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Cheviot Hills

The greatest neighborhood in the world



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Adaptation

By Ben Lee

A few months ago, if you had told me that we would still be “safer at home” in June, I would’ve said, “you’ve got to be kidding.” Yet, here we are. Still home, still waiting for a vaccine, still hoping we don’t come down with this virus, still a bit fearful about the unknown yet hopeful for brighter days ahead. It has become second nature to grab a mask before heading out the door. We have gotten used to the boys being home all day and logging on to their classes. They say humans are pretty adaptable creatures and I think we have done a pretty good job evolving from a state of panic back in March to a reluctant acceptance as to what our lives look like now.

Compared to the rest of the world, even the rest of the city, I feel particularly lucky. Did you happen to see one of the articles floating around the internet that basically said that while yes, we are all in this storm together, we are all navigating this storm from very different boats? I fully recognize that quarantining in a house is significantly easier than an apartment. I take walks around the neighborhood and see parents with toddlers and I say a silent prayer of gratitude that my kids are older and don’t need constant supervision or the need to be entertained. We have enough food in the fridge and, thank goodness, didn’t suffer the loss of a job.

But this I know for a fact and perhaps you’ll agree: working from home is hard. I was preconditioned for this back when I broke my knee a few months ago and could unintentionally prepare, not knowing that working from home post-recovery would be a mandate. I couldn’t have predicted that our boys would be forced to “work from home,” though, too. In addition to our wifi being stretched too thin and our snack consumption way too high, there’s also a lot more noise and activity and hyper barking dogs and interruptions than there was before. However, noise and distractions aside, the great thing about real estate is that as long as you have a phone and computer, you can pretty much conduct business from anywhere. Of course, one of the cornerstones of a real estate transaction is human interaction; and sadly that has been almost completely eliminated



for the time being. I haven’t seen members of my team (other than my wife) in person for months. Listing appointments have been handled virtually. I have conducted one-on-one showings for various properties but meeting someone for the first time in a mask without shaking hands is still something hard to get used to.

It’s funny how the work-related jobs I once was ambivalent about are now what I miss the most. I’ve always had a love/hate relationship to Sunday Open Houses. Typically I’d be in the middle of a pleasant afternoon with the family and have to stop our activity in order to put on a suit and stand in someone else’s home for several hours. It was always challenging to be “on” that whole time and mentally draining to try to make personal connections with everyone who’d walk through the door. It was stressful because I really did want to greet everybody and make individual time for them; to learn about their needs and share information about other properties in

the neighborhood. I enjoyed meeting people for the first time as much as catching up with friends who would pop in to say hello. I liked seeing the Open House “regulars” who will likely never buy or sell but enjoyed the Sunday outing of checking out what was new on the market. Some neighbors liked to get design ideas or a mental picture of how their home measures up. Sometimes it would feel like I was the conductor of a three hour symphony. A marathon of conversations with many different people peppered with personal anecdotes along with a variety of facts, numbers, and the need for whipfast mental recall. So, yes, in a word: exhausting. But now that Covid-19 has put a (hopefully only temporary) end to Open Houses, I have to admit how much I miss them. We are still able to market properties successfully without them but it’s not the same. I’ve become adroit at conducting virtual tours and actually put five homes in escrow at the end of May. This tells me product

is moving and people are definitely buying and selling. As the city is slowly starting to open up, the economy is yawning, stretching and starting to wake up, too. But I really do miss people and am anxious to get back to the more social aspect of this business.

I hope by next month we are back to a somewhat normal way of life but if July brings more of the same, at least there’s comfort in knowing that we are proving our ability to adapt and adjust to life’s unforeseen curveballs that hurl our way (I really miss baseball!). When this is all over, I look forward to seeing you at those Open Houses around the neighborhood. Maybe we’ll crack open a cold bottle of Corona and think about how we got through those first six months of the year and toast to a better, latter half of 2020.

I hope you and your loved ones continue to stay strong, healthy and sane during this crazy and uncertain time in history. Be well, friends.

My featured listings

BEN LEE PROPERTIES

Beverlywood - NEW LISTING!



3043 Oakhurst Ave \$1,849,000

4 Bed / 2.5 Bath 2,163 Sq. Ft., 5,000 Sq. Ft. Lot

Inspired by the lush tapestry of Tuscany's countryside, step into this home and experience a bit of Italy in Beverlywood. From the Batchelder tiled fireplace and paned, arched bay windows in the living room to the richly landscaped backyard, every detail in this newly painted, two story, hardwood floored home exudes romance. Built in 1928 and remodeled to create more space, features include: an enormous master suite with walk-in closet, master bath with steam shower plus an adjacent, sun-filled room that could double as a conservatory, nursery, gym or office. The private backyard is an idyllic paradise with mature fruit trees, new garden deck, cascading Bougainvillea and a storybook walkway that leads to the converted garage/artist's studio, nestled within a canopy of greenery and foliage. Located on a quiet, friendly street in the award winning Castle Heights Elementary School district, this home is a true neighborhood gem that deserves your immediate attention.

Santa Monica - NEW FOR LEASE!



139 Hollister Ave for lease at \$25,000 p/mo.

5 Bed / 6 Bath Approx. 5,000 Sq. Ft.

A unique opportunity to live in a state-of-the-art masterpiece mere moments from the beach, this absolutely stunning, brand new construction is a seashore adjacent fantasy come true. Sleek and modern, this incomparable property is minimalist in design yet abundant in warmth and luxury. Set in earthy, natural tones of glass and wood, step into the foyer and encounter an impossibly high skylight that basks the entire home in breathtaking sunshine. A vast, open floor plan allows an easy flow from the Great Room with built in art wall and adjoining wet bar to the formal dining room, and on to the magnificent entertainer's kitchen that includes top tier Wolf and Subzero appliances, an oversized island with prep sink and custom built cabinetry with infinite amounts of storage. Properties such as this one are virtually impossible to come by in this enviable enclave of Santa Monica. There is simply no time better than now for your chance to live the ultimate California dream.

Beverlywood - GREAT NEW PRICE!



9125 David Ave for lease at \$7,500 p/mo.

4.5 Bed / 3 Bath 2,392 Sq. Ft.

Be the first to occupy this newly renovated, 4.5 bedroom/3 full bath, 2392 sq ft home on a vast, corner lot in the heart of Beverlywood with a few of downtown and a swimming pool. Fresh and clean, the home has been completely remodeled without sacrificing original character. Features include: new hvac, brand new stainless appliances, counters and cabinets in the kitchen, all new plumbing fixtures and tile in the bathrooms, hardwood floors, Bay windows, stone fireplace in the den and a drought resistant backyard with a beautiful swimming pool, ideal for the upcoming summer months. There is a formal living room, formal dining room, breakfast nook, large bedrooms, ample closets and immaculate, fully renovated bathrooms. There is no shortage of space and storage possibilities. Located in the award winning Castle Heights Elementary School district, this is a unique opportunity to be the first residents of this meticulously remodeled home.

Cheviot Hills - IN ESCROW!



3009 Castle Heights Ave \$1,399,000

3 Bed / 2 Bath 1,546 Sq. Ft., 5,022 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheerful, traditional style home with exquisite landscaping on a large corner lot ideal for raising a family. Design details include intricate crown moldings, hardwood floors, Bay window with Plantation shutters and stately fireplace in the formal living room. The three bedrooms are large and comfortable- a Murphy bed allows flexibility to easily convert one bedroom into an office. A short stroll to sweet neighborhood park and situated in the award winning Castle Heights Elementary School district, this attractive home will make its next inhabitants happy for years to come.

Santa Monica - IN ESCROW!



929 16th St \$2,495,000

5 Bed / 4 Bath 2,601 Sq. Ft., 7,405 Sq. Ft. Lot

Seller may finance!!!! Live just moments from the beach and feel the cool ocean breezes from either unit of this pristine Santa Monica duplex. Each offers hardwood floors, comfortably sized rooms, closets and living spaces, immaculate kitchens with stainless appliances and oversized windows that let natural light stream into each home. Each unit also offers a wholly private and beautifully landscaped backyard, perfect for summer barbeques or evening cocktail parties. Located in one of the most enviable sections of Santa Monica: nestled an arm's reach between the chic shops and restaurants of Wilshire and Montana Avenue, this unbelievable opportunity is not to be missed.

Beverlywood - IN ESCROW!



9112 Gibson St \$1,290,000

3 Bed / 2 Bath 1,264 Sq. Ft., 5,001 Sq. Ft. Lot

A delightful Spanish style home on one of the friendliest streets in Beverlywood. The front door, a magical patchwork of color, sets the tone for what exists beyond: a picturesque and private front courtyard that leads to the main property. Inside you'll find all the special characteristics that give this architectural style such unique charm: thick adobe walls, curved archways, coved ceilings, hardwood floors and crystal doorknobs. Located in the award winning Castle Heights school district and a short stroll from the fun shops and restaurants of South Robertson, this house will not be on the market for long so make a point to see it today.

Cheviot Hills happenings

– Westside Stories – Descanso Gardens



By Michael Harris

Descanso Gardens, previously closed to do Covid, has recently reopened. You may need an appointment now to visit but it's definitely worth seeing. Located at 1418 Descanso Drive in La Canada-Flintridge, Descanso Gardens was deeded to Los Angeles County by its original owner Manchester Boddy. The extensive and renowned camellia collection was acquired from two Japanese nursery owners who sold their inventory to Boddy because they were about to be interned to a Japanese

prison camp at the outset of WW II. The original Boddy mansion is located in the south east corner of the 150 acre now public park.

Mr. Boddy was a rags to riches entrepreneur who was the owner of the Los Angeles News and who ran for and lost in his effort to win the seat in the US Senate which was eventually won by Richard Nixon. Mr. Boddy's interests included flowers and horticulture in general and the fruits of those interests are preserved and displayed in the Gardens which are now open and available to the public.

If you enjoy reading these vignettes each month, you may want to check out my father-in-law's book, Westside Stories. It's a memoir/history of growing up on the Westside of Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s with great photos, anecdotes and stories. Perfect for the history buff/enthusiast in your family! It's available for purchase on Amazon, just search for Westside Stories by Michael Harris.

– RAFFLE –

By Ben Lee

Here's your chance to enjoy fresh-from-the-oven donuts while supporting a local business! This June (which happens to be National Donut Month. Who knew?) we are giving away a \$50 gift certificate to Miss Donuts on Robertson. Treat your friends and family to a few dozen super special sugary sweets, courtesy of Ben Lee Properties. To enter, simply send me an email (ben@benleeproperties.com) and write DONUTS in the subject line. That's it! We will pick a



winner at random at the end of the month and get you the gift certificate soon thereafter. Good luck and happy National Donut Month!

Motor Ave. Farmers Market- Open!

By Ben Lee

Our neighborhood farmers market is open every Sunday from 9am-2pm. Please support your local farmers by purchasing fresh fruits, vegetables, hummus, nuts and more directly from the source. Social distancing and safety measures are enforced and these farmers really need our help during this trying time. Did you know you could pre-order a farm-to-table box on line and pick it up on Sunday? Featuring a variety of fruits and vegetables straight from our local farmers, you can order a box for \$28 by Thursday and it will be waiting for you at the Farmers Market on Sunday after 11am. I can vouch that these boxes are really delicious. Please visit the website at: www.motoravenuemarket.com to



purchase a box as well as other goodies such as fresh breads, pastries and more. There is also a way to get items delivered right to your door if you are someone who should not be leaving the house at this time. The market would love to find more volunteers to help with this service, however. If you are able to volunteer to make deliveries and help those in need, please contact: maia@motorassociation.org

June Celebrations



By Ben Lee

Formal graduations have all been cancelled but I couldn't let June go by without acknowledging our son Spencer who has officially finished middle school and our son Vincent who is done with Mirman's Lower school and is moving on to the Upper School. Congratulations to you both on these special milestones and a hearty congrats to all the kids out

there who are graduating, too! I also wanted to wish a very sincere Father's Day to all the dads and granddads. I'm so grateful to my sons for making me a dad, to my father for being a great inspiration all my life and my father-in-law for giving me advice and always contributing to this newsletter. I hope all fathers are able to enjoy a (socially distant?) celebration with the ones you love!