

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 06 Issue 19 Wednesday, November 21, 2012



The Home Designer: Bathroom Remodeling ...read on page D5

Holiday Lights: Festive, Merry and Bright

By Cathy Dausman



Holiday lights on display at Orchard Nursery in Lafayette

Photo Andy Scheck

Festive, sparkling, colorful. The very words connote holiday celebrations, but they can also be used to describe lighting itself. Whether indoor or outdoor, low voltage or incandescent, temporary or permanent, lighting sets the mood in our homes and affects the very mood of our guests.

Light ambiance comes from both its source – a floor lamp, an overhead fixture, candles, luminarias, a wall sconce or footlight – and color spectrum, from the cool blue of fluorescent tubes to the soft orange flicker of a candle.

Suzanne Warrick of Interiors in Lafayette says Christmas lighting goes “above and beyond what you live with daily.”

“It’s a more joyous occasion and holiday lighting gives you a focus – a tree, wreath or garlands,” she explains. Warrick suggests adding votive and decorative candles as accent pieces to introduce romance to a room and a multi-sensory feel from the candle’s smell and flicker. Candles placed in carved pomegranates or pumpkins, or candles set in hurricane lamps filled with bird seed or cranberries can highlight your home’s color scheme, she says. Take a cue from jewelry stores that use skylights or low-voltage lights to make everything sparkle.

Peggy Hoffman brings the weather inside her Moraga home by hanging “snow” lights from Orchard Nursery in her living room windows. “They are tubes of lights hung vertically and then individual lights in the tubes light up sequentially so that it looks like a snow flake falling to the ground,” she says, adding they’re “lots of fun and different.”

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	9	\$785,000	\$2,000,000
MORAGA	9	\$202,500	\$1,300,000
ORINDA	13	\$625,000	\$1,740,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

- 3231 Camino Colorados, \$785,000, 3 Bdrms, 1527 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-19-12
 667 Glorietta Boulevard, \$1,205,000, 3 Bdrms, 2135 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 10-19-12;
 Previous Sale: \$1,057,500, 05-15-09
 1901 Hunsaker Canyon Road, \$2,000,000, 10-24-12;
 Previous Sale: \$1,500,000, 08-15-06
 3269 La Canada, \$1,680,000, 2 Bdrms, 2298 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 10-11-12;
 Previous Sale: \$850,000, 03-30-12
 3372 McGraw Lane, \$1,974,500, 4 Bdrms, 3127 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 10-24-12;
 Previous Sale: \$650,000, 12-04-98
 1108 North Thompson Road, \$829,000, 4 Bdrms, 2427 SqFt, 2001 YrBlt, 10-16-12;
 Previous Sale: \$1,295,000, 04-17-06
 1483 Shulgin Road, \$875,000, 1905 SqFt, 1937 YrBlt, 10-22-12
 591 Silverado Drive, \$957,500, 3 Bdrms, 1910 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 10-23-12;
 Previous Sale: \$383,000, 05-10-89
 1141 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$1,550,000, 5 Bdrms, 4558 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 10-24-12

MORAGA

- 2063 Ascot Drive #214, \$211,000, 2 Bdrms, 1082 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 10-10-12;
 Previous Sale: \$275,000, 07-12-02
 2063 Ascot Drive #217, \$202,500, 2 Bdrms, 1082 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 10-12-12;
 Previous Sale: \$355,000, 11-04-04
 1499 Camino Peral, \$461,000, 3 Bdrms, 1697 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 10-19-12;
 Previous Sale: \$655,000, 04-04-07
 96 Courter Lane, \$1,195,000, 4 Bdrms, 2880 SqFt, 1999 YrBlt, 10-16-12;
 Previous Sale: \$999,500, 12-15-00
 119 Donald Drive, \$802,000, 3 Bdrms, 1672 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 10-16-12;
 Previous Sale: \$331,500, 12-31-97
 2045 Donald Drive, \$975,000, 4252 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 10-11-12;
 Previous Sale: \$103,000, 12-21-73
 28 Lance Court, \$840,000, 4 Bdrms, 2722 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-19-12;
 Previous Sale: \$295,000, 07-05-96
 75 Lynwood Place, \$1,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 2766 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 10-12-12;
 Previous Sale: \$460,000, 05-01-92
 243 Sandringham Drive #N, \$925,000, 4 Bdrms, 2353 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 10-23-12;
 Previous Sale: \$339,000, 08-12-87

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Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

Moraga Road, 94549, Bank of New York, 10-24-12, \$913,750, 4674 sf, 4 bd

ORINDA

Barbara Road, 94563, HMI Properties, 10-15-12, \$544,500, 1796 sf, 2 bd



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and Buyer



1002 Santa Monica Ct, Pleasant
Hill, Represented Buyer

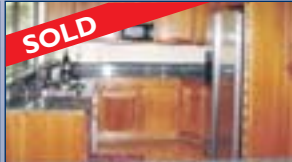


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in 2012**

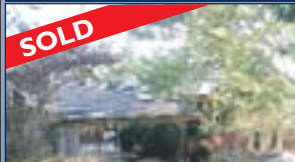
114 Lucille Way, Orinda
Represented Landlord & Tenant



44 Lucille Way, Orinda
Represented Seller



9 Loma Linda Ct, Orinda
Represented Buyer



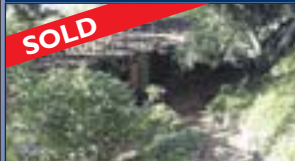
9 Ewart Dr, Lafayette
Represented Buyer



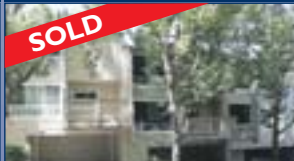
917 Veterans Dr, Martinez,
Represented Buyer



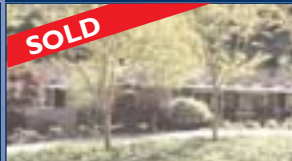
234 El Toyonal, Orinda
Represented Buyer



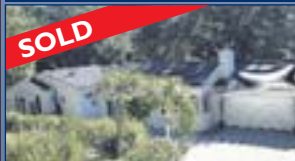
485 Woodminster Dr, Moraga
Represented Tenant



94 Devin Dr, Moraga
Represented Buyer



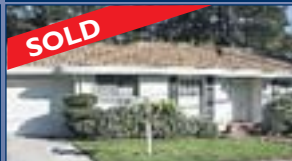
255 La Espiral Dr, Orinda
Represented Buyer



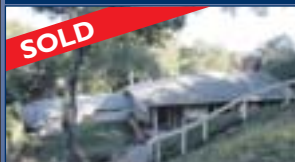
20 Birch Ct, Orinda
Represented Seller



17 El Camino Moraga, Orinda
Represented Buyer



136 Spring Rd, Orinda
Represented Seller and Buyer



9 Wanfleete Ct, Orinda
Represented Buyer



122 Lombardy Ln, Orinda
Represented Buyer



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

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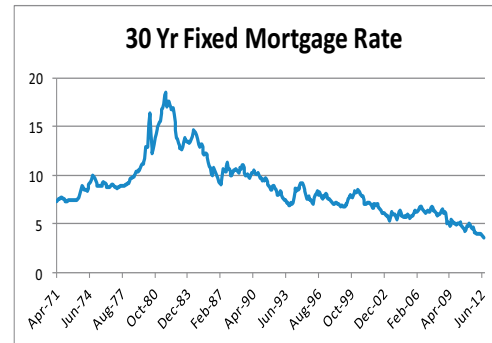
ORINDA

- 2 Calvin Drive, \$859,000, 4 Bdrms, 2068 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 10-16-12
 3 Easton Court, \$989,000, 4 Bdrms, 1917 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 10-10-12;
 Previous Sale: \$1,150,000, 07-10-08
 30 El Verano, \$781,500, 2 Bdrms, 1640 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 10-19-12;
 Previous Sale: \$439,000, 05-15-98
 17 Kittiwake Road, \$625,000, 4 Bdrms, 1719 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 10-15-12;
 Previous Sale: \$956,000, 07-13-05
 11 La Fond Lane, \$1,260,000, 4 Bdrms, 2875 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 10-17-12;
 Previous Sale: \$1,395,000, 03-29-05
 67 Loma Vista Drive, \$855,000, 4 Bdrms, 2266 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 10-19-12
 159 Lombardy Lane, \$1,555,000, 4 Bdrms, 3486 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 10-12-12
 255 Manzanita Drive, \$750,000, 4 Bdrms, 2376 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 10-23-12
 412 Ridge Gate Road, \$1,390,000, 3 Bdrms, 2950 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 10-18-12;
 Previous Sale: \$725,000, 06-08-00
 241 Village Gate Road, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 2075 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 10-17-12;
 Previous Sale: \$425,000, 12-01-97
 11 Vista Del Mar, \$1,740,000, 5 Bdrms, 3415 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 10-10-12;
 Previous Sale: \$415,000, 10-02-80
 11 Westover Court, \$850,000, 3 Bdrms, 1874 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 10-24-12
 118 Zander Drive, \$1,110,000, 3 Bdrms, 2285 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 10-24-12;
 Previous Sale: \$1,350,000, 07-14-05

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Lamorinda Home Values are Rising

	October 2011	October 2012	% Change
Lamorinda:			
Properties Sold	39	57	46%
Average Sale Price	\$889,000	\$1,033,000	16%

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Zestimate Schmestimate

by Andi Peterson Brown

Last week I met with some prospective sellers in Orinda to discuss putting their home on the market next spring. Like many sellers, they had printed out their home's Zillow Zestimate before our appointment. When I sat down, I saw it—on the table but off to the side, looming and waiting to pounce. I've done battle with the dreaded Zestimate before, and in fact, I have a handout for just such an occasion entitled *Why Zestimates are Inaccurate*. I had initially used stronger language in the headline, but I was advised over the shoulder by the husband that it was "off-putting."

In reality, I had already looked up the Zestimated value of their home and knew that they would be pleasantly surprised. My price opinion of their home was significantly higher by about 20%, but oftentimes my opinion is lower than the Zestimate. A Zestimate is a home valuation and price created by zillow.com's algorithm. It is based purely on numbers and recent sales in the area. While not always inaccurate, it is usually inaccurate.

When I give my opinion on a home's value, not only do I think about recent comparable sales, but I also take into consideration overall condition, appeal of layout and finish quality, lot usability, perceived negatives, deferred maintenance, a budget to get it ready for market, supply, demand, interest rates, the overall lending environment, and the overall economic environment. Zestimates don't take any of that into consideration, and that is why they su—, I mean are inaccurate.



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Holiday Lights: Festive, Merry and Bright

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Festive white bulbs light up the outdoors.

Photo Cathy Dausman

Local electrician Rob Omo likes to drive around during December just to see what people do with outdoor lighting. He admits he's not a big fan of the programmed lights and music shows some homeowners put together, saying "it takes away the peace, quiet and tranquility of the season."

Light options today are myriad. Incandescent bulbs emit light as a byproduct of their heated filament. Neon, fluorescent and CFL lights use a gas filament. Halogen bulbs are bright – and plenty hot – and the bulbs themselves are fragile. The new LED, or light-emitting diode lights, deliver a computer chip glow and are basically cool to the touch. These low-power, high-efficiency lights may be shaped like a traditional bulb, but are also manufactured in strips and round "pucks." LEDs packaged in waterproof casings can be used outdoors and even underwater to highlight

pools and waterfalls.

Elemental LED's Director of Marketing Jim Puchbauer says LED technology uses 25 percent less power than traditional filament lights, and last roughly 50,000 hours. He says LEDs work well for libraries and art gallery displays since they emit neither harmful ultra violet rays nor damaging heat. REACH, Elemental LED's philanthropic arm, recently partnered with Orinda Arts Council to install LED lighting in the Orinda Public Library display cases.

Steve Lambert, owner/designer of Orinda's Garden Lights agrees that the new generation LED is the way to go outside, as they offer color tone, longevity and weatherproof lighting. He suggests residents use white lighting, which "brings out the nature of the landscape," or add a bit of temporary color to their exterior light scheme using colored lenses.

Exterior pathways and steps should be lighted first for safety, Lambert says, before moving on to decorating the trees. He suggests homeowners minimize "light pollution" – unwanted light spilling into your neighbor's yard – when designing outdoor illumination.

Simply winding inexpensive strands of low-power lighting around tree trunks and along branches gives a yard an almost Disneyland feel at night. And neighborhoods can also create area-wide magic by setting out luminarias made of tea candles set in sand-filled paper bags. Home improvement stores offer a plastic version as well. Moraga's Rimer Court has had a luminaria display for the past nine years (see the Dec. 8, 2010 Lamorinda Weekly story at <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0420/pdf/Moragas-Luminarias-a-Bright-Christmas-Tradition.pdf>).

Any discussion of holiday lighting would be incomplete without including Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights. Rabbi Alissa Miller of Lafayette's Temple Isaiah explains the candles on the menorah are cumulatively lit over an eight day celebration. "The menorah is set into your window so everyone can see it," Miller says, recalling the powerful symbolism of light from a limited source at this darkest part of the year. Traditionally comprised of wax candles or wicks set in oil, electric menorahs are also available for safety reasons.

So look up, and light up your indoors and yards. Who knows, it may even ward off that year-end stress. Star light, star bright – fill your surroundings with decorative light!



The Home Designer

Bathroom Remodeling - Keep It Smart ... And Save

By Brandon Neff

Second only to kitchens, the bathroom is the most used, and the most valuable piece of real estate in your home. Many think of it as a purely utilitarian space - a necessity of life. Others, like myself, consider the bathroom a place to indulge and luxuriate.

Unfortunately, if I had a nickel for every time a client would wax poetic about a particular bathroom he or she longed for after staying at a posh hotel - all the while living with a bathroom akin to a Por-To-Let - I would be a rich man.

It seems most Americans believe a beautiful bathroom is something to be admired, but is either too expensive, or not worth the effort. Uttering the words "bath remodel" can reduce most men to tears - their respective wallets clamping shut as they imagine hemorrhaging bank accounts and endless construction. I'm here to tell you otherwise.

Depending on your tastes and expectations, rewarding yourself with an updated and beautiful bathroom can be a relatively painless and satisfying project. Have I got your attention? Whether you choose to work with a designer with a vision, or tackle it DIY style, there are a few key factors to keep in mind. Making smart choices can lead you in the right direction. Read on.

House proud. First, consider the architecture of your home. We've talked about this before - know the style of your home and work with existing architectural details. Is it cottage or contemporary? Suburban ranch or Georgian Revival? It's important to respect the lines of your home when doing any updates to ensure both continuity and to keep it from becoming the Winchester Mystery House. There was a good reason why you chose the home you're in, so look to those details when approaching your renovation.

Look for clues such as crown molding, ornate base molding, smooth or textured walls, window mullions (the dividing wood trims between smaller panes of glass within the window), original building materials such as brick and hardwoods, and metal finishes throughout the home. Honoring the architecture will guide you through the innumerable choices out there, and can inspire your design.

Truly, if you live in a California-style split level house and long for a French Rococo bathroom then I suggest you call your real estate agent and start looking for something new - forcing period architectural details into a home designed in a completely different style can be very tricky to pull off, and most often ends up looking a bit kooky.

Go toward the light. Is your bathroom a dark cave with one exposed bulb guiding you to the toilet? Is there any natural light? Is your only source of light coming from above?

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A classic pedestal sink and recessed cabinet make the most of a small bungalow bathroom. Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design



Bathroom Remodeling - Keep It Smart ... And Save

... continued from page D5

Lighting a bathroom properly is essential - for most people their first glimpse of themselves as they rise to greet the day is in the bathroom mirror. It should be a soothing start not a frightening jolt. For example, I often remind clients that sconces placed at eye level flanking the bathroom mirror is tremendously flattering as opposed to the overhead florescent most subject themselves to, and a small investment worth making.

There's a saying in the theater I refer to: light from above on stage equals tragedy. More specifically, when light strikes your face from above it can leave you looking drawn and shadowy. No one wants that. Am I right?

Instead, let lighting work with you to highlight both the best features of your space and your face. Additionally, step away from the fluorescents and embrace halogen lighting or LED. Advancements in lower energy LED lighting have made them a desirable choice for many of today's homeowners for their style and versatility. And, most importantly, put everything on a dimmer - the most inexpensive, and effective decision you'll ever make. Check out

Lutron systems for their function and design. You can thank me later.

Lay the ground rules. When considering the overall scope of a bathroom reno, the easiest way to cut costs is to keep existing plumbing locations where they are. Moving sinks, drains and shower plumbing is where the money begins to flow, and quickly. Most bathrooms have a good layout - generally speaking. With only three major components - the sink, toilet and shower/bath enclosure - there aren't too many options for their respective positions. Where limited space is a consideration, changing the location of the plumbing may not yield any discernible gains, and the task at hand may be purely functional and cosmetic.

Creating the illusion of more space can be the key to making it work. For example, removing a vanity and replacing it with a wash basin, or pedestal sink can open up a bathroom tremendously. Most wash stands feature towel racks below and integrated open shelving for additional storage.

If closed storage is an issue, look to narrower medicine cabinets made to install between wall studs, or add shelving between studs - this trick is rarely utilized by contractors, but can offer great storage solutions for a small space. In addition, newer, smaller profile toilets are now available to improve space planning while comply-

ing with lower water usage restrictions.

Toto and Kohler are two manufacturers that are leading the charge toward more economical and slimmer styles. Lastly, consider installing a frameless glass shower enclosure - a dramatic way to improve the sight line in a bathroom freeing it from visual barriers and

creating a more open feel.

Tile me up, tile me down. If you've decided that tiling your bathroom is the way to go for a new look, but you're worried about the high cost of labor and materials, I have a couple of ideas for you.

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A mix of modern mosaic tiles and old school finishes make this Craftsman style bathroom feel modern

Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

First, labor costs begin to climb in line with more elaborate patterns and materials. Keep it simple. As a purist, I prefer bathroom tile to err on the cleaner and more elegant side. I recommend pure white marbles (avoid Carrera marble with its muddy gray background), white ceramics or even white quartz materials are great options for all of your major coverage. Keep the pattern and color choices restricted to walls, window coverings, fixtures and accessories.

I like to choose a classic white marble subway tile, say Calacutta, for the shower walls. It always looks timeless, and can go from trad to mod with ease. To save money on floor tile go with large scale - fewer cuts means fewer dollars. Even in small spaces I prefer oversized floor tiles grouted with a minimum seam for an overall larger-than-life effect.

For economy in bath and shower surrounds, pick up less expensive ceramic tiles from any "big box" store and mix in a classic natural stone trim, or liner, set at 60"-65" H (this height falls above thermostatic controls and below the shower head.) You'll get the look of a custom tile installation at a fraction of the cost. Again, I recommend keeping grout width to a minimum for both aesthetics and maintenance.

My general rule with any home improvement is to always buy the very best quality you can afford and to hire the best help. Your bathroom is a place you spend a lot of "quality" time in, and it should reflect your personal style, as well as function beautifully.

Keep in mind that designing a smart space isn't about spending a lot of money, but rather it's about making good choices. Do your homework. Ask for help. Make good choices.



Brandon Neff is a Bay Area based Interior Designer. He can be reached at BrandonNeffDesign.com or at brandonneffdesign@yahoo.com.



Sleek travertine and a wall of glass make this modern bathroom feel airy and chic.

Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

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ORINDA



20 Oak Court

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Offered at \$459,000



ORINDA



40 Dos Osos

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Offered at \$545,000



ORINDA



50 Camino Don Miguel

Special Country Club location amidst expensive homes. Lush setting with building site knoll and towering oaks, filtered views & total privacy.

Offered at \$545,000



ORINDA



270 Camino Sobrante

Chic, mid-century modern in best OCC location. Beautifully remodeled 3bd/2ba features vaulted ceilings, gourmet kit. w/built in ofc level out to private patio & play area; spacious flat yard w/terraced flower beds & view deck.

Offered at \$999,000



ORINDA



81 Van Ripper Lane

Great 4bd/ 3.5ba rancher on one of the best Orinda streets. Great price too - move right in or remodel.

Offered at \$1,250,000



ORINDA



71 Camino Don Miguel

Beautifully renovated trad. charmer on priv. lane in heart of OCC. Custom detail throughout - fabulous redone kitchen, gorgeous mstr ste, formal LR & inviting FR. Lovely lvl garden w/ expansive brick patio + outdoor fireplace.

Offered at \$1,285,000



ORINDA



1 Snowberry Lane

Beautifully updated mid-century 4bd/3.5ba, 3439 sf, on .75 ac park-like setting in premium Sleepy Hollow location. New eat-in kit. w/stainless Viking appliances, granite counters & hwd flrs; porcelain tile in entry & dining & much more!

Offered at \$1,365,000



ORINDA



251 Monte Vista Ridge Rd.

Panoramic views of Briones! Outdoor living at its best with expansive terrace featuring fabulous kitchen. Romantic master retreat with spa bath. Stunning gated 5bd/4ba custom estate!

Offered at \$1,995,000



ORINDA



65 La Espiral

Updated w/beautiful custom features & amenities. Very well maintained. Majestic setting, lovely gardens, new pool + views/ privacy, fully fenced. Tuscany ambiance, European flair.

Offered at \$2,195,000



ORINDA



60 Coachwood Terrace

An Estate in prime location. 5bd/4.5ba, pool/spa, apx. 6000 sq ft on apx. 6.54 acres. Fabulous stone walled gardens, many fruit trees. Reflects Orinda living at its best.

Offered at \$2,495,000



LAFAYETTE



1690 Reliez Valley Rd.

Fab 1+ ac ridgeline ppty w/spectacular views of Mt. Diablo etc. Paved driveway to building site w/utilities & sewer at ppty. Incl preliminary plans for 4900+ sq ft home.

Offered at \$650,000



LAFAYETTE



3278 Sweet Drive

Spacious hm in charming nghbrhd. Entirely renovated 4bd/ 2.5ba, hdwd flrs, sep. mstr retreat, tons of natural light. Great for family living & entertaining. Seamless in/outdoor living w/spacious decks, lvl yd + an extra bonus rm.

Offered at \$889,000

THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATES:

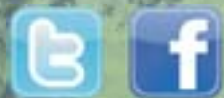
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 Patricia Battersby
 Joan Cleveland
 Shannon Conner
 Joan Eggers
 Linda Ehrlich
 Joan Evans
 Linda S Friedman
 Marianne Greene
 Dexter Honens II
 Anne Knight
 Susan Zeh Layng
 Art Lehman
 Charles Levine
 April Matthews
 Karen Murphy
 Ben Olsen
 Sue Olsen
 Tara Rochlin
 Jaime Roder
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