

## What to expect in 2015

By Andi Peterson Brown

The 2014 Lamorinda real estate market remained strong as the Bay Area economy continued to thrive, bringing us a steady stream of well-capitalized buyers. Sold inventory for the year remained almost identical to 2013: 276 homes sold in Orinda (264 in 2013), 301 in Lafayette (315 in 2013), and 150 in Moraga (140 in 2013), while the average sales price increased in all three cities. As compared to 2013, Orinda's average sales price increased 11% to \$1.375M, Lafayette's increased 8% to \$1.35M, and Moraga's increased 6% to \$1.205M. As the market emerges from its annual winter hibernation and we gear up for the 2015 spring selling season, we expect to see:

- **A competitive spring market.** Buyers should anticipate a competitive spring market, but industry experts expect more sellers to come to market in 2015, helping to ease our inventory shortage. Values are anticipated to continue their rise, but at a more moderate pace.
- **Relatively steady interest rates.** Interest rates remain historically low and are expected to remain so for some time. Industry economists are forecasting, though, that they could inch up to 5% before the year is over.

In addition, I'm happy to talk in more detail about the market if you have further questions.



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## Stylish Solutions

# The Intrinsic Nature of Deep Cleaning and Design

... continued from page D1



*We have two French Ranges that are not self-cleaning. As such, a professional deep clean is critical from a maintenance standpoint. Take a good look at your appliances, inside and out, front and back as well as ceilings, light fixtures and floors. Hire professionals when you can. Photos Eric Nelder*

How do we do that? Here are my top three successful January cleanout tips for you, the stylish suburbanite:

**First: Deep Clean.** Even if you have never hired a cleaning service, there are times it's prudent to call in the professionals. At least three times a year, we recommend a deep clean for each of our clients. That includes things like: skylights, stone floors, heating vents, interior ceilings, drapery and upholstery. There are so many services that specialize; find the ones with solid reviews that use eco-friendly products and invest. And look up. Don't neglect the oversized chandelier and ceilings. They need to be washed.

Many people hold off until the so-called spring months

(March and April) to do what they call a "spring clean," but we have found getting a solid crew in for a deep clean in January not only clears the glitter off the hardwood floor (hello, holiday leftovers), it sets our clients in a refreshing place even while the weather can be gloomy.

Personally, we have stone floors and the glitter (which I love in December) gets a tad tiresome in late January. After a solid vacuum by me, it's time to call in the stone polishers and sealers. Expensive? Perhaps, but definitely worth it. Besides, a bit of maintenance along the way saves the investment down the road.

**Second: Reduce, reduce, reduce.** Did I say reduce? I meant, reduce! We tackle our waistslines and even our winter gardens in January but often forget to look hard inside our homes. Personally, I succumb to January sales just like the rest and, as a decorator, I am often purchasing for inventory later in the season, but some of those things work their way into my personal space. Not good, Ann.

How do I recommend tackling this reduction? Simple: make a chart and get aggressive. Take inventory and target to reduce by 25 percent. That means when you are cleaning out a kitchen storage area, if you have 10 measuring cups, lose two or three – more if you can. Ten pans? Lose two or three.

The truth is, when we really face our truth behind the storage doors in the kitchen and on the book shelves in the family room, there is always room for reduction. Donate, garage sale, recycle.

Even the pros know: it's nearly impossible for someone to get a clear vision for a space in their mind's eye without clearing the clutter first. ... continued on page D6



*Close-up shots reveal how clean items really are.*