Road, \$490,000, 2 Bdrms, 1110 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 1-3-13

1634 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,100,000, 4 Bdrms, 2770 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 1-2-13

3441 Solana Court, \$1,049,000, 4 Bdrms, 3292 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 1-14-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,049,000, 07-16-12

3332 Stage Coach Drive, \$1,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 3127 SqFt, 1984 YrBlt, 1-4-13;

Previous Sale: \$585,000, 11-21-90

3149 Stanley Boulevard, \$640,000, 4 Bdrms, 1657 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 1-10-13

3101 Withers Avenue, \$625,000, 3 Bdrms, 2744 SqFt, 1947 YrBlt, 1-8-13

1086 Via Media, \$1,616,000, 5 Bdrms, 3594 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 1-4-13

MORAGA

328 Constance Place, \$850,000, 3 Bdrms, 2202 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 1-9-13;

Previous Sale: \$84,500, 08-25-75

ORINDA

108 Via Floreado, \$742,000, 3 Bdrms, 1964 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 1-11-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,100,000, 09-07-05

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

Carol Lane, 94549, Bank of America, 01-09-13, \$808,981, 1187 sf, 3 bd

Dyer Drive, 94549, Morgan Stanley, 01-07-13, \$825,000, 2748 sf, 5 bd

ORINDA

Moraga Way, 94563, HMI Properties, 12-11-12, \$454,900, 1367 sf, 2 bd

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Times They have A - Changed

By Andi Peterson Brown

The Bay Area is in the midst of a housing shortage, and Lamorinda is no exception. At the end of 2012, our inventory was down about 50% year over year and we sold about 30% more homes. In other words, lots of buyers bought and lots of potential sellers stayed put. As a result, we are quickly working through our available inventory, and we need to replenish it.

Right now the Lamorinda market currently has just over one month of inventory. That means that if no new listings came on the market, at our current pace of sales we would run out of homes in about one month. Conventional wisdom says that a healthy housing market has anywhere from 5-6 months of inventory, with anything less deemed a seller's market, and anything more deemed a buyer's market.

So with a paltry one month of inventory available, there's no question that we have a seller's market on our hands. We are seeing homes that are well priced, well staged, and well marketed sell within a matter of days, oftentimes over asking price, and usually with multiple offers.

Moral of the story? It's a fantastic time to sell right now. In fact, we need you. Price and market your home correctly and you too can seize this incredible opportunity.



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From "Fixer" to Farm Fresh

...continued from page D1

Soto said its covered front porch and barn-like shutters on the second story facing the street should give the finished product a modern farmhouse feel.

"It's really gonna be quite beautiful," she said, promising a light and airy home large enough for a family to live comfortably, yet not out of place for Lamorinda.

The level lot adjacent the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail contains fruit trees and rose bushes. Four of the five bedrooms, including the master, are on the ground floor. A fifth bedroom over the kitchen and dining areas has its own full bath with a sitting room across the hall. The area could easily be used as a second master suite, an au pair unit or in-law living quarters.

The pre-existing wood burning fireplace in the great room will be resurfaced. Soto said the home's "top of the line" kitchen overlooks the back yard and will feature a butler's pantry, a five-foot-wide refrigerator/freezer, honed Carrera marble countertops, gas range, double ovens and what she calls a "computer command center" – the house will be pre-wired for computer network access.

A mudroom with half bath leads out to a covered

breezeway and the new detached garage on the lot's west side. The old garage space has been re-imagined as a dining room. The new garage is 540 square feet with two 9-foot-wide doors and one deep bay to accommodate a large SUV.

The house is being built with dual zone furnaces, water heaters and air conditioning systems and has been seismically updated. The entire lot will be fenced, with a gate leading directly to the bike trail, near where Soto plans to install an outdoor children's water fountain.

This is not the first house either owner has rebuilt, but it is their first project together. Soto said she completed a remodel near San Anselmo. McClain said his civil engineering and construction background helped him remodel two homes in the Rockridge area.

He called his first project "the worst house in the neighborhood." Both McClain and Soto find whole house residential remodeling simultaneously fun and challenging, and Soto credits local builder Tim Mcnamara for helping them understand the construction process.

...continued on page D6



663 Glenside Drive, Lafayette

Photo Cathy Dausman



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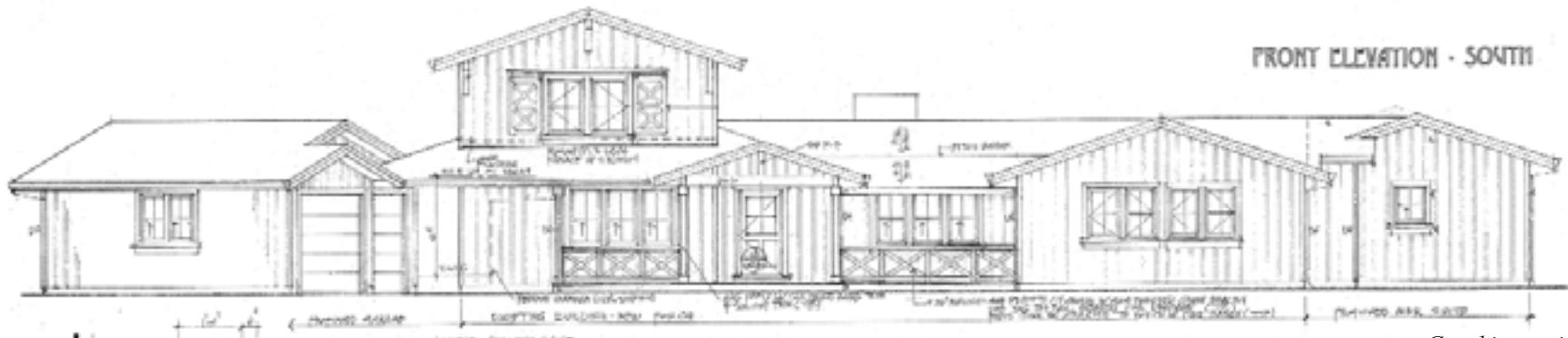
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*Per public records



From “Fixer” to Farm Fresh

...continued from page D4



Graphic provided

For Soto, who loves decorating, the fun comes as she restores “a bit of history” in an area where farm houses and orchards once were common.

One challenge the two faced was complying with setback requirements, since the house sits at an angle on the property. Expanding the footprint was a trial and error process McClain referred to as “a Gordian knot.”

In the end Soto and McClain claimed a five-by-five foot bump-out in the kitchen for a seating nook and expanded the house 11 feet along the front. Amid

the challenges, McClain said he enjoys the “new house smells” of lumber, carpet and paint.

The two plan a second local joint remodel in 2014, although Soto and McClain say “finding the next property” is its own challenge. Soto confided, “This is my dream house.”

“Every house we fix is your dream house!” McClain said quickly.

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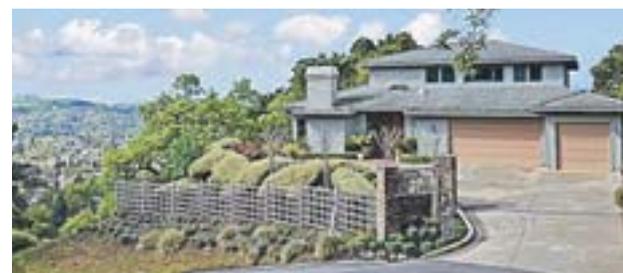
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Tom Barber, Lafayette, CA - 2012



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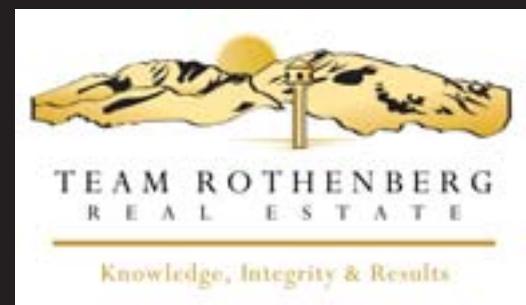
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The Home Designer

What's Love Got To Do With It?

By Brandon Neff

Believe me, holiday themed articles peppered with witty, cutesy turns-of-phrase and double entendre are not my style. You'll never read my "Deck The Halls With Boughs Of Velvet," or my "Jack-O-Lantern Decorating Extravaganza" in this column. In fact, I would say that I go to great lengths to avoid any type of contrived prose or display altogether. However, how can I ignore that Valentine's Day is upon us, and begging to be recognized? I'm no cynic (well, maybe a little). So, in honor of the occasion I will do my best to thread the needle of incorporating something resembling romance into this week's feature without dissolving into saccharine rhetoric. Don't expect any "love nest" or "super-sexy boudoir" recommendations from me here, but rather, I offer you a more esoteric take on the occasion – glamour.

Glamour is sexy. Glamour stirs emotion. Glamour heightens every moment. Glamour, dare I say, is romantic.

In my work, clients are mostly interested in function. They want spaces that serve a specific need - this usually includes a TV and a place to sit while watching said TV. People, there's more to living well than a comfortable place to sit while tuning out your partner – am I right? Don't answer that!

While I'm all for creating a functional room, I'm a firm believer that your space can, and should inspire you to live at a higher level. A sanctuary, if you will, where you're operating at your best – free from all the chaos of the world outside your doorstep. Your home can be aspirational, and is definitely an extension of your personality. Whether you want to believe it, or not, your home represents to all who visit just who you are at your heart evidenced by what things you surround yourself with, and what you're presenting to every guest. If, as we're being sold every day, our personal "brand" is being shaped by our work, our time "online" and by our actions, shouldn't your brand begin at home? So, to this end, I propose adding a touch of glamour to your brand.

What is glamour? For me, it's seeing things through a curated lens - making the most out of everything you add to your life. Glamour sparks an emotion, or creates a dramatic pause. Historically, glamour was seen as something for the rich - an affect ripe with pretense and largely unattainable. Trust me, glamour isn't about money. Far from it. Things, in themselves, do not create glamour, but how you put them together does.

...continued on page D10



A curvy custom sofa and plush pillows add comfort and glamour. Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

A couple of "before and after" photos illustrate my point. I was asked by my clients to create something "glamorous and inviting" in their living room. They entertain quite often, but this room felt sad and uninspiring – hardly a room for festive and lively gatherings. Even more upsetting, the existing furnishings and trimmings had cost them a fortune – again, without guidance they had spent a ransom on pieces that neither worked, nor accomplished their goal. There was no gracious layout, no flattering lighting, nothing personal or interesting that indicated who they were at their best.

When I first saw the room, I envisioned it becoming a light-filled space with generous seating, dramatic windows, sumptuous details and a show-stopping moment or two – my clients are fun and interesting people, but the room betrayed their personality.

... continued on page D10



Drab walls, outdated shutters and poor layout hide this room's enormous potential.

Photos courtesy Brandon Neff Design

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The Home Designer

...continued from page D8



Dramatic linen draperies, pale walls and beautiful textures make the room a chic gathering space.

They wanted a place for cocktails and conversation – a place to enhance their lifestyle and heighten moments with friends and family. And they wanted a little romance.

What I created for them was a room that feels twice as large and 10 times more glamorous. And don't let the chic furniture and fabrics fool you – everything is durable, functional and washable, fashionable and practical in perfect harmony. Soft lighting keeps you looking your best, jewel tone upholstery surprises you, and sensuous shapes and textures stimulate all of your senses. Let's face it, if we didn't care about our surroundings we'd all still be living in caves. We evolved and discovered a life less ordinary.

Simple tips. I removed the dated shutters on the windows and hung full length drapes mounted just below the crown molding for exceptional drama. It takes the eye up and makes the room feel grand. In lieu of a clunky coffee table, I placed two smaller "tea height" tables in the room to catch cocktails and canapés – they're easy to move around as needed and add great sculpture. A pair of matching chairs replaced the love seat, creating more personal space for guests – no one wants to share a love seat unless they're lovers, and even then just for a short period of time! Creating sexy lighting was key – always mix overhead lighting with more flattering task and accent lighting at eye level. So important. Lastly, for added glamour, mix in a few unexpected elements like that chandelier fashioned after a sea urchin – with so many choices out there why would one want something ordinary? It's whimsical and unique – just like my clients.

Remember, interior design is personal, intimate and revealing at the same time. You have the choice to live your life in a space that speaks to you, makes you smile and lifts your spirit when you open the door – something akin to love, right?

For this Valentine's Day surround yourself with what you treasure; choose wisely. If all else fails, choose dark chocolates!



Brandon Neff is a Bay Area based Interior Designer.

He can be reached at BrandonNeffDesign.com or at brandonneffdesign@yahoo.com.

Ask Cynthia Brian-Cymbidiums Reader's Request

Hi Cynthia:

I noticed that you include orchids as one of your favorite plants in your articles. They are beautiful but I know they are hard to grow. Any suggestions? Thanks for the great advice always.

Maggie in Moraga

Hi Maggie:

You are absolutely right that **I LOVE** any type of orchid. Contrary to popular belief, they are incredibly easy to grow and fairly maintenance free. Yes, I do remember the days when the media touted orchids as rare and risky, but the reality couldn't be further from the truth. Orchids are actually one of the largest flowering plants on the planets with an estimated 26,000 species!

Although native to the subtropical highlands of Southeast Asia, for Lamorinda gardeners, the Cymbidium is an easy and excellent choice for both indoors and outdoors. Cymbidiums need bright light and like to be dry before re-watering. I usually water my indoor specimens once every two to three weeks throughout the year and my outdoor ones are watered when the soil is dry. They blossom January through late spring preferring temperatures in the 50-70 degree range when blooming, making them the perfect indoor plant for late winter. When all stems have completed their blooming cycle, cut the spent flower at the base. Because I like the look of the spiky leaves, I use my plants in design details throughout the year.

If you want Cymbidiums to re-bloom (and who doesn't), it's best to put them outside in the fall in bright sunlight in a north facing space as they need cool night temperatures to set new flowers. By the way, I always keep mine in a pot and never plant them directly in the ground. As they outgrow a container, I repot. My Mom, who taught me almost everything I know about being a gardener, has over 50 potted Cymbidiums outside in her patio that re-bloom every season with four to twelve spikes. She moves them from place to place to add color and texture to her garden rooms. A girlfriend of mine keeps six to eight pots of orchids behind a retaining wall on the north side of her house. She doesn't like the look of the plant, but she adores the blooms. She cuts the long flower stems to make gorgeous arrangements and her plants give her an abundance of orchids annually without any fuss or muss. Although care instructions will tell you to fertilize orchids every other week with a half dose of 20-20-20, I have not found this to be necessary.

Throughout February, you can find displays of beautiful Cymbidiums in full glory at your local nursery, home center, and even the grocery store for under \$20. What do you have to lose? So what if it only lasts a season in your home? You'll still have two to four months of beautiful flowers gracing your décor- a much less expensive choice than buying weekly cut bouquets! Now this is a gift that keeps on giving.

Cynthia

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Cynthia Brian

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- **Details on 2012 Lamorinda Home Sales**

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ORINDA



New Listing

32 Dos Posos

Lovely Orinda Country Club traditional overlooking Lake Cascade. 4bd/3.5ba including stunning kitchen w/ adjacent family room, formal dining, new deck with spa. Lawns and gardening areas. Great family living and entertaining areas inside & out! **Offered at \$1,699,000**

ORINDA



251 Monte Vista Ridge Rd.

Stunning 5bd/4ba gated custom estate home w/panoramic views of Briones. Outdoor living at its best w/expansive terrace featuring fabulous kitchen. Romantic master retreat w/spa bath.

Offered at \$1,939,000

ORINDA



65 La Espiral

Updated 4bd/4ba with beautiful custom features & amenities. Very well maintained. Majestic setting, lovely gardens, new pool + views/privacy, fully fenced. Tuscany ambiance, European flair.

Offered at \$2,195,000

MORAGA



New Listing

128 Miramonte Drive

Pristine Miramonte Gardens home. End-unit w/ many upgrades; African hardware, recessed lighting, charming private patio. Move-in Ready! 3 bedroom + office + great storage.

Offered at \$499,000

MORAGA



New Price

3 Peralta Court

Absolutely beautiful single-level home in Sanders Ranch. Eat-in kit. w/double ovens, gas range, built in refr., island w/counter seating & more. Hdwd flrs, spacious bdr., indoor laundry rm & great storage. Lvl yd w/slate patio. Cul-de-sac location.

Offered at \$1,089,000

MORAGA



New Listing

26 Williams Drive

Located in popular Moraga Place close to schools, shops. Home has large entertaining kitchen/family room combo. Large master suite opens to entertainer's yard of sparkling pool, lawn, play. Formal living & dining rooms.

Offered at \$1,100,000

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

3645 Boyer Circle

Fabulous 3500+ sf custom hm w/lovely views on .76 ac. Walk to town. 4bd/3.5ba, vaulted ceilings, formal din, FR adj. to kit. In/outdr access from almost every rm. 2nd common play area opens to kids beds is currently an ofc. Expansive decks/lvl play areas.

Offered at \$1,249,000

LAFAYETTE



11 Leslyn Lane

Spectacular 4bd/5.5ba on apx. 4.37 acres. High ceilings, two family rooms, master with fireplace, spa tub, heated floors and private deck. Wine room, office, media center, organic garden with raised beds, salt water pool and cozy cabana.

Offered at \$2,650,000

ALAMO



New Listing

72 Chancellor Court

Beautifully remodeled and updated home in prestigious/ gated Stonegate. Fabulous kitchen, hardwood floors, crown moldings, plantation shutters. Private court with great yard and attractive gardens.

Offered at 1,095,000

EL CERRITO



New Listing

1332 Navellier Street

One of a kind opportunity! California Historical Interest designated home built in 1898 on 1.86 acres. Gorgeous views of the Bay. Needs restoration but livable. Probate sale!

Offered at \$649,000

WALNUT CREEK



New Listing

2431 Mallard Drive

Remodeled & updated Larkey Park rancher w/ kitchen opening to large family room, separate living room & dining area. Great, private yard with patio & grass play area!

Offered at \$675,000

WALNUT CREEK



3706 Waterford Lane

Gorgeous Traditional 4bd/3.5ba Northgate home. Many upgrades! New carpet, paint, refinished hdwd flrs. Huge eat-in kit/FR. Formal dining & LR. Professionally landscaped back yard. Grand master w/ adjoining den.

Offered at \$1,370,000

THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATES:

*Ashley Battersby
Patricia Battersby
Joan Cleveland
Shannon Conner*

Joan Eggers

Linda Ehrich

Joan Evans

Linda S Friedman

Marianne Greene

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Anne Knight

Susan Zeh Layng

Art Lehman

Charles Levine

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Lynda Snell

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Terri Bates Walker

Ann Ward

Dan Weil

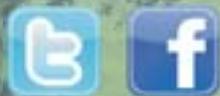
Margaret Zucker

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