

Housing

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over the same period. Inglewood saw a 17 percent drop in single-family home sales and an 11 percent drop in the single-family median price. On the other hand, single-family unit sales jumped about 67 percent in El Segundo between June and the same time last year --- and about 25 percent when compared to June 2007. The single-family median price in El Segundo tumbled from about \$1,005,750 in June 2008 to \$780,000 last month.

One of the market's emerging bright spots has been the sale of higher-end and luxury homes in communities including Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach and the neighborhoods of the Palos Verdes Peninsula. According to the statistics offered by local realtor Elaine Carlson and posted at www.palosverdsource.com, the average price of homes on the peninsula that went through escrow last month was about \$1,316,000, compared to the median \$1,273,333 in June of last year. The number of houses sold also jumped 23 percent over the same time period.

That mirrors similar findings across the Southland, as DataQuick found that resales of single-family houses priced \$500,000 and above rose to 19.6 percent of all existing units sold in June, up from 18.0 percent in May but still down from 29.2 in June 2008. Sales of \$500,000-plus houses dipped at one point to about 13.4 percent of sales this last January.

"The rising median should still be viewed mainly as a sign the market's moving back toward a more normal distribution of sales across the home price spectrum," said DataQuick President John Walsh. "Sales in many higher-cost neighborhoods couldn't have gotten much lower, so this recent uptick in activity should come as no surprise. What's missing still is a wide open financing spigot for the would-be buyers of these more expensive homes."

There's still been enough good news that market watchers have begun spreading the word that the current dip in housing prices has come to a close. Kissinger isn't ready to say the market has bottomed out, but he agrees with Walsh and others that home buyers seem more willing now to get back into the hunt. The sales volumes tracked by Kissinger and his SBAR compatriots also show a substantial increase in multiple bids on properties. The South Bay's housing numbers may still be trending down, but "at a decelerating rate," Kissinger said. He added that both home sellers and buyers need to know that "what we've gone through over the last many months is a cycle--not a crash-and-burn" scenario, but that the economy "still has a lot of work to do" before it can be considered healthy again. Nonetheless, there are many good reasons for people to feel hopeful about the South Bay market, according to Kissinger. "It's coming back," he said. •

Council

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special appearance by actor/comedian Owen Smith. El Segundo businesses have donated prizes for the reception. Tickets for the event are \$25 and can be reserved by calling 310-607-9130.

During public communications, volunteers thanked the Council, local citizens and the El Segundo Fire department for their support in the Muscular Dystrophy Association "Fill the Boot" fundraiser that took place in late April. The firefighters received a plaque for raising \$11,791.

Mayor Slams State on Budget

In the wake of Sacramento's announcement this week on an agreement to erase California's \$26 billion shortfall, an incensed Mayor McDowell said the State is stealing money

from cities to help accomplish this. The news doesn't bode well for El Segundo, which recently had to cut 10 percent (roughly \$6 million) out of its own 2009/10 fiscal budget during a difficult strategic planning session and may have to slice even more. "We have to go back to the table because we could be cutting as much as or more than a million dollars," said McDowell. "They have taken it with no ability to pay it back." Noting that California now has the lowest credit rating of any state in the country, McDowell called for a constitutional convention to try to fix what he termed a "terrible economy" that is only getting worse. "Something must be done...I've never felt this strongly about a political issue," the Mayor added.



Penguin

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gossip and shenanigans somehow crowd out real news and political stories. It's all about ratings, and that isn't going to change, is it? No turning back. I guess we want more Madonna and less info on health care reform. I guess. By the way, speaking of pop news,

I inadvertently demoted philandering Mark Sanford from Governor of South Carolina to Senator last week. My bad. A faithful column reader pointed out the faux pas, gleefully so.

But that's cool. At least he's reading. And supporting. Keep the faith, folks!

Fishing

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try our luck there. I remember taking my old transistor AM radio on the excursions, and listening to the inimitable Vin Scully wax poetic about the Dodgers. 1965 or so.

Anyway, we commiserated with each other cuz we couldn't get the lines into the water, but it wasn't about the fishing, or lack of it... it was about being able to talk with the old man. Straighten him out on a few things. Or maybe learn a few things. Priceless.

One of the years we actually caught some of the elusive trout. Which involved figuring out how to bait the hook with some kind of colored "cheese," cast the line into the water without tangling the fiber, and hope that the little, defenseless fishies were starving enough to hit our cheese. Which they did that year. Which was both good and bad.

Between my wife, myself and the kid, think we caught about 45 fish. Or 45 more than I captured the first year. Guess that I should have bought a license. My bad. No crime there, right? I probably caught about 10 or so. Guess who had to take the hook

out of almost all of the struggling, soon-to-be dead fishies? Same guy who had to take all 45 dead-ass fish down the road to clean 'em.

Took the trout down to a place called Tom's, which is a convenience store, tackle shop, restaurant and bar located about a mile from where we park our trailer. Yup, when we camp we have them spot a trailer for us. Pretty outdoorsie, eh?

Anyway, I had never cleaned a trout before, so cleaning 45 was really fun. You cut off their heads and then you...ah, forget it. And in the area where we gut the fish, it seems that a swarm of bees always finds the need to gather. Bees swirling, guts spilling into the sink. Just another day in paradise!

At least I could walk inside and buy a beverage after the sweaty, stinky ordeal. The cocktail was fairly priced at about three bucks. But Tom's sported some of the homeliest bartenders that I had ever seen. One old lady had about two teeth. Guess I am spoiled, what with all of the fine talent working at the local South Bay watering holes...

Frankly

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three years ago?

To all of you baseball guys and gals who are even remotely considering attending the LL World Series next month, clear out all of the excuses, get yourself a few tickets to Pennsylvania, and enjoy the 10 or so days of the tourney. Heck, I am always trying to figure out a way to maneuver my way back to PA. Anyone need a tour guide? Great little restaurant called the Mountaineer perched just outside the outfield fence. Great folks, great prices. Walk in there with 10 bucks; walk out with a few fins still in the pocket.

Anyway, the Mountaineer favored cheap beverages and cheap grub. But more importantly, the folks were incredibly nice and cordial. But they did speak with a strange accent.

So I am talking to you, *BL*, *KW* and myriad others. Heck, *CH* considered jumping on a plane and going at one time.

Remember our trip well. We flew into Philadelphia on a redeye...then looked at the Liberty Bell exhibit and walked across the street to tour Independence Hall. Then I had to figure out how to drive about 250 miles back into the interior of PA., with construction going on most of the way.

Only fell asleep once while driving, and luckily ran into a McDonald's. Had a Happy Meal and then went to snooze on the grassy knoll outside of the Mickie D's. Got back

in the car and navigated to Williamsport. Somehow, somehow. Threw out a few choice curse words when we I missed an off ramp, but the kid in the back seat stayed calm and composed, and got us where we were going.

Make this the year you go to Williamsport. Or you can blame this or that for not making the trip. We all make excuses for staying in our comfort zone; hell, I am a big-time offender. But do this, folks--you won't regret it!

And in conclusion for this week, what the heck is Laker, or soon-to-be-ex-Laker Lamar Odom thinking? He reportedly turned down a couple of offers from magnanimous Laker owner Jerry Buss, including contracts that could have netted the soon-to-be-30-year-old ball bouncer a cool \$36 million over the next four seasons.

A rightfully miffed Buss, tired of Odom's perceived procrastination, pulled the offers off the table, leaving Lamar in limbo. Reports were that it was Odom's agent who advised his client to nix the possible deals. But here's my question. Who works for who in these deals? Seems to me that the agent works for the player, right, and not the other way around?

Sack up, Lamar. Call the Lakers, say you were an idiot to turn down the initial offers, plead temporary insanity, and sign on the dotted line.

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