

Housing market improving in El Dorado, Placer counties

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

The first six months of 2013 brought a remarkably fast recovery to the regional real estate market.

Figures from DataQuick, a San Diego real estate information firm, show median single-family home prices jumping anywhere from 15 percent to 50 percent across much of the four-county Sacramento region.

There were a few exceptions, mainly in the region's most sought-after residential areas. The college town of Davis, the leafy neighborhoods near downtown Sacramento, and the upscale foothill communities of Granite Bay and El Dorado Hills held their value better in the crash, LePage said. Those areas saw more moderate price increases during this year's rebound, he noted.

In Sacramento County, the number of homes on the market that were foreclosures dropped from 41 percent in the first half of 2012 to 16 percent in the first half of this year. El Dorado, Placer and Yolo counties also saw the percentage of foreclosures on the market drop by more than half.

Read the whole story

Man dies while swimming at Lake Tahoe

A man died Saturday while in the water at Sand Harbor in Incline Village.

Washoe County sheriff's deputies said it does not appear the circumstances leading to the death are suspicious.

They are not releasing his age or hometown.

Deputies said the man was found unresponsive in Lake Tahoe about 12:15pm Aug. 3.

An autopsy will determine the exact cause of death.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Expense of managing Colo. River will impact Nev.

By Andrew Doughman, Las Vegas Sun

Federal water experts and climatologists on Friday issued a grim report on the future of the Colorado River watershed to lawmakers from around the West in Las Vegas.

But perhaps no other state has as much at stake in the river's declining conditions as Nevada.

Managing the Colorado River will cost billions of dollars over the next 50 years, according to the panel of experts at the Council of State Governments West conference.

Demand for the Colorado River's water exceeds supply, meaning governments will likely have to spend from \$4 billion to \$7 billion to ensure a stable water supply in Nevada, Arizona, California, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico.

Federal government experts see population growth in these states as increasing demand for water. The billions of dollars would be put toward increasing supply – through re-use, importation, or desalination of water – and decreasing demand through conservation in residences, industry and agriculture.

Read the whole story

Calif. shelves massive online education plans

By Steve Kolowich, Chronicle of Higher Education

Legislation in California originally aimed at getting state colleges to award credit for massive open online courses and other offerings from nonuniversity providers has been shelved for at least a year.

The bill, SB520, caused a stir when it was introduced, in March, by State Sen. Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento. Faculty unions strongly opposed it, and later drafts of the bill would give faculty-governance bodies more oversight of what outside courses could count for credit.

Steinberg has shelved the bill. The senator will re-evaluate next summer whether the legislation is still necessary, said Rhys Williams, a spokesman.

The senator changed his mind after the three public systems in

California moved to expand their online offerings. California State University, for example, announced on Wednesday that it would offer 36 online courses this fall that could be taken for credit by students at any of the system's 23 campuses.

The latest California budget provides some new money to the state's public higher-education institutions, and the three systems – California State, University of California, and California Community Colleges – “have all produced plans for developing online access, course completion, which is a very welcome policy outcome,” said Williams.

Steinberg is “willing to see how those plans materialize and then evaluate their impact next year,” said Williams. (Because of how the Legislature operates, it would be possible to simply pick up the bill where it left off, rather than start again from scratch, he said.)

The spokesman did not elaborate on how the senator planned to assess the universities' online efforts, though he suggested there would be no specific set of criteria. “I don't think the senator's going to start prescribing specific goals to meet,” he said.

The decision to put the California bill on hold, which was originally reported by the *Oakland Tribune*, represents yet another stalled effort to insinuate MOOCs into the existing landscape of credit-bearing higher education. Last month Florida passed a bill that opened the door to public universities' giving credit for MOOCs, but only slightly. And several institutions that have tried to create nontraditional pathways to credit have seen no takers among MOOC students.

2 fatalities during I-80 challenge

The Nevada Highway Patrol was successful in meeting its goal of no fatalities on Interstate 80 through Nevada during the July 24-31 I-80 Challenge.

During the eight-day challenge NHP investigated more than 20 property damage, minor injury accidents and wrote more than 1,300 traffic citations. There were also more than 20 arrests; six of those for DUI.

Though Nevada met its goal, there were two fatalities reported along the I-80 corridor. One occurred in Nebraska and the other in Ohio. Reports indicate that this time last year there were four reported fatalities along the I-80 corridor across the nation.

Bear caught and released in Stateline

Bear activity is increasing in heavily populated areas of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

A 3-year-old female black bear was trapped near a condo-time share complex July 31 and released the following day in Stateline. Two other traps on the Nevada side of the South Shore remain.

The released bear, which was not nursing so there are no cubs to worry about, had not previously been tagged by the Nevada Department of Wildlife. She weighed about 150 pounds.



Bears in Lake Tahoe neighborhoods are common.
Photo/Judy Brown/File

"We were able to give her a healthy dose of aversion conditioning treatment during the release. When we can shoot a bear with rubber bullets and chase her with the Karelian bear dogs, it gives us a real chance to change the bear's behavior and keep it from becoming too acclimated to humans," NDOW biologist Carl Lackey said in a press release.

Dry conditions can mean less natural food for bears in the high country. This has them coming into populated areas in search of food, where they often find people food.

July in western Nevada was the hottest in recorded history and the area is now in year two of a drought. This is affecting bear behavior.

Now and going forward is the time bears will dramatically increase their food consumption in an effort to put on layers of fat in preparation for hibernation in late November or early December.

"We will see more and more bears searching for food. It is the responsibility of people living in bear country to not attract the bears by poorly handling garbage or leaving other attractants like bird and pet food available," Lackey said.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Brown has the money to run for 4th term

By Anthony York and Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown has amassed a political war chest of more than \$10 million for a potential re-election effort next year, far outpacing two possible GOP rivals and putting him in a strong position if he decides to seek a fourth term as California's governor.

Brown has an additional \$3 million left over from the campaign to pass his tax measure, Proposition 30, last fall, according to reports filed with the state Wednesday.

Each of Brown's two potential GOP rivals has less than \$50,000 in campaign cash.

Abel Maldonado, the former lieutenant governor, has just \$45,000 on hand, having spent more than \$200,000 during the first six months of this year.

GOP Assemblyman Tim Donnell, another potential Brown challenger, reported just \$27,000 in the bank.

Read the whole story

Abandoned puppies expected to survive

By Chris Buckley, KOLQ-TV

INCLINE VILLAGE — Nine days ago a man found a box of 10 puppies in a dumpster behind a South Lake Tahoe gas station. They were only a few hours old. Six of them survived and are now being cared for at the Pet Network Humane Society in Incline Village. Executive Director Becky Goodman says she was horrified.

“Initially the reaction when you find out that someone would take newborn puppies and pull them from their mother is bad enough but to pull them from their mother and put them in a dumpster is just unconscionable.”

The puppies spend days at the shelter and nights with several foster parents. Their eyes are still shut and they need to be fed every two hours.

“It’s a little scary and a little tiring but it’s very worthwhile,” board member and foster parent Diane Finegan said. “It feels wonderful, it really does. They are so sweet and they deserve a chance in life and we’re hoping they get good homes.”

Read the whole story

Nev. casinos don't do well in

June

Stateline casinos had a lot less money to count in June compared to a year ago.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board today released figures that show statewide the gaming revenue was down 4.8 percent in June. The win was \$792 million, whereas it was \$833 million in 2012.

On the South Shore the winnings were \$13 million, which is 24 percent less than what they were a year ago.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Senators keep trying to get money for Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

For the fifth consecutive year, senators from California and Nevada are asking their colleagues to come up with \$415 million to fund environmental projects at Lake Tahoe.

The last four years the answer was no – or it didn't even make out of committee for there to be a vote. When it was introduced in 2009 the cash was to be spread over eight years; this time it's for 10 years.

Since the inaugural Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit in 1997 that was convened at the request of then-President Bill Clinton, nearly \$2 billion has come to the basin to primarily help with lake clarity. Money from California, Nevada, local

jurisdictions and the private sector came up with the bulk of that dollar figure.



Congress is being asked to give Lake Tahoe \$415 million over the next 10 years.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Clinton is the one who launched the environmental improvement program.

In 2000, the first Lake Tahoe Restoration Act was funded at \$424 million across 10 years. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., reintroduced the act on Aug. 1, with the support of Sens. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif, Harry Reid, D-Nev., and Dean Heller, R-Nev.

Money has been used to improve the clarity and quality of Lake Tahoe, thin forests in an attempt to reduce the threat of wildfire, help fight aquatic invasive species, improve air and water quality, build bike trails, and improve wildlife habitat.

The new money would do much of the same.

“I strongly believe we have a duty to protect Lake Tahoe, one of the most beautiful and pristine spots in our country,” Feinstein said in a press release. “Even in times of fiscal austerity, we cannot ignore the natural wonders that define our country. Lake Tahoe continues to suffer from pollution and

sedimentation that reduces the lake's remarkable water clarity, the potential for devastating wildfires remains high and a variety of invasive species threaten to devastate the region's economy."

Her family has had a second home on the West Shore for decades.

With the annual enviro summit being Aug. 19, the LTRA will undoubtedly be a topic of conversation – especially with former Vice President Al Gore attending the Sand Harbor event.

"Having the authorizing legislation (LTRA) allows legislators to appropriate funding to protect our lake for future generations, with assurances the money is being used responsibly," Cheva Heck with the USFS told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Also in the bill is \$2 million that would be used to transfer all of the urban lots owned by the U.S. Forest Service on the California side to the California Tahoe Conservancy. The USFS would get some CTC parcels outside the urban area so its ownership is more contiguous.

The current USFS parcels would be deed restricted so the CTC could not put them in their rather recently created "asset lands bank"; which allows the CTC to sell them for development purposes.

Nevada did not want to be part of the urban lot transfer.

The Forest Service manages more than 3,200 urban parcels throughout the basin.

This version of the LTRA would also allocate \$20 million to bring back the Lahontan cutthroat trout.

The legislation requires an annual report to Congress detailing the status of all projects undertaken, including project scope, budget and justification and overall expenditures and accomplishments.

Here is a copy of Feinstein's statement that she read into the record.

This is the LTRA summary of how the \$415 million would be spent.