

REAL ESTATE

Realtors Face New Challenges

By Erik Derr

Every time Janet Johnston reads or hears about the real estate market, she gets mad. She had planned to move to Phoenix earlier this year, to live closer to her new granddaughter. But she promised herself she wouldn't leave the South Bay until she sold her home of 35 years, a three-bedroom Craftsman with "a front yard filled with some of the most beautiful flowers and trees anywhere."

That's where much of the frustration lies for Johnston, a former school teacher and part-time restaurant greeter who prides herself on being well-read and "up-to-date" on current events. Despite her desire to join her family in the Arizona desert, she's still waiting to put her home on the market because she has so felt "so intimidated and confused" by what she describes as the "endless stream of reports about the real estate market" over the last many months.

"Some are saying 'sell,' others are saying 'not yet,' and others saying 'you should have sold already,'" Johnston lamented. "You never know what to believe. So I've ended up not doing anything at all." Most if not all of the housing information Johnston reads in newspapers and sees on television "doesn't tell me a hill of beans," she added.

David Keller, an agent with Shorewood Realtors who has served the South Bay market since 1988, feels Johnston's pain. "I don't put any credence at all in any of those market numbers... indicators like average price or median mean nothing to us," he said, adding that the real estate market changes "neighborhood by neighborhood by neighborhood," so "a house at one end of the block won't be the same as a house on the other end of the block." No "national or statewide, county or even city-wide trends" can tell buyers or sellers what they really need to know to make decisions, Keller said.

On the other hand, thanks to the advent of the Internet and popular real estate Websites such as Zillow.com and Redfin.com, there's "enough information out there" for consumers to make knowledgeable decisions, he said. During a recent outing with two of his clients, a young couple looking for their perfect Beach-area house, Keller was reminded just how discerning people who know how to access online real estate data can be.

After exploring the market through his tried-and-true industry channels, the real estate veteran conferred with the duo, who had done their own comparative shopping through various websites --- and had come to the same conclusions Keller had about which properties were best for them.

According to the recent study by the National Association of Realtors, 87 percent of all homebuyers in the United States used the Internet to search for a home in 2008, up from 84 percent in 2007, 77 percent in 2005 and only two percent in 1997. As well, an estimated 32 percent of homebuyers last year reportedly first found the houses they eventually purchased while they were online.

A growing number of Keller's real estate compatriots in California apparently agree with his focus on high-tech, user-driven marketing. Survey results released earlier this month by the California Association of Realtors showed an estimated 55 percent of all responding real estate professionals used the Internet for their business. Meanwhile, an estimated 45 percent used a laptop or tablet computer in the field, while 39 percent said they used some type of hand-held Internet device. About 46 percent of respondents said they accessed one or more online social networks, like Twitter or Facebook, to make business contacts. "In a time when clients demand both information and expertise from

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Open House Directory

BROKERS OPEN HOUSE

1. **Fri. 11:30-1:30** **935 Main St. #105** **2 Bd. 2 Ba.** **\$449,000**
Jim Marak Remax El Segundo 310.322.1900

OPEN HOUSE

2. **Fri. 11:30-1:30** **935 Main St. #105** **2 Bd. 2 Ba.** **\$449,000**
Jim Marak Remax El Segundo 310.322.1900

3. **Sun. 2:00-4:00** **832 Penn St.** **2 Bd. 1 Ba.** **\$599,900**
John Skulick Shorewood Realtors 310-350-4240

4. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **1005 E Acacia Ave, ES** **3 Bd. 1.5 Ba.** **\$849,900**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

5. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **737 California St** **5 Bd. 3 Ba.** **\$1,199,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

6. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **350 Hillcrest St.** **3 Bd. 2.5 Ba.** **\$999,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

7. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **1208 E Sycamore Ave, ES 4Bd. 3.5 Ba..** **\$1,399,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

OUT OF AREA OPEN HOUSE

8. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **232 16th Pl, MB** **3 Bd. 2 Ba.** **\$1,099,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

9. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **1215 Ashmill St, Carson 4 Bd. 3 Ba.** **\$575,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

10. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **1223 Ashmill St, Carson 3 Bd. 3 Ba.** **\$550,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

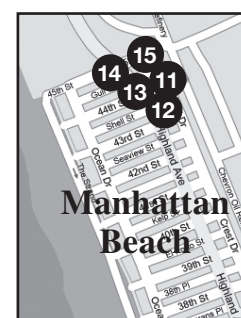
11. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **4321 Crest Dr #A, MB** **3 Bd. 2.5 Ba.** **\$1,599,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

12. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **4323 Crest Dr #B, MB** **3 Bd. 2.5 Ba.** **\$1,789,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

13. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **4320 Highland Ave #C, MB 3 Bd. 2.5 Ba.** **\$1,859,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

14. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **312 44th St #D, MB 4 Bd. 4.5 Ba.** **\$2,299,000**
Bill Ruane Re/Max Beach Cities Realty 310-877-2374

15. **Sun 2:00-4:00** **312 44th St #E, MB 4 Bd. 4.5 Ba.** **\$2,299,000**
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