Tahoe real estate market makes gains in 2010

The Lake Tahoe real estate market ended the decade with strong sales and significant signs of improvement, according to a year-end report from Chase International. The report, which compares all sales and home prices from 2010 to those of 2009, shows a 16 percent increase in units sold and a 20 percent jump in overall sales volume.

Tahoe City showed the largest increase in sales with a 40 percent increase in total volume or dollars and 17 percent rise in units sold. Incline Village saw a 27 percent jump in both units and volume. The South Shore saw a 10 percent increase in dollar volume and a 15 percent increase in units sold. The East Shore was the only area that saw a decrease in dollar volume at minus 3 percent, but did see a 7 percent increase in units sold.

The median price of a home in Incline Village is $827,000, the highest in the basin, despite a 10 percent drop from 2009. The median price of homes sold along Tahoe's East Shore is $570,000, up 5 percent over 2009 and for South Shore, the median price remained steady compared to 2009 at $317,000. The overall median price of homes sold in Lake Tahoe is $541,000, down 6 percent, while the average price remained stable with a 1 percent increase at $897,173.

The National Association of Realtors notes that historically high housing affordability is boosting sales activity across the nation, indicating a gradual recovery into 2011.

The sales of condominiums around the lake are also up substantially with a 48 percent rise in sales volume and 46 percent jump in units sold.

Truckee condos were up 46 percent in both sales and volume.

Home sales in Truckee remained relatively flat, with little movement in volume and a five percent increase in number of units sold. The average price of a home in Truckee is $627,093, down 4 percent, and the median is $490,000, down 8 percent.

Slopestyle to be part of World Ski Championships in February

The fast-paced action sport of slopestyle skiing has been confirmed for the International Ski Federation's Freestyle World Ski Championships being hosted by February by Deer Valley and Park City Mountain Resorts. The slopestyle event, which is one of three new action sports events being considered for inclusion in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games, will be at Park City ski resort.

FIS Freestyle World Ski Championship's organizers confirmed that slopestyle would be added to the schedule Feb. 3, with qualification runs taking place a day earlier. The event will be on Park City Mountain Resort's King's Crown run, home of one of the resort's popular terrain parks. Park City Mountain Resort is also the site of the halfpipe competition, while moguls, dual moguls, aerials, as well as ski cross, will be at Deer Valley Resort.

Slopestyle tests a skier's ability to handle a variety of terrain by executing freestyle maneuvers down a course. Each course is filled with features including rails, jibs, hips and a variety of jumps allowing riders to combine big air and technical tricks into one run. Competitors are scored in an

overall impression judging format on amplitude, execution, difficulty of line, landing and use of the course.

Slopestyle skiing, as well as halfpipe skiing, and slopestyle snowboarding, was given support for 2014 inclusion by the International Olympic Committee at its executive committee meeting in September. The final approval for these action sports to make it onto the Sochi, Russia, Olympic schedule will come following a review of the new sports taking place during World Championship competitions this season. IOC President Jacques Rogge is empowered to make the final call.

In November, the FIS Council voted to add slopestyle skiing and snowboarding to the respective World Championships beginning this season. Organizers for the FIS Snowboard World Championships in La Molina, Spain, recently confirmed adding slopestyle snowboarding to the schedule.

Park City Mountain Resort has been a leader in winter action sports since the 2002 Winter Games. The Resort has successfully hosted a number of international caliber halfpipe events as well as received numerous awards for the terrain parks built at the resort. The resort has continued to push the limits of winter action sports and is considered a training ground for some of the industry's best freestyle skiers.

The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association is expected to name up to four men and four women to compete in the slopestyle event with spots expected to be hotly contested. Qualifying will be primarily based on the Association of Freeride Professionals ranking system which includes events such as the USSA's Revolution Tour as well as the Dew Tour and X Games.

Deer Valley was also the host for the 2003 FIS Freestyle World Ski Championships. Both Park City Mountain Resort and Deer Valley Resort were venues for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games.

The World Championships will be televised on NBC Feb. 5 from

1:30-3pm and Feb. 6 from noon-1:30pm.

Providing health care in Africa tests S. Tahoe doctor's skills



Yesterday I literally had to fight back tears after the first hour. I am not ashamed to say that, but their suffering was very emotional and they have been waiting for some hope.

One patient was seventeen and looked seven. She had terrible deformities from previous burns, but also a belly full of ascites. I think it is the fist case of kwashiorkor I have ever seen.

By Kathryn Reed

Steve Bannar sent several emails like this to family and

friends when he was in Tanzania in November administering health care to people who don’t often see doctors with his skills.

The surgeon with Tahoe Orthopedics & Sports Medicine in South Lake Tahoe spent a month with Health Volunteers Overseas in this remote outpost of Africa. It was a test in many ways – in ingenuity, creativity, resolve, and medical know-how.

Though fixing clubfeet is not something he does in his everyday practice, at least it involves orthopedics. For one case the child sucked on his mother’s bosom – that was his anesthetic.

Much of what Bannar was doing in this village near the shores of Lake Victoria had nothing to do with his specialty.

“The basic concepts are the same. The science is the same. It’s more adapting to what is available. You certainly can’t rely on technology,” Bannar said.

Deformities run rampant. They are the result of poor nutrition, parasites and neglect.

Bones stick out. Burns are common. Infections normal. Trauma constant. Mosquito nets help prevent the spread of malaria.

Bannar divided his time between two hospitals – one government run, the other a Catholic facility. The latter being significantly cleaner.

“I have never felt so dirty in my life. I try to be as clean as possible but that is impossible. I saw over thirty patients without soap or towels, nasty. I return to the room to shower and a cockroach the size of a mouse is in there with me,” he writes in an email home.

He had to practice medicine in facilities that are nowhere near what he is used to.

It was a bit of a struggle to get all of his goods through customs, but eventually he made it. Barton Health provided many of the tools he left behind for the medical community to use after his departure. He took lower-tech equipment, but even some of that was more modern than anyone in this village was used to.

“I took the tools to the machine shop to sharpen them for surgery,” Bannar told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I used a hand drill to put pins in.”

He spent some time with a witch doctor who most of the people believe in. He, too, is a believer.

“I’m not sure how well it works, but it’s been around for a couple thousand years, so it has some validity,” Bannar said of the various potions.

But it was his modern tools that helped an albino be able to feed himself by creating a better pinch on his arm. In this part of the world albinos are said to have magical powers. Their body parts are harvested – even while they are alive. This particular boy had one arm missing and fingers of the other hand cut off.

Despite being steps from Lake Victoria, Bannar couldn’t cool off by swimming in the refreshing looking water. A parasite that goes through the skin lurks beneath the surface.

Rice and fried minnows was a normal meal. Bananas are everywhere and seemed to be put in nearly every dish. Fried grasshoppers are another delicacy of sorts.

“The small intestines [of some unknown creature] was the nastiest, slimiest, chewiest piece of meat I have ever had,” Bannar sends home in an email.

Despite the poverty, the ravaging of forests for fuel, the injuries from motorcycle accidents on roads he decided not to

venture out on with two wheels, and the overwhelming need for Western doctors to visit more than once a year, Bannar is ready to go back.

He’s been a member of Health Volunteers Overseas for 15 years, having traveled to Vietnam and St. Lucia.

“It’s really rewarding. I like adventure, to see new cultures,” Bannar said, sitting in the confines of his spacious, clean office. “You eat and live like a national. Instead of going as a tourist and taking, you are giving. You leave something.”

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Photos provided by Steve Bannar.

Judge suspends calls between Garridos

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

A judge today suspended phone calls between Phillip and Nancy Garrido after the El Dorado County counsel raised concerns that their monthly conversations may have veered into witness-tampering.

Ed Knapp told the judge in the Jaycee Lee Dugard kidnapping case that “our fears have been confirmed.”

Knapp said later outside of court that he could not discuss the problem in detail but would address it in a legal motion to be filed later to prevent the husband and wife from speaking to each other.

Since last summer, the Garridos have been allowed a five-minute phone call between each other once a month, despite concerns by the Sheriff's Department that the calls could be used to influence testimony.

Read the whole story

Tracking backcountry data in Tahoe region

By Reno Gazette-Journal

TAHOE CITY — Alpenglow Sports, a 30-year North Lake Tahoe backcountry ski and outdoor retailer, has partnered with industry-leading outdoor manufacturers Black Diamond, Dynafit North America, Patagonia and Marmot to create an unprecedented challenge for the region's backcountry skiing community.

"Tahoe's consistently deep snowpack, long spring season and copious bluebird powder days have spawned a tremendously motivated backcountry user group that cumulatively put in an astounding amount of human-powered vertical each winter," Alpenglow Sports General Manager Brendan Madigan said.

This free, "earn-your-turns" event starts with a simple online form at www.TahoeVertical.com, where participants can enter their daily vertical feet collected on skis, snowboard and snowshoe or simply hiking. The challenge will collect data from all participants through May 1.

Read the whole story

UNR professor battles alien species at Lake Tahoe

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Don’t call him a fish guy.

It’s not that he doesn’t know a lot about fish. He does. He knows about big ones and little ones. He knows a lot about ones that are swimming where they should be and those that are living where they should not.

But as a professor of limnology at University of Nevada, Reno, Sudeep Chandra’s knowledge of inland water systems – lakes, rivers, streams and estuaries – extends far beyond its scaled denizens.

“You can say it’s inland oceanography,” Chandra said of a specialty that involves biology, physics, geology and chemistry, among other things.

“You have to study a little bit of everything,” said Chandra, 36. “We focus a little bit on all of these things.”

Chandra’s work takes him to many faraway locations – places like Mongolia and Bhutan, Guatemala and the Siberian Arctic.

But in 2010, much of Chandra’s attention was focused close to home – to Lake Tahoe, a national treasure threatened by a frightening invasion of non-native fish and shellfish that could profoundly impact the landmark alpine lake. Chandra’s work at Tahoe and other Nevada lakes this year earned him an award of excellence from the American Fisheries Society, the group’s highest honor.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Clear and cold



It’s looking like another gorgeous day to hit the slopes. Check out the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Emily’s Run at Heavenly becomes a reality

It’s official, signs are up for Emily’s Run at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

The ski foundation teams began racing on it this week.



Emily's Run at Heavenly is official.

Photo/Steve
Clothier

“The course is awesome. You can see the whole thing from top to bottom with no tree obstruction,” Steve Clothier, Emily’s father, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “They will now be training slalom, GS, and Super G on the run for the rest of the season pending weather.”

Emily Clothier died at Heavenly in 2008 while training.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Keeping Truckee Meadows clean through nonprofit

By Maggie O’Neill, Reno Gazette-Journal

Christi Cakiroglu has learned a lot about trash over the years.

As a result, the 38-year-old executive director of Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful has an intense love-hate relationship with that thing called litter.

She loves to pick it up, but she hates to find it – especially in open spaces where people illegally dump it.

She also can’t stand the sight of cigarette butts – not only are they the most common piece of trash found at park cleanups, they also take an average of seven years to biodegrade. The plastic filters found in most cigarettes take even more time: hundreds of years, if not longer, she said.

One thing that has changed for Cakiroglu during her years as executive director of Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful is her tolerance for what is acceptable. It has a mission of creating a cleaner and more beautiful region.

Read the whole story

Seeds for a community garden beginning to sprout

By Garry Bowen

On Dec. 14, upon the first seating of South Lake Tahoe's newly-elected City Council, a quiet anniversary one day shy of a year was commemorated by a rather quiet submission, that of a project proposal regarding a Community Garden for South Shore.

As there was quite a lot of commotion that day, what with employment anniversaries of 5, 10, 20 years or more, a retiring police lieutenant, and swearing in ceremonies of all sorts, a quiet submission, especially when submitted during the Public Comment period [additionally obscured by being the only portion not televised], needs further comment.

In mid-December 2009, a meeting was convened at Embassy Suites among a few key folks in town, in which agreement was reached within an hour-and-a-half to begin a pilot composting program [technically known as food waste diversion] with Embassy Suites, South Tahoe Refuse, both Marriotts, and later, Aramark, on board. The "silent" partner in that endeavor was Full Circle Compost over the hill in Minden, as a repository for nearly 5-plus cubic yards accumulated per week,

“percolating” into compost on a large scale to benefit South Shore culinary interests, and the health and well-being of constituents.



Garry Bowen

Diverting food waste from a lengthy trip to the landfill is a commendable thing to do in any event, but the quiet submission of the above mentioned proposal will mean much more to the city’s future if enough attention is paid, as there was always to be a second, more substantial stage – that of creating fresh, vibrant, and natural produce.

After almost a year-and-a-half of due diligence, a plan has evolved that is readily capable of growing significant amounts of fresh and natural produce for the South Shore populace, using a moderately priced facility designed for high altitude, low temperature climes like ours. In addition, as it is a geodesic dome designed as a passive solar structure, there is a good possibility we will not have to engage any public utility, as all resources are in effect “renewable”. This makes it a totally sustainable project, which includes “paying its’ own way” counter to the usual Tahoe bane, operation and maintenance.

Lastly, it is the opening “salvo” of a facilitated project of the City’s Sustainable Action Plan, in this case Item No. 9, Healthy Food Systems, a worthy place to start implementing necessary change. As nutritional energy is the most important ingredient to most any endeavor that people do, any function that allows all inhabitants, whether residing or visiting, to

benefit, is comprehensive. Adding additional components of education, companionship, and use as a “community gathering place”, all of which can be done “year-round” [the latter two are requisite to the dictates of Item No. 9], is the best that can be offered for less than six figures.

Benefiting all layers of the community at once is the best introduction to sustainability, and need not involve any impediments to “normal” progress, stilted as it sometimes seems to be. The community only needs to know that this project is ready, willing, and able to perform in a relatively short time-span, given the now year-old “ramp-up”.

At the beginning of the year and the decade, we can only hope that this is but one comprehensive example of a proactive, self-sustaining civic entrepreneurial project, the success of which will lead to many others in the realm of sustainability. South Shore, the region, and the Earth will all be better off.

If there is an interest in either the Primer submitted to council, or the impending Strategic Business Plan, use the contact information below to comment or request an electronic copy.

Garry Bowen has a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health. He’s also in the process of planning with his classmates their 50-year South Tahoe High reunion. He may be reached at tahoefuture@gmail.com or (775) 690.6900.