

Outdoor living, great schools and accessibility keep Lamorinda real estate hot

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Photos provided

According to Dudum Del Santo, the ability to enjoy indoor-outdoor living has gained in popularity, which, of course, goes back to our great climate. “People want to have an extended living space that goes outdoors,” she said, “or at least the ability to add it. We’re seeing more and more buyers looking for that total outdoor living area – not just a backyard, pool or patio, but an outside great room, complete with a TV, barbecue and covered section.”

Coldwell Banker’s Larry Hood echoed this thought and added that large backyards and the abundance of open space surrounding Lamorinda increase its appeal. “There are so many recreational opportunities in our area,” Hood said. “Younger, energetic families are choosing the area in part because of all the activities available to them. And large yards, someplace for the kids to play, are also a big plus.”

Hood added that Lamorinda is still more affordable than San Francisco, Marin or the Peninsula, and the commute to the business centers is typically easier. “It’s a big draw anytime people can keep within 30-45 minutes of San Francisco’s financial district,” he noted. Anton Danilovich from Sotheby’s International Realty concurred. “People are getting more ‘bang for their

buck’ when moving here.

“We’re seeing young professionals who were living in San Francisco moving to Lamorinda to raise their families,” Danilovich continued. “A large house here is probably the same price as the two-bedroom loft or condo they’re leaving. A \$2 million home in Lafayette would probably be \$6 million in Palo Alto or \$4 million in Marin.”

One thing Danilovich noted is that often people moving to the suburbs “like the pricing but not the housing options. The style of houses in this area hasn’t changed much over the years,” he said. “I’ve had clients asking for contemporary homes and they don’t want to look at anything else.” He notes that these are typically the people that have been living in the city, in one of those newer ultra-modern, ultra-sleek high-rise apartment buildings. “They’re telling me they don’t want to spend several million dollars and end up living in their parents’ house,” he stated.

Hood agreed that people searching for homes in Lamorinda are looking for more contemporary designs. “Younger families tend to like higher ceilings, open space, less compartmentalized styles,” he reported. Dudum Del Santo has found the same thing. She

noted that while the craftsman and farmhouse style homes you might see on HGTV are popular, “people also like the sleek, clean lines of the contemporary design.” Sothebys Maribel Cribb added that simplicity and energy efficiency are also key features homebuyers are looking for.

Danilovich told about a Lafayette house he recently sold. By doing a significant style and design rehab, “we literally doubled the value of the home without adding any square footage,” he said. “You can’t believe the dramatic difference high quality new floors, paint, tile, door knobs and even hinges can make.” Admittedly, the kitchen layout was changed and opened up but, according to Danilovich, “most everything else was purely aesthetic.”

People would rather move into a home that’s been upgraded and modernized, Dudum Del Santo noted. “They’d rather pay a little more, even wait a little longer, for that move-in ready house,” she said. Calhoun agreed. “Most working couples simply don’t have the time or energy to renovate.”

Once here, Lamorinda homebuyers may never want to leave. As one longtime resident recently said, “Why would I want to live anywhere else?”