

REAL ESTATE

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This column highlights promotions, transfers, hirings, awards won and other key personnel moves within the suburban real estate community. Send a brief biographical summary—including the towns of residence and employment and a black and white photo if desired—to: Movers and Shakers, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, 48150. Our fax number is (313) 591-7279.

Jayne promoted



Bradford Jayne, AIA, becomes manager of health care planning services for Albert Kahn Associates, an architectural and engineering firm. He previously served as senior planner for health care facilities. Jayne, a Birmingham resident, served as chief planner for the new \$200 million Veterans Administration replacement hospital at the Detroit Medical Center before rejoining Albert Kahn Associates last year.

Kagzi named manager



Mohammed Kagzi, PE, of Farmington Hills, has been hired as manager of health care electrical services of Albert Kahn Associates. He has 25 years experience in health care facility design nationwide. Kagzi is currently participating in projects for Sparrow Hospital in Lansing and the University of Michigan Hospital, in Ann Arbor.

Holmes assumes job

Pamela DuBols Holmes, AIA, has assumed the role of manager of health care architectural services for Albert Kahn Associates. She has more than 20 years experience in architectural design.

Bhattcharyya named

Suda Bhattcharyya, PE, has become manager of health care mechanical services and will continue as assistant director of mechanical engineering for Albert Kahn Associates. He joined the firm in 1970.

Mary Kaverley, a sales associate with Clarkson Real Estate Services in that community, has acquired the Graduate Realtors Institute designation.



Coming clean: Windows that sparkle do more to showcase a house for sale than other preparations, some real estate agents maintain.

Smart agents jump start sales

By DOUG FUNK

STAFF WRITER

Just because this is a sellers market — more buyers than houses available for sale — doesn't mean that every listing is a quick sell.

Some houses wither on the vine. "It's languishing because it's not clean, in poor condition or so overpriced that no one looks at it," said Joan Knittel, associate broker with Century 21 Row in Livonia.

"Smart agents and their clients don't just wring their hands and complain. They do something."

"I just had one where the sellers were asking too much money," said Ruth Malach, a Realtor associate with the Michigan Group in West Bloomfield.

"I must have done six market analyses. They turned down one offer because they thought it was too low. A second came in at about the same price. I said, 'Does this tell you something?'"

"I stayed with them until midnight Saturday and was there again at 9 a.m. on Sunday," Malach related. "I told them, 'This house is selling this weekend to this buyer. I'm not letting go.'"

"Finally, they (sellers) said, 'Ruth, I guess you were right.'"

Malach said she will jump start a listing that hasn't sold for six weeks by removing it from the multi-list, trying to get sellers to agree to a price

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Joan Knittel

associate broker Century 21 Row in Livonia.

change, then relisting.

"Generally, it's all tied to pricing," said Mary Williams, a Realtor associate with Prudential Great Lakes Realty in Farmington Hills. "If it's priced right, it will sell."

"If a seller wants to stay with a price, they must change the property, if possible," Williams said. "They have to freshen it. It has to sparkle. Paint, carpeting is generally going to do an awful lot."

Mike Baker, sales associate with Re/Max Crossroads in Canton, has experienced listings with a decor problem.

"I have a house now in Plymouth. (pause) What's happened is some sellers have gotten into a mindset that they can put their house on the market in any condition and it will sell," Baker said.

But it isn't true. "Buyers for the last four or five years have been quite fussy about mechanicals and decorating in a home," he said. "They want to move in without picking up a paint brush."

"When a house is showing a little below average — they haven't updated floor coverings or the kitchen — buyers just say, 'Next.' Even in this market."

"You can't change location," Baker said. "You can drop the price and change the condition of the house with paint, floor covering. Put lighter colors in."

Some Realtors won't bother listing or showing a home if it's shabby, Malach said. "When I take a listing, I go through and tell them (sellers) what I think needs to be done and I call a handyman."

"When you go into a house that needs carpeting, has holes, needs painting — is that a turner? Malach asked rhetorically. "If I can't look at a house and say, 'Isn't it pretty? I can't sell it.'"

Sales strategies sometimes must be expended.

"You need to move to target-marketing, exposing it to a target group that would be interested to moving into the community," Williams said.

"Send mailings out to neighbor-

hoods one or two notches (in price) below the property you're marketing to entice buyers to move up. Except first-time buyers. Go to apartments."

Networking with other agents, "getting the word out," helps, too, Williams said.

Malach said she finds open houses fruitful.

An undesirable location — on a major road, near electrical transformer lines — can be a tough nut to crack.

"You have to price realistically for location. You have to make it attractive to the buyer in price so they can overlook the railroad tracks," Knittel said.

"It has to be in tip-top shape, clean, very-well maintained," she added. "Clean windows will do more to sell a house than a lot of other expensive things."

Knittel recalled selling to a buyer who specifically wanted to be on a main road because the constant buzz of traffic made her feel more connected with the world.

"The only way to accommodate for that — location, location, location being key — is by price and exposure, target-marketing," Williams said.

But the good news is that sooner or later there's usually a buyer for every kind of house.

"I tell people, 'After all, you bought it. There will probably be someone else,'" Knittel said.

Be careful when buying Mexican time shares

REAL ESTATE QUERIES



ROBERT M. MEISNER

I read with interest your recent article on time shares in Mexico. I wanted to inform you and your readers that one's interests can literally go down the drain at the whim of the time share facility in Mexico.

This happened to me when I was advised by a time share in Puerto Vallarta that the time share facility had been sold and that they would no longer honor my time share certificate, which was to be good until the year 2012. It appears that the time share along with their U.S. affiliates, who allowed us to transfer our time share week to another facility, no longer wish to honor our ownership in these time shares.

They refuse to supply me with the names of all of the other owners of the time shares who have been duped so that we may proceed with class action suits, international boycotts and sanctions, or other appropriate steps to regain our ownership or be compensated for this thievery. I am advised that there are mem-

bers/owners from every state in the U.S. and Canada, perhaps 1000 or more. Since Mexico wants to do business with the U.S. and other countries, the Mexican government should be able to intervene in this affair to enforce this agreement or provide compensation or not allow the time share facility in Puerto Vallarta to operate at all until they have made good on these certificates of purchase. I hope to make this public through the media and other sources to warn people not to buy any "time shares" or other properties in Mexico at all because the rule of law is not enforceable in Mexico.

I have reviewed the materials which you sent me and appreciate your frustration in dealing with a time share situation in Mexico. Several readers have also advised me of the fact that they have not been able to obtain refunds on time share deposits, even though it was represented to them that there would be a cooling off period of three days before their time share agreement became enforceable. There is a consumer protection agency in most Mexican cities. I would suggest that you write the city in question, care of the Consumer Protection Division of the Mexi-

can government. I would also suggest that you write the Mexican Consulate here in Michigan to express your frustrations. It is also obvious that you need to retain the services of an attorney who is prepared to bring a class action suit against those persons responsible, both here in the United States and/or in Mexico for what appears to be a fraudulent transaction. Obviously, people who are interested in buying time shares should be aware of the fact that the time share entity may dissolve and/or refuse to honor your time share certificate in the future. This is unfortunately a black mark on all time shares and one would think that the time share industry would want to insure that this kind of situation will not be wide spread in order to minimize the negative impact that it has on all time share arrangements.

Robert M. Meisner is an Oakland County area attorney concentrating his practice in areas of condominium, real estate, corporate law and litigation. You are invited to submit topics which you would like to see discussed in this column, including questions about condominiums, by writing Robert M. Meisner, 30200 Telegraph Road, Suite 407, Bingham Farms, MI 48026. This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion.

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