



The Real Estate Informer

From Bernard Gibbons, "The English Agent"

www.BernardGibbons.com

January 2012

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Restaurant Awards - My Top Choices for 2011
- 2011 - The Real Estate Year In Review
- Plus All The Latest Real Estate Sales Statistics



Bernard Gibbons, J. Rockcliff Realtors
15 Railroad Ave., Danville, CA 94526
(925) 997-1585
bernard@bernardgibbons.com
DRE #01331583

JUST LISTED FOR SALE IN TWIN CREEKS



For more information or to schedule a private showing, phone or text Bernard Gibbons any time at (925) 997-1585 or send an email to bernard@bernardgibbons.com

71 Carousel Place, San Ramon

Rarely does an opportunity like this present itself to acquire a home with so much potential at such an affordable price.

This 3 bed, 2 bath home on a 10,625+/- sq.ft. lot has had a number of significant improvements over the years including a new roof, dual-pane windows and hardwood floors. Set at the end of a quiet court and in walking distance of shops and schools, it is just waiting for a buyer with vision who will want to add their own personal touches and transform it into the home of their dreams.

Offered For Sale at \$499,900



Yes, its that time of year again. These are the local restaurants I consider to be the best in their categories based on my experiences in 2011.

Best Italian Restaurant

There are probably more Italian restaurants in the Bay Area than anything else yet really good ones are few and far between. After much consideration, my award goes to a relatively new restaurant, **Mangia Mi** in Danville. This little hideaway serves food with fresh ingredients at a reasonable price. They also have an outdoor patio.

Best French Restaurant

Not much competition here. French cuisine is considered to be the best in the world but the representation in the east bay is poor. I am

Restaurant Reviews - The Real Estate Informer Restaurant Awards: for 2011

pleased to say that we have one outstanding example though. The prices may be on the high side, but **Chevalier** in Lafayette serves outstanding French food and is highly recommended for that special meal.

Best Indian Restaurant

Indian restaurants come and go with alarming regularity and most are average at best. Too bad, since Indian cuisine is one of my favorites. The best Indian restaurant I know is undoubtedly **Swad** in Lafayette where you can get great food with outstanding flavors.

Best Chinese Restaurant

Again, there is a vast choice in this category. Overall though, I think **Yan's China Bistro** is the winner. With locations in Walnut Creek and Alamo, the food (especially the specials) is excellent and the surrounding are very pleasant.

Best Seafood Restaurant

I do like seafood and this is another category where there is little choice. The Walnut Creek Yacht Club has its followers but I still rate **Scotts Restaurant** in Walnut Creek higher. I find myself returning there frequently for their reliable and sometimes imaginative dishes. The décor is

rather dated but it is still a pleasant (and very popular) restaurant.

Best California Cuisine

There is plenty of choice here and many contenders have a good reputation and a strong following. My choice, following their relatively recent change of ownership (and menu) is **Patrick David** in Danville. An intimate restaurant serving imaginative food in a great location.

Best Outdoor Dining

There are many restaurants in our area with patios. Not all have food to match the al fresco experience though. Some that do are **Barone's** in Pleasanton and **Chevalier**, **Metro** and **Postino**, all in Lafayette. After much deliberation though, I think **Blackhawk Grill** has the edge over them all. It would be hard to imagine a more perfect location and the quality of food has always impressed me.

Best Overall

And the winner is **Chevalier** in Lafayette. As noted earlier, this is one of the very few remaining French restaurants in our area and the food is authentic and without compromise. The main restaurant is like a typical small French bistro and they also have a covered dining patio, set amidst attractive gardens. **Chevalier** has exactly what it takes to make a good restaurant great.

TIME TO GET YOUR HOME ON THE MARKET?

If you are waiting for prices to increase, it just isn't going to happen for a few years. If you plan to make a move, this is the new reality, and now is the time for action. Spring is around the corner and there will be a lot of motivated buyers around very shortly. Desirable homes that are priced at true market value and professionally prepared and marketed will be in great demand this year.

Do you really want to wait until you have more competition? For a free market evaluation and consultation to evaluate what cost-effective improvements you should make to help you to maximize your return, call Bernard Gibbons on (925) 997-1585 now.

Reviews such as the ones on this page are included as a service to introduce people in the San Ramon Valley to interesting restaurants. I have no connection with any restaurateurs in the area and all opinions expressed are strictly those of the writer. I welcome and encourage your comments and/or feedback. If you have a particular restaurant that you would like me to review, email bernard@bernardgibbons.com and I will do my best to oblige.

2011 - The Real Estate Year In Review

I'm sure that many will be glad to see the end of 2011. Last year was a year of a very slowly recovering economy with short sales and foreclosures dominating the real estate landscape. Did things get better or worse during the course of the year? Read on and find out.

Lets take a look at the cost of an average detached single family homes in some of our major areas at the start of 2011 and see what that really means as well as monitoring the change as we leave the year behind.

The Danville Market

100 such homes sold in Danville in the first quarter of 2011 with prices ranging from \$467,000 to \$1.95m, an average price of \$877,423.

An example of what you could expect to buy for \$870,000 is the home illustrated below.



This 4 bedroom, 2.5 bath single level home in Leander Hills with 2322 sq.ft. of living space, was very nicely updated and set on a lot approaching a half acre with manicured grounds.

Flash forward to the last quarter. There we see that 135 homes were sold. Prices ranged from \$382,500 to \$1.74m, an average of \$812,875. So the average price appears to have fallen but what would that buy? Try this 5 bed, 3 bath home in Sycamore.



With 2751 sq.ft. and a lot of just over a third acre, this home was also very nicely updated. Overall though, probably not quite as appealing as the one previously mentioned which might suggest little real change in prices although volume of sales was up by 35%.

The San Ramon Market

Like Danville, real estate activity in San Ramon is closely related to the quality of schools although historically, prices in San Ramon have always been rather less than in Danville

Here, in the first quarter of 2011, we saw 133 homes sold with prices from \$392,500 to \$2.8m. The average was \$767,768 and for around that figure you could have got a completely updated home in

Bollinger Hills like this one:



5 beds, 3 baths and 2776 sq.ft. of living space on a 0.25 acre lot.

Moving forward to the last quarter again, we saw only 92 sales taking place. Prices ranged from \$265,000 to \$1.66m giving an average price of \$683,314. For just a little more (\$690,000), you could have bought a very appealing 4 bed, 2.5 bath home in the gated community of Fleur Du Mont, like the one below.



Conclusions

In terms of volume, the San Ramon market appears to have fallen behind. We have to remember that the availability of homes to buy has an effect on how many homes can be sold though. 145 homes were listed for sale in the fourth quarter of 2011, compared with 270 in

Interest Rate Update:
 30 Year Fixed (Conforming) - 3.875%
 30 Year Fixed (Jumbo) - 4.0%
 FHA 30 Year Fixed - 3.75%
 (Source: Wells-Fargo Home Mortgage)

January Dates
 Jan 1 - New Years Day
 Jan 16 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

the first quarter. That is a significant reduction.

Danville shows a similar picture. 244 homes were listed in the first quarter, but only 124 in the fourth quarter.

Overall then, there appears to be a lot of confidence in the Danville market, in particular, although with a greater choice of homes, and probably some more realistic pricing, the San Ramon market would probably have had more activity.

Prices in both of these markets seem remarkably stable and this is likely to continue to be the case for the next few years until we see the end of the effects of short sales and foreclosures in our area.

If you are thinking about buying or selling anywhere in the San Ramon Valley or Lamorinda and you need advice on any aspect of the process, give me a call and I'll arrange to meet with you and evaluate your situation. My contact details are on the cover. There is never any obligation and I am always happy to hear from you.

Market Update

San Ramon Valley & Lamorinda

Source: Contra Costa / MAX MLS

The 40 most recently Closed Sales of Single Family Detached Homes in Alamo, Blackhawk, Danville, San Ramon, Walnut Creek, Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda

(Sorted By City and Closed Date)

Address	City	Beds	Baths	1/2 Baths	SqFt	Lot SqFt	List Price	Sold Price	Sale \$/SqFt	Closing Date
214 Pulido Rd	Danville	4	3	0	1765	11,330	\$679,000	\$655,000	371	12/30/2011
47 Hidden Hills Pl	Danville	4	2	1	4099	227,818	\$1,172,350	\$1,152,350	281	12/30/2011
292 Love Lane	Danville	4	3	0	3107	16,200	\$1,299,000	\$1,248,000	402	12/30/2011
3181 Griffon Street West	Danville	5	4	1	2925	7270	\$929,568	\$890,000	304	12/29/2011
489 Clipper Hill Rd	Danville	3	2	0	2040	37,440	\$619,900	\$575,146	282	12/29/2011
260 Valle Vista Dr	Danville	3	1	0	1191	13,600	\$429,900	\$382,500	321	12/29/2011
820 Bali Ct	Danville	2	2	0	1550	5035	\$539,500	\$535,000	345	12/29/2011
157 Merano Street	Danville	5	3	0	2828	6930	\$799,000	\$775,000	274	12/29/2011
1608 Colchester St	Danville	4	3	1	3457	7492	\$1,000,000	\$940,000	272	12/29/2011
35 Rhett Pl	Danville	5	5	0	4386	13,576	\$1,399,000	\$1,360,000	310	12/28/2011
175 Donald Ct	Danville	4	4	0	2790	16,275	\$979,900	\$980,000	351	12/27/2011
1309 Greenbrook Dr	Danville	4	2	0	2132	7000	\$664,444	\$650,000	305	12/27/2011
329 Red Maple Dr	Danville	4	2	1	2637	18,000	\$879,900	\$843,000	320	12/23/2011
859 Acalanes Rd	Lafayette	3	3	0	2495	27,000	\$1,125,000	\$960,000	385	12/30/2011
7 Arbor Way	Lafayette	4	2	1	1830	12,160	\$778,000	\$745,000	407	12/30/2011
10 Carolyn Ct	Lafayette	4	2	0	1074	7104	\$539,900	\$487,000	453	12/28/2011
831 Tanglewood Drive	Lafayette	6	5	0	6120	30,000	\$2,000,000	\$1,935,750	316	12/27/2011
855 Mountain View Dr	Lafayette	4	3	0	3297	14,560	\$1,295,000	\$1,236,000	375	12/27/2011
1055 Sunrise Ridge Dr.	Lafayette	4	3	1	3422	49,658	\$1,299,000	\$1,280,000	374	12/23/2011
6 Westwood Ct	Orinda	4	4	0	2986	19,080	\$1,199,000	\$1,170,000	392	12/29/2011
20 El Patio	Orinda	6	4	1	4042	24,000	\$949,000	\$825,000	204	12/29/2011
129 Meadow View Road	Orinda	3	2	0	2265	14,000	\$749,500	\$675,000	298	12/28/2011
40 Ardor Dr	Orinda	4	3	0	2594	53,578	\$959,000	\$880,000	339	12/23/2011
44 Loma Vista Drive	Orinda	4	2	1	2209	6000	\$775,000	\$730,000	330	12/23/2011
210 Mara Place	San Ramon	4	2	1	1933	7000	\$629,000	\$620,000	321	12/30/2011
2795 Morgan Drive	San Ramon	4	3	0	2539	8148	\$669,000	\$650,000	256	12/30/2011
905 Bentley Oak Ct	San Ramon	5	3	1	3462	19,380	\$1,175,000	\$1,123,000	324	12/29/2011
117 Pebble Pl	San Ramon	4	3	0	2280	7029	\$599,000	\$570,000	250	12/28/2011
9152 Tangerine St	San Ramon	2	2	0	960	7500	\$279,900	\$265,000	276	12/28/2011
1256 Ustilago Dr	San Ramon	4	2	1	2225	8938	\$799,999	\$790,000	355	12/27/2011
300 Holbrook Pl	San Ramon	4	3	1	3391	14,750	\$899,900	\$880,000	260	12/23/2011
9736 Davona Dr	San Ramon	4	2	0	1479	7000	\$474,800	\$491,000	332	12/23/2011
30 Victory Ct	San Ramon	4	2	1	2411	4610	\$633,500	\$628,000	260	12/23/2011
2215 Canyon Lakes Dr	San Ramon	3	2	1	2499	3900	\$617,400	\$621,000	248	12/23/2011
70 Casa Grande Pl	San Ramon	3	2	0	1555	7029	\$499,000	\$494,900	318	12/23/2011
841 Gail Court	Walnutcreek	5	3	0	3465	46,609	\$1,265,000	\$1,265,000	365	12/31/2011
270 Dover Dr	Walnutcreek	4	2	0	2270	11,000	\$719,000	\$683,550	301	12/30/2011
72 Carlos Court	Walnutcreek	4	2	0	1789	10,010	\$475,000	\$477,000	267	12/30/2011
744 Autumn Dr	Walnutcreek	3	2	0	1887	12,600	\$639,900	\$620,000	329	12/30/2011

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