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Rate of Condominium Conversions, Sales Continue Downward Spiral

Number of Distressed Properties Jumped 66 Percent in 2006

BY MICHELLE MOWAD

The one-two punch of slower sales and rising rates and payments on adjustable rate mortgages continues to drive foreclosures higher for homes in San Diego County.

The Web site RealtyTrac, an online market for distressed properties, said 12,623 properties entered some stage of foreclosure in December, up 66 percent from December 2005.

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Main Reason the Menu Changes Is to Keep Eateries Interesting



Restaurateurs Hold Promotions to Test Popularity of New Items

BY CONNIE LEWIS

If you're looking for a dose of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acid on the fly, Rubio's Fresh Mexican Grill has added some new salmon items to the menu that might fill the bill.

But hurry. The promo-

Sailing Not Smooth for New Monthly Business Magazine Pacifica

Employees, Contractors, Publisher In Dispute Over Late Paychecks

BY JESSICA LONG

Will it or won't it print again? That is the question facing North County's new monthly Pacifica Magazine.

If you ask Publisher Rafael Cabrera, the answer is a resounding "yes" despite complaints from former employees who say they haven't been paid since December.

"I am good at what I do and I am not going to fail with Pacifica," said the 50-year-

Philanthropists Conduct Business-Friendly Environmental Campaigns

Community Leaders Contribute Expertise To Clean-Water Issues

BY PAT BRODERICK

Save the planet, save your business.

That's the word from the San Diego Social Venture Partners, a coalition of about 130 "venture philanthropists," who invest their own money and expertise to improve the quality of life in the region.

On Jan. 30, the SDSVP kicked off a campaign to raise \$1 million to identify and help solve some of the county's environmental concerns.

Primary among them is the issue of clean water, including ocean pollution, beach closures and a safe supply of drinking water.

"It upsets me when I hear, after a minimal rainstorm, that we have to stay out of the water for 72 hours," said Martin Brown, retired senior vice president of Amlylin Pharmaceuticals in San Diego, and a coalition member. "It's ridiculous. We live by the ocean. If we screw up this environment, it's going to affect us all. Real estate values will go down, and it will be impossible to recruit people into San Diego. If we do the right thing for the environment, we will do the right thing for business."

Money Talks

Matching funds of \$200,000 each have been pledged by Paul Eichen, chief ex-

ecutive officer of the Solana Beach-based Rokenbok Toy Co., and founder of the San Diego-based Orca Fund, which supports environmental issues; and by SDSVP board member Aaron Contorer, a former executive of Microsoft Corp., who runs the Contorer Foundation.

Come April, all of the players will get together to decide how the money will be spent, according to Trevor M. Callan, co-founder of Callan Capital, a San Diego-based private banking firm, and SDSVP treasurer.

"We don't want to be too narrow," he said. "Ultimately, it will be up to the investors. But there is a lot of buzz around water issues."

In fact water is the key that ties all of the other environmental issues together, said Brown.

"I wasn't aware that we have mul-

tiples and large water sheds in San Diego County," he said. "Water is so integral to life in San Diego."

Good Business

A new member to the coalition is David Saltman, chief executive officer of Open Energy Corp., a Solana Beach-based renewable energy company that operates worldwide.

"I believe that the whole idea of sustainability is very much a part of what business will be in the future," he said. "What we are facing in the energy sector is a perfect storm, with rising energy costs of fossil fuels, geopolitical issues regarding oil reserves in the Middle East, and global warming.



David Saltman

People now recognize that they don't want the pollution of burning fossil fuels."

Saltman said he was impressed with the business model presented by the San Diego Social Venture Partners, which in fiscal 2005 and 2006 leveraged \$320,000 in contributions into more than \$2.3 million for their organizations, according to Callan.

"The idea that social contributions should be measured in terms of returns on investments is fantastic," said Saltman. "It's not enough to donate a check to charity. They want to see measurable results — a business plan, strategy, a mission. These are people not just donating money, but time. They can pick up a phone and call a congressman. They can leverage more than capital, using connections, know-how and business acumen for doing good things in the world."

National City Seeks Support for Chargers Stadium

Seeking allies in the city's quest for a new football stadium for the San Diego Chargers, Mayor Ron Morrison of National City wrote letters to several top elected and appointed officials soliciting their support.

The letters dated Feb. 1 were sent to San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders, San Diego City Council President Scott Peters, county Supervisors Ron Roberts and Diane Jacob, and Stephen Weber, president of San Diego State University.

Morrison generally describes the 52-acre site west of Interstate 5 and south of Bay Marina Drive and its advantages of being close to major arterials and served by the San Diego Trolley.

Morrison said a major challenge to

build the project is securing financing for both the stadium and surrounding infrastructure. He said he didn't envision the financial participation of his city or any other jurisdiction for construction costs.

Instead, Morrison sought land for the project where "revenue producing development opportunities can be identified," and referred to the example set by Petco Park.

The Padres' baseball-only ballpark, opened in 2004, cost about \$450 million and was financed with about \$300 million in taxpayer funds. Private capital invested around the ballpark is now generating tax increment dollars for the city's redevelopment agency.

The Chargers have been looking for a new site outside San Diego for more than

a year, after giving up attempting to broker a deal at its current home at Qualcomm Stadium. The team cited a lack of a development partner and the city's dire financial condition in looking elsewhere.

In addition to National City, the cities of Chula Vista and Oceanside have also expressed interest in working with the team. The Chargers have the legal right to discuss relocating to any city in the nation, but said it will continue to work only with cities within the county for an unspecified time.

The team can leave San Diego after the 2008 season, but would have to pay off about \$60 million in bonds issued in 1997 to pay for improvements to Qualcomm Stadium.

—Mike Allen