



The Real Estate Informer

From Bernard Gibbons, "The English Agent"
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Signs of Movement in The Local Real Estate Market



As I write this column at the end of January it is clear that there are signs of optimism in the air for the real estate sales market. Weekend Open Houses are getting high numbers of visitors and buyers are actually writing offers. Homes in the Bay Area are selling again!

Most people appear to agree that we have now past the bottom of the price correction curve although many also predict that value appreciation will be slight until at least the third quarter and possibly until Spring of 2008. If you are planning to trade up, this means that this year could be a very good time to get your home on the market before prices start to rise again.

The table below shows numbers of single family homes

with a sale agreed over the past 6 months. Obviously December was the time of least activity but in January we can see that there was a swift recovery to pre-December figures. And I would not be surprised to see much higher figures in February.

What is not shown here is the number of homes for sale. In fact this figure is now around 30% lower overall than it was in August 2006. Less choice for buyers and less competition for sellers.

	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
San Ramon	68	66	87	71	56	69
Danville	56	62	46	54	45	66
Alamo	13	10	14	12	10	8
Walnut Creek	83	52	96	69	55	66
TOTAL	220	190	243	206	166	209

Featured Office Listings

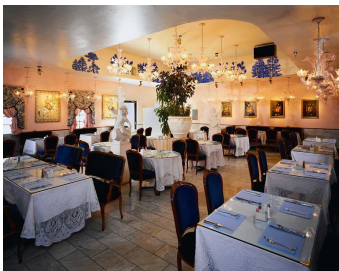


San Ramon - 5 bed, 3 bath, 3176sf - \$949,500



San Ramon - 3 bed, 2.5 bath, 1967sf - \$799,000

Restaurant Review: Favorite East Bay Area Restaurants 2007



The start of the year traditionally heralds the start of the Awards Season and it is in that spirit I offer my own nominations for Favorite Restaurants in The San Ramon Valley and Lamorinda. Do you agree with my selections? Disagree? Please let me have your comments by email to Bernard@BernardGibbons.com

Best Indian Restaurant Swad, Lafayette

A relative newcomer, Swad provides tasty Indian food in nicely decorated, contemporary surroundings. The Murgh Elaichi Korma (chicken in a very mild curry sauce with cardamom, fenugreek and cashews) is exceptionally good and their signature Butter Chicken is also very good. The Paratha (an Indian flat-bread) is amazing!

Best French Restaurant Alouette's, San Ramon

This family owned and run restaurant in a large shopping center on Crow Canyon Road serves very traditional French food in an intimate bistro setting. Excellent Sweetbreads, and Steak au Poivre and probably the best Duck à l'Orange in the East Bay. I have eaten at many more expensive French restaurants but Alouette's takes some beating.

Best Mexican El Charro, Lafayette

Totally unpretentious food from a typical Mexican restaurant menu but consistent and perfectly cooked. Great enchiladas, tamales and chile rellenos. The fajitas are pretty good too. Lots of other dishes but most people seem to go for the old favorites. They also have a pleasant outdoor patio (often full) for those hot summer evenings. Sophisticated it is not but definitely very satisfying. Mexican soul food! Don't miss the outstanding complimentary tortilla chips with garlic butter and particularly good salsas.

Best Chinese Restaurant Uncle Yu's, San Ramon

If you were to visit Uncle Yu's without knowing it was a Chinese restaurant, you could be expecting classical French food. This large, tastefully decorated art deco themed space always seems to be three quarters full and although the food is mostly no better than many other Chinese restaurants in the area, the service is exemplary, the wine list astounding and the total dining experience is tremendous.

Best English Restaurant The Crown, Danville

OK so it's really a pub but now well established as a Danville landmark, the Crown serves unquestionably the best fish and chips (and mushy peas) in the Bay Area and possibly the best in California. That's not all they sell but it is so good that it is hard to order anything else! I should also mention the great range of beers including Fullers ESB and London Pride.

Best European Restaurant Vino, Lafayette

You will never find Vino by accident. Just five tables squeezed into a tiny space set back from Mt Diablo Blvd. Vino is staffed by the owner, Castro Ascarrunz (the Maitre D', waiter and piano player all rolled into one) and his wife who is the chef. Tremendous ambience and interesting, well-cooked Basque-influenced food. Don't even think of going without a reservation.

Best Mediterranean Alamo Creek, Alamo

What a find. This is a great little restaurant that appears to have just five tables plus a few outside at first glance. In reality, there is a second

dining room at the back and additional outdoor seating. There are so many good things to say about Alamo Creek. Wonderful, tasty food (and vegetables!!). Very attentive service. Good ambience (at least in the back dining room. And unbelievably inexpensive. Alamo Creek and Vino are two of the smallest, yet most appealing restaurants in the East Bay.

Reviews such as the ones on this page are included as a service to introduce people to interesting restaurants in the San Ramon Valley. They should not be taken as any form of recommendation. We have no connection with any restaurateurs in the area and all opinions expressed are strictly those of the writer. Any comments or feedback is welcomed and encouraged. If you have a particular restaurant that you would like to see reviewed, email me at bernard@bernardgibbons.com

DO YOU KNOW ANY FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS?

The real estate market has seen a considerable adjustment over the past year or so and homes are more affordable now than they have been for some time. This provides a great opportunity for people wanting to buy their first home.

I have helped many people to buy their first home, often as a result of referrals from people like you. If you know anybody I can help in this way, please let me have their contact details. I promise to treat them like family. Call me anytime on (925) 997-1585 or email bernard@bernardgibbons.com.

Getting Organized For Tax Time



Many refund delays, time-consuming correspondence and audits are triggered by taxpayer carelessness. Here are some IRS reminders about items to check in advance of filing your return, along with some steps to take afterward.

Start with the basics.

Check the package of forms and schedules that came from the IRS. First read the instructions to make sure you have all the ones you need. If not, they are easily available from the IRS through several channels. To have them mailed to you, call 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676); to use the automated fax service, call 703-368-9694 (not a toll-free call); or to download copies, go to the website <http://www.irs.gov>.

Should you fill out the 1040 yourself or hire someone?

The answer depends on how complicated your finances are.

Does your income come mainly from salaries, with some interest from savings and dividends from stocks and mutual funds? And do you claim either the no-questions-asked standard deduction, a flat amount based mostly on filing status and age, or simple-to-calculate itemized deductions for such outlays as state income taxes or sales taxes (one or the other, but not both), charitable contributions, real estate taxes, and mortgage interest? Then you probably are able to file without paid help. The IRS and many volunteer organizations, such as AARP, offer free help. Also consider electronic filing. TurboTax, TaxCut and other software programs are comparable in quality and prompt you step by step to make filing easy.

Do you have income from, say, rental properties or partnerships or do you operate your own business, whether on a part- or full-time basis? Then you might need professional help.

If you decide to turn the chore over to a paid preparer, meet as early as possible during the filing season. For a first-time meeting, bring along returns for previous years. In some cases, reviewing past filings uncovers miscues that require amending or ways to trim the tab that you might now be overlooking.

Whether you go it alone or

hire a tax pro, set aside time to rummage through your personal records, including last year's returns, check-books, credit-card statements, receipts, appointment calendars and bills. Your objective: to scavenge for forgotten deductions, particularly if you are self-employed.

When filling out the 1040:

If you do your own return, read the instructions carefully. They include plain-language explanations of changes in the tax laws and are essential in accurately preparing your return.

Before sending in your return, photocopy it. Also be sure to attach securely all required schedules and statements -- for example, Schedule A, on which you itemize deductions, or Schedule D, which lists gains and losses from sales of individual stocks, mutual fund shares and other assets.

After you file:

Save records that support deductions, exemptions and other items on your return, and that photocopy of your return. You will need them if the computers bounce your return. Generally, the statute of limitations for the IRS to start an audit is three years from the return's due date.

As one last step, open a file now for this year and begin to save the information that you will need next year at 1040 time.

Interest Rate Update:

30 Year Fixed (Conforming) - 6.375%

30 Year Fixed (Jumbo) - 6.375%

(Source: Wells-Fargo - Jan 30th, 2007)

February Dates:

Feb 12 - Lincoln's Birthday

Feb 14 - Valentine's Day

Feb 19 - Presidents' Day

Feb 22 - Washington's Birthday

THINKING ABOUT MAKING A MOVE?

I Will Help You Get Your Home Ready To Sell

If you are considering selling your home, please contact me now to ensure that your home selling experience is smooth and stress free.

I have a team of proven, reliable Painters, Carpet Fitters, Landscapers, House Cleaners and Contractors ready to do whatever is needed to get your home on the market.

Call me at any time for a free consultation and market valuation without any obligation. I will also let you have a copy of my High Impact Marketing Plan that will describe exactly what I will do to get your home sold.

All Agents are not alike!

Contact Bernard Gibbons at (925) 997-1585 and be prepared to experience the highest level of personal and professional service in real estate.

Planning Some Home Improvements? - If you need a contractor, give me a call. I maintain a database of reliable, contractors of all kinds who work in our area. Call Bernard Gibbons on (925) 997-1585 or email Bernard@BernardGibbons.com.

MARKET UPDATE

SAN RAMON VALLEY & LAMORINDA

Source: Contra Costa / MAX MLS

**The 40 most recently Closed Sales in Alamo, Blackhawk, Danville, San Ramon,
Walnut Creek, Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda**
(Sorted By City and Sold Price)

Address	City	Beds	Baths	Part Baths	SqFt	Lot Sq Ft	List Price	Sold Price
3278 Stone Valley Rd	Alamo	4	2	1	2538	15000	\$1,249,000	\$1,172,000
1427 Vine Lane	Alamo	5	4	1	5760	32638	\$2,895,000	\$2,845,000
301 W Meadows Lane	Danville	3	2	1	1992	2700	\$699,950	\$685,000
60 Rainbow Cir	Danville	4	3	0	1744	3630	\$699,000	\$690,000
81 Fawn Pl	Danville	3	2	1	1590	3008	\$699,000	\$715,000
42 Casablanca Street	Danville	3	2	0	1744	5069	\$759,000	\$759,950
25 Nerine Ct	Danville	3	2	1	2023	5026	\$824,950	\$795,000
226 Abigail Cir	Danville	4	2	1	2396	4000	\$799,950	\$799,950
611 Derbyshire Pl	Danville	4	2	0	1955	16059	\$915,000	\$875,000
140 Soda Pl	Danville	4	3	0	2481	26000	\$1,059,000	\$1,022,000
637 Glen Rd	Danville	3	2	0	1636	13635	\$1,150,000	\$1,140,000
201 Cross Bridge Drive	Danville	5	3		3087	7500	\$1,250,000	\$1,185,000
826 Casita Ct	Danville	5	3	0	2828	25300	\$1,289,000	\$1,265,000
4 Windover Ter	Danville	5	4	0	3736	16117	\$1,650,000	\$1,575,000
3275 Vals Lane	Lafayette	3	2	1	2900	11761	\$1,499,000	\$1,440,000
2504 Fountainhead Dr	San Ramon	3	1	1	1276	880	\$468,888	\$445,000
213 Arianna Ln	San Ramon	3	2	1	1605	0	\$615,000	\$600,000
111 Adams Pl	San Ramon	4	2	0	1544	7125	\$669,000	\$645,000
601 S Blackbrush Ln	San Ramon	4	2	1	1904	2100	\$675,000	\$665,000
1094 Vista Pointe Cir	San Ramon	3	2	1	1533	2500	\$710,000	\$700,000
2564 McLaren Ln	San Ramon	3	2	1	1578	3138	\$715,000	\$710,000
531 Treyburn Cir	San Ramon	5	2	1	2109	3810	\$749,950	\$745,000
16 Almond Orchard Ln	San Ramon	4	2	1	1995	2560	\$769,000	\$750,000
7418 Hillsboro Ave	San Ramon	4	2	1	2724	9775	\$859,950	\$855,000
2372 Keats Lane	San Ramon	4	3		3361	7349	\$1,199,900	\$1,064,956
5218 Pembroke Way	San Ramon	5	4	1	4005	6600	\$1,198,000	\$1,329,900
2378 Keats Lane	San Ramon	5	3	1	4061	7267	\$1,404,062	\$1,404,062
700 Ardleigh Ct	San Ramon	5	5	1	5035	23250	\$1,748,250	\$1,650,000
601 Hardcastle Court	San Ramon	5	5	1	5010	15582	\$1,795,000	\$1,765,000
1475 Marchbanks Dr	Walnut Creek	1	1	0	665	0	\$274,900	\$260,000
1315 Alma Avenue	Walnut Creek	1	1	0	595	0	\$335,000	\$335,000
1564 Candellero Dr	Walnut Creek	3	2	1	1568	2244	\$555,000	\$525,000
31 Iron Horse Ln	Walnut Creek	1	2	0	1144	0	\$554,900	\$554,900
2893 San Carlos Dr	Walnut Creek	3	2	0	1300	9000	\$675,000	\$650,000
1713 Encanto Court	Walnut Creek	3	2		1257	10800	\$659,000	\$655,000
78 Las Juntas Way	Walnut Creek	3	2	0	1307	10000	\$659,000	\$671,000
1301 Walden Rd	Walnut Creek	4	2	0	1781	10800	\$877,500	\$830,000
3976 Arbolado Dr	Walnut Creek	3	3	0	2749	17424	\$1,375,000	\$1,325,000
850 Gail Ct	Walnut Creek	4	4	1	5037	50965	\$2,499,000	\$2,195,000

How much did that home down the street sell for? For more detailed information on home sales anywhere in Contra Costa or Alameda County, call Bernard Gibbons on (925) 997-1585 or send an email to Bernard@BernardGibbons.com