

The Journal Government & Community Affairs
Monterey County Association of REALTORS

*Investing In Your Future....
Your Realtor Action Fund Dollars Work For You!*

December 24, 2008

Dear MCAR GAD,

Can you believe 2009 is already upon us? I for one must admit this has been one of the most unique years in recent memory and it has certainly gone by fast, given the variety of challenges and issues we have endured.

I look forward to 2009 with optimism. No doubt we will encounter challenges along the way, but with your help, an appropriate level of accountability and oversight can be given as issues arise.

Below is a brief list of some of the accomplishments we were able to achieve this year with your help. Thank you for all that you do!

We hit the ground running in May with a trip to the State Capitol and successfully lobbied our State elected leadership in Sacramento to amend Legislation requiring energy audits at the point of sale.

- Worked with the Salinas elected's and city staff to appropriately classify Agents under the "occupations & services" category of the Salinas Business License Tax Ordinance, thus reducing their annual business tax to \$100.00 from a previous \$200.00.
- Worked with the Refinement Group to establish sound policies on future housing and growth within the General Plan...whether or not it ever gets adopted is another issue altogether.
- Advocated and collaborated with the "REPOG" workgroup to educate the public and private sectors on the long term, sustainable benefits associated with implementing the proposed water plan (solution) for the region.
- Worked with the City of Salinas to address concerns relating to foreclosure blight- without implementing new regulations.
- Successfully rolled out the new MCAR Blog in an effort to educate the public on local real estate issues and to provide a forum in which MCAR members can discuss and collaborate on challenges facing the real estate industry with their colleagues.
- Worked with the City of Pacific Grove to incorporate the new checklist/form for exterior inspections.
- Performed extensive research and put together an exhaustive report on the potential benefits associated with re-implementing Prop 90 in Monterey County.***UPDATE*** *Currently working with the County to address stakeholder concerns in an effort to move the program forward to the Board of Supervisors by early 2009 for consideration and adoption.*
- MCAR partnered with LGR member Michael Waxer and the "Step Up 2 Green" project to develop an incentivised and collaborative approach to addressing the impacts of residential housing on the environment.
- BORPAC interviewed over 30 candidates through the course of the year and devoted countless

hours to ensure real estate interests were being observed by those in elected leadership. A BIG thank you for the time devoted to this effort in the months leading up to General Election!

- Currently working aggressively to appeal the conforming loan limits for Monterey County, supplying extensive amounts of data substantiating our challenge while lobbying our congressional leaders with industry and constituent concerns.

As the list above indicates, 2008 was a busy year. We are looking forward to an equally rewarding list of accomplishments in 2009!

From all of us here at MCAR, we wish you a wonderful and prosperous holiday season!

Kevin

Conforming Limits Appeal Update

It was my "Holiday Hope" that we would be able to report early news on the status of the Monterey County FHA / HUD Conforming Limits Appeal that was undertaken by MCAR in early November. Unfortunately, the Federal Government has a deadline of January 1, 2009 to release its decisions on appeals throughout the Country, and it appears they will be using all of the allotted time given. To this end, we will certainly report on the appellate decision as soon as we hear word, (watch your email) which I'm assuming will be on January 1st or shortly thereafter.

I would like to say thank you to all of you who partnered with us on this endeavor. While the decision is yet to be delivered, the cooperative efforts of the MCAR membership to lobby our local elected leadership and deliver a factual message outlining the ramifications of this decision was simply impressive.

All of us can probably agree that the year ahead will most likely be challenging in a variety of ways. Moving forward expeditiously on issues as they arise will prove beneficial as we tackle the challenges one by one. Your involvement in this process is crucial. As we've seen, a collaborative effort by many often produces stronger results than that of just a few. Stay tuned.

In The News

The financial status of the State of California continues to monopolize the attention of the state and national media outlets. Both sides of the California legislature have been unsuccessful in achieving compromise on a solution to the estimated \$42 billion budget shortfall projected through mid year 2010. The Governor, along with the State Controller has indicated that the State may indeed run out of cash within the next 2 months if the shortfall is not addressed immediately.

Watsonville is the latest local municipality taking drastic measures in an effort to save money and to mitigate the \$1/2 million budget shortfall the city is facing. Many city services including libraries and recreation programs will face a two week furlough, though vital services such as public safety should not be affected. As was reported in the last Report, the city of Salinas is considering similar action to address budget shortfalls through the 2010 fiscal year.

The new deadline for comments for the Monterey County General Plan EIR has been set to February 2, 2009. While there are certainly numerous areas for debate and compromise within the proposed plan, two specific components have gathered the attention of many. The EIR is calling for the County to develop a Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP). The plan would essentially require protection of 158 species including 11 "natural communities," 100 "CEQA-defined plant species" and 47 "CEQA-defined" animal species resulting in the largest "NCCP" in the State, at a cost of around \$20 million to prepare. It's important to note that Monterey County currently lists 28 officially threatened or endangered species.

Another component of the EIR in question is the referencing of outdated housing and population data. The EIR uses housing and population data to derive numerous assumptions within the plan including to what extent the County will grow, along with the infrastructure needed to support that growth. The housing projections were derived from a 2004 report instead a more recent report from 2008, which produced results more in line with historical assumptions as opposed to numbers correlating with the housing boom. The two reports differ substantially with projections off as much as 30% in some areas, certainly enough to impact the overall scope of the document.

Stay tuned as January is sure to heat up!

Cal Am Needs Your Help

California American Water has requested the assistance of the MCAR membership in informing customers moving into the Cal Am territories for sewer service. They are requesting that customers moving into the following areas call 1-888-422-5261 to begin their sewer service.

Oak Hills, Indian Springs, Spreckles and Las Palmas.

Until next time,

Kevin Stone
Government & Community Affairs Director
Monterey County Association of REALTORS®