THE GREATER STUDIO CITY Insider

Brought to you by Craig Strong

Spring Festivals and Farmers Markets in Studio City

Springtime in Studio City is a time for art shows and outdoor festivals. Celebrate eco-conscious living at the L.A. Earth Day celebration, pick up a one-of-a-kind piece of local art at the annual Rotary Art Show, and make several dates to hit the Studio City Farmers Market for some shopping, eating and people-watching.

MAY 12-13: STUDIO CITY ROTARY ART SHOW

This Mother's Day weekend, stop by Moorpark Park for the 48th annual Studio City Art Show. The show is presented by the Rotary Club of Studio City-Sherman Oaks. Peruse art displays by talented painters, sculptors and photographers. See (and purchase) mixed media art, prints, textiles, woodwork, metalwork and more. Artists are carefully selected to showcase a wide variety of unique and high-quality work. The Rotary Art Show is always a highly anticipated event, drawing crowds from near and far. The park is pet-friendly and there's a playground for the kids, too.



STUDIO CITY FARMERS MARKET

Every Sunday, rain or shine, the Studio City Farmers Market is open for business. The market has evolved into a beloved community event. The first rule of the Studio City Farmers Market is to come hungry. Options include delicious hot fare from local favorites like Mama Musubi, Olivewood Pizza and Wicked Maine Lobster. There's plenty more to satisfy any craving. Pick up some breakfast burritos, tamales, pupusas, juicy burgers and bacon-wrapped hot dogs.

There's always plenty of fresh produce from local growers, along with artisanal cheeses, breads and plenty of other goodies. You can also pick up other locally made products such as soaps, clothing and household cleaners. Buying locally benefits both you and your local community, and it can have a major impact on the health of our environment, too.

LOS ANGELES ZOO SPRINGTIME EVENTS

Spring is also a great time to get out to the L.A. Zoo for some of their special events. In keeping with the Earth Day theme, the zoo presents Wild for the Planet from April 21 through May 18. Presentations, exhibits and fun activities will focus on conservation and sustainability. Celebrate the rich biodiversity of our planet, while exploring ways to protect it in a fun, interactive way.

Keep the eco love going with the zoo's Sustainable Wine and Dinner Series. Each dinner is set in a different area of the zoo. Dine in the Amazonian Stilt House or along the terraces of the Mahale Mountains, among other picturesque settings. The four-course farm-to-table meals are created by executive chef Brad Robertson, and each is centered around wines produced by local sustainable wineries. As you dine, learn and discuss something new. Each night features a different topic of discussion — like sustainable agriculture, local wine or getting up-close with the zoo's inhabitants.

Local Upcoming Events:

FIRE SERVICE DAY

Hosted by Toluca Lake Chamber of Commerce on Saturday May 12, 2017, 13th Annual Old Fashioned Pancake Breakfast. All profits from the event will benefit Fire Station #86 and the Widows and Orphans Fund.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Mark your Calendars for Toluca Lake's annual **National Night out**! Date is TBD 100 50 Riverside Dr. *(Chase Bank Parking lot).*

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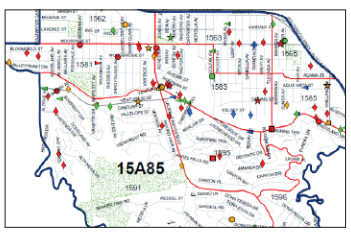
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Your Money



Organizing 6
In The Home



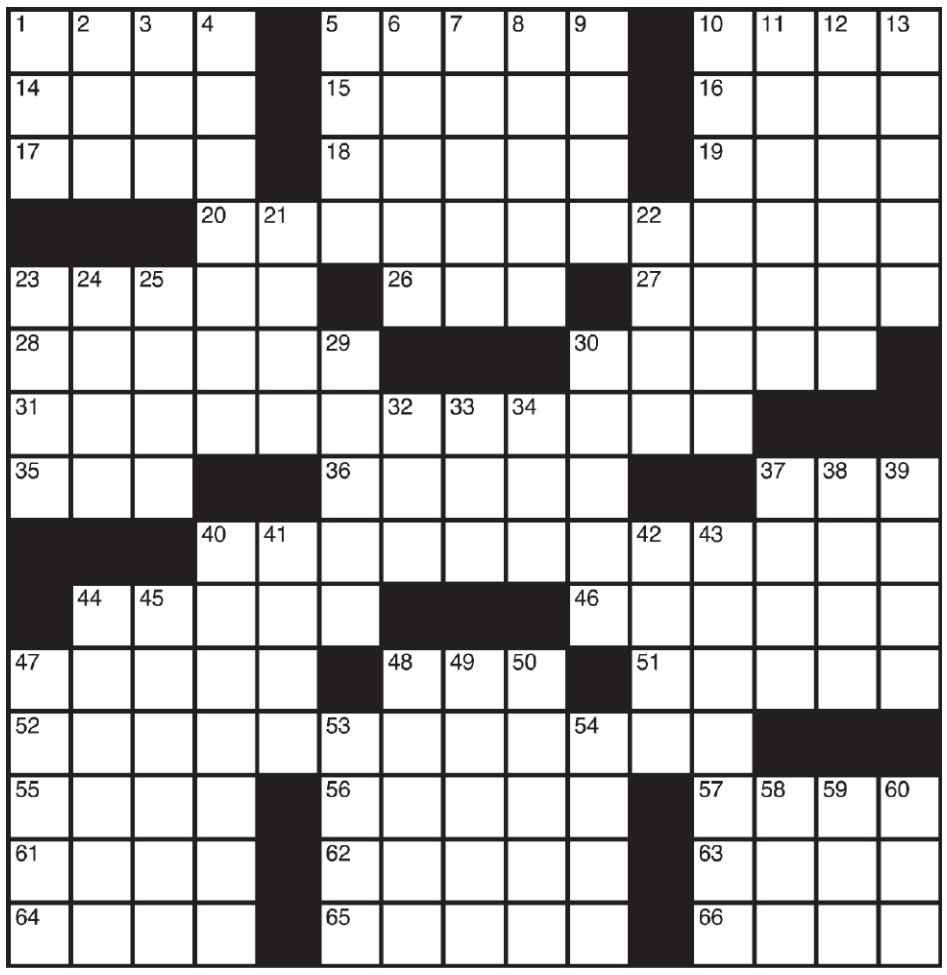
Adventurous Mexico 9
Travel



Crime Report 10

DP# 21736

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



just for fun

ACROSS

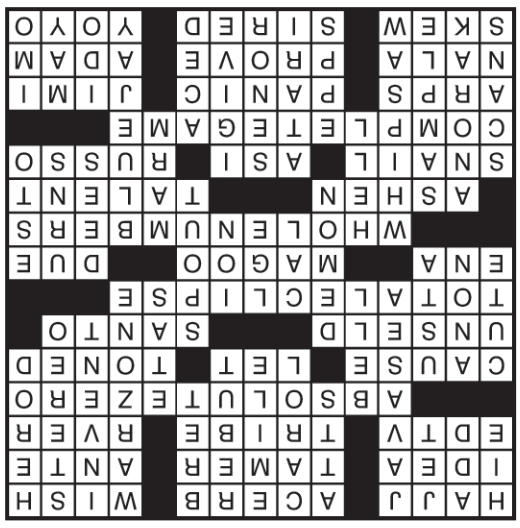
1 Trek to Mecca
5 Astringent in taste
10 Something made on a shooting star
14 Brainstorm
15 Circus animal handler
16 Pot starter
17 1999 satire about a reality show
18 Erie or Cree
19 KOA visitor
20 Theoretical temperature at which molecular activity ceases
23 __-and-effect
26 Wimbledon do-over
27 Quieted, with "down"
28 Wes in the Basketball Hall of Fame
30 __ Domingo
31 Astronomical phenomenon
35 Bambi's aunt
36 "Mr." with Jim Backus' voice
37 In line for
40 0, 1, 2, 3, etc.
44 Pasty-faced
46 Ability spotted by a scout
47 Slow-moving mollusk
48 "__ was saying ... "
51 Actress Rene
52 Rarity for a pitcher, nowadays
55 Some dadaist pieces
56 Go to pieces
57 Rocker Hendrix
61 "The Lion King" lion
62 Show beyond doubt
63 Eve's partner
64 Represent unfairly
65 Fathered
66 Toy on a string

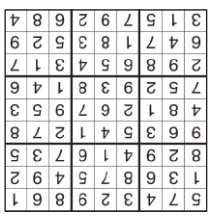
DOWN

1 Shake a leg, quaintly
2 Put two and two together
3 Air Force One, for one
4 Indonesian site of a WWII naval battle
5 Some "Night Court" characters: Abbr.
6 "Silent Night," e.g.
7 Novelist Zola
8 Counter, as an argument
9 Author Harte
10 Dangerous place for an embedded journalist
11 Dream up
12 Man cave system
13 "The Great" Judean king
21 Ding-dong maker
22 Sched. postings
23 Like kitten videos
24 Any minute, to Shakespeare
25 Court sports org.
29 Sinister spirit
30 Teapot feature
32 Western neighbor of Nev.
33 Size up from med.
34 Charged particle
37 Dead ends?
38 Coffee servers
39 __ perpetua: Idaho's motto
40 Two-person log-cutting tool
41 29-Down's milieu
42 Schoolteacher of old
43 Toronto baseballer
44 Hooded ski jacket
45 Supermarket freebie
47 Speed-reads
48 Big name in arcades
49 Madrid mister
50 "Uncle!"
53 Actor Omar
54 Got a hole-in-one on
58 Wedding vow
59 Memorial Day month
60 "I think," in texts

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PUZZLE answers







SCRABBLE GRAMS

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A1 E1 O1 R1 L1 C3 N1	RACK 1	
A1 A1 E1 I1 R1 R1 F4	RACK 2	
A1 I1 H4 B3 T1 S1 F4	RACK 3	
I1 I1 Y4 C3 R1 M3 M3	RACK 4	Double Word Score
A1 E1 O1 B3 K5 L1 C3	RACK 5	1st Letter Triple

PAR SCORE 265-275 **FIVE RACK TOTAL ___**
BEST SCORE 337 **TIME LIMIT: 25 MIN**

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. Finally, 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All the words are in the Official SCRABBLE® Players Dictionary, 5th Edition. **SOLUTION TOMORROW**

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For puzzle inquiries contact scrgrams@gmail.com

01-07

Sudoku

created by Crosswords Ltd.

		4	3		9			
	3	6		7				
	2		4					
9	6	3						8
4								3
7						1	4	6
	9				4		1	
				8		5	2	
			7		2	6		

IMPROVEMENTS THAT ADD VALUE TO A HOME MAY INCREASE ITS BASIS

by Gary M. Singer

Q: How can you say, as you did in a recent newspaper article, that putting in a new washer and dryer is an expense that would increase your basis in a condo? Aren't appliances simply replacements rather than upgrades?

A: You raise an interesting question. Under certain situations a washer and dryer may be more like a toaster oven, while in other situations it might be more like a stove. But let's take a step back.

When you sell a property and show a profit, the IRS will want to tax that profit. If the home is your primary residence and you have lived in it for two out of the last five years, the IRS allows married couples to exclude from tax up to $500,000 in profit. If you are single, the IRS allows you to exclude up to $250,000.

Now, if your profit is above those levels, or if the property is not your primary residence (maybe it's a vacation home) and you have a profit, you'll want to calculate all the costs of purchase, sale and, according to IRS Publication 523, all improvements that "add to the value of your home, prolong its useful life, or adapt it to new uses."

Also according to this document, if you have improvements that add value to your home, you can add those improvements to the "basis" of the home. (Basis is the term that the IRS that to most homeowners would be equivalent to the cost of the home.)

So, back to your question. That washer and dryer may or may not qualify. In some situations, we have had accountants tell us that it would increase the basis. If you install an addition to a home with a new laundry room, all of those expenses may go toward the basis. Publication 523 also states that built-in appliances can increase the basis to the home. That's why the washer and dryer may add to your basis to your home and in other circumstances it may not.

If you are simply replacing the washing machine or dryer during the time you live there, that installation may not count toward your basis. That replacement won't increase the value of the home and may not last but a couple of years. The IRS would probably not view that as counting toward the basis of the home.

For more information on the basis of a home, you can look at Publication 523 from the IRS. Simply search Publication 523 in the IRS search bar and you can either view the publication or you can download it. ■

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KIDS AND MONEY:

DON'T BE SWAYED BY SCAMMERS AMID COLLEGE MONEY RUSH



by Steve Rosen

It happens every spring. As parents and students scramble to line up more money to cover college costs, scam artists pop up like unsightly weeds in a finely manicured yard?

Unfortunately, this has been a recurring Kids & Money column topic because people continue to be taken in by fraud.

Every year, many students and parents are defrauded by scholarship scams, losing millions of dollars, according to estimates from the FinAid financial aid website.

There is no shortage of information online, in libraries and in high school counselor offices about how to apply for and win scholarships. You can do it yourself for free. Yet, people succumb to the lure of advertisements that offer "free money" or "your fair share" of scholarship dollars, courtesy of con artists.

The latest evidence of this scholarship disconnect comes from a survey this month by The Student Loan Report. Among other things, the researchers asked 1,000 college students about securing scholarship dollars.

According to the survey, 41 percent of the students said they would be willing to pay to be matched on scholarship lists with potential donors. Even more disappointing was the number of students who paid for the service.

> "Every year, many students and parents are defrauded by scholarship scams, losing millions of dollars…"

That number? 73 percent. How do you explain those results?

Nicolas Chee of The Student Loan Report chalked it up to parents and high school seniors who are stressed over not having enough money at this late date to cover college bills, especially as admissions letters are hitting mailboxes.

He also said some parents, especially if this is their first time through the financial aid process, can be susceptible to scams.

Of course, there are legitimate scholarship search services. But there's no reason to pay when you can score results on your own with some time and effort.

What are some of the magic words used by scam artists to hook you? Here are some tips from the College Board, FinAid, the Better Business Bureau and the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

"Your scholarship is guaranteed or your money back." There are no guarantees, and refunds often have conditions or multiple strings attached.

"Win your fair share." According to FinAid, less than 1 percent of users of fee-based scholarship matching services actually win an award. If it seems to good to be true, it usually is.

"Immediate action is necessary." Don't be pressured to hit a deadline for signing up.

"This is exclusive information." Wrong. There are many free lists of scholarships available through FinAid, the College Board and other reputable organizations.

"The scholarship will cost money." Only a few legitimate companies ask for a small application fee. But phony companies might ask for as little as $3, more often $10 to $25, and some fees as high as $5,000 to "ensure that only serious candidates apply," the College Board said.

"I need your credit card or bank account number." Don't walk away from this line. Run. Never give out that information; it's the express lane to your money.

"I'm from the Federal Grants Administration." Scam operators often use official sounding words to imitate a legitimate government agency, foundation or educational organization. Do your research and see if the agency or organization actually exists.

One final point: Take control of the scholarship process. Even at this late date, plenty of organizations, foundations, clubs and religious groups have money to hand out to students who meet certain criteria. Get after it. ■

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YOUR MONEY

THE GREATER STUDIO CITY Insider

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ASK CRAIG STRONG

Q & A with the real estate expert



Selling Quickly This Spring

Q Dear Craig, I've been thinking about selling my home for awhile. But, I haven't been able to enter the market just yet based on expectations I have and the fear of not meeting or exceeding those expectations. My three main concerns are determining the right season to sell based on my area and competition, the value of my home, and how long it will take to sell. Ultimately I hope to close as soon as possible with an acceptable return on investment. Can you tell me if it is a good time to list my home and what I can do to make sure that I receive offers quickly?

Derek

A Dear Derek, Ask any real estate professional and they'll tell you that Spring is the undisputed champion of seasons for selling. And this Spring, homebuyers will be jumping at the bit to close, move and get settled into their new homes before the end of summer.

Besides buyers who are eager to move onto the purchase process after a dreary winter with little inventory, home values are giving sellers the upperhand in the market as most markets are exceeding pre-recession levels and gaining slightly higher valuations for most homes than recent months. This rise in addition to the a few minor renovations you can complete, will offer you a quicker close and most likely more return at sale.

Quick updates that I suggest are a minor bathroom remodel, a minor kitchen remodel and outdoor additions. By giving your old bathroom floors and vanity a face-lift, the new look will grab any interested buyers' attention. While a little extra decorative details in the kitchen such as sink fixtures, curtain rods and drapes could give them the perfect space for entertaining. For a simple update at very little cost, add a splash of color to the front of your home. By adding flowering foundation plants, or a fun color combination of doors, trim and siding, your home will surely pop with upscale charm.

If you've found this information helpful and are ready to get started, or if you have additional questions about the home selling process, feel free to call. ■



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Client Testimonial



I had a great experience – Craig and his team were extremely helpful in the buying process. They were diligent, respectful and provided clear communication with in-depth knowledge. I fully trusted them to look out for my best interest. I highly recommend their service.

-Wendy Allen

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STRONG REALTOR

DAIRY-FREE NUTRITION TIPS

for the 65 Percent of People who are Lactose Intolerant



by BPT

Do you love dairy, but usually regret eating it shortly after it's gone? That sour stomach after drinking milk, munching on cheese or eating ice cream is sometimes called a dairy hangover. The culprit: lactose.

Lactose is a milk sugar. Infants have special enzymes that break down lactose. As people grow, the ability to digest milk typically decreases because they lose these enzymes. In fact, approximately 65 percent of the human population has a reduced ability to digest milk and foods made with milk after infancy, according to the National Institutes of Health.

SYMPTOMS OF LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

If you've had the following symptoms after eating dairy products, you may be lactose intolerant:

- Gas
- Bloating
- Abdominal cramping
- Diarrhea
- Nausea

If you or your children have these symptoms, there are many things you can do. First, talk with your doctor or nutritionist about your health concerns. Second, consider keeping a food journal of what you eat and how it makes you feel. This can help uncover trends and important connections. Finally, research high-quality dairy-free alternatives for you and your family's diet.

TIPS FOR GOING DAIRY-FREE

Adjusting to a low-dairy or dairy-free diet might seem overwhelming. There are many dairy-free milk options on the market, but it's important to be a conscientious shopper. Whereas most dairy-free beverages use non-food flavorings and additives like carrageenan, all plant-based Mooala products are made with real ingredients, and are USDA-certified organic, Kosher and GMO-free.

Every Mooala product has 10 or fewer grams of sugar per serving and it can be found in approximately 1,500 retailers throughout the U.S. Try Original Almondmilk and Vanilla Bean Almondmilk for a creamy treat that tastes surprisingly similar to milk. Nut-free and soy-free Original Bananamilk is also available to the estimated 5 million Americans who are allergic to tree nuts.

Another concern for people cutting dairy is vitamin D and calcium deficiencies. Fortunately, there are foods you can add to your diet so you get these important nutrients. Egg yolks, canned tuna and almonds are good sources of vitamin D. Spinach, kale, collards and white beans are good sources of calcium. What's more, many common grocery store items are fortified with calcium and vitamin D as well, such as breakfast cereals and orange juice. Just look at the label for more information.

There are plentiful options to eat well and go dairy-free if you have lactose sensitivities. Have fun exploring new recipes that support your nutritional needs. One that features many of these powerful dairy-free foods is a tasty smoothie you can whip up in just minutes:

GRAPEFRUIT BANANAMILK SMOOTHIE

Ingredients:

- 1 deseeded grapefruit
- 1 sweet apple
- 2 handfuls of spinach
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 handful of ice
- 1/2 cup Mooala's Original Bananamilk
- Dash of fresh ginger

Directions:

Place ingredients in blender, then puree until you've reached your desired consistency. ■

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KITCHEN ORGANIZATION THAT REALLY WORKS

by Kathryn Weber

The kitchen is the most used room in the house. And when it's time to put a meal together, having an organized kitchen will help you find what you're looking for when you're looking for it. By spending some time organizing, mealtimes will be faster and your kitchen will stay neater.

FUNCTION

Make sure you can get to what you need when you need it. If you cook frequently, make sure you have a countertop utensil holder that has your most-used items at the ready. Take a spatula to your gardening center to find a nice ceramic planter that is sturdy, is the right height and holds all the utensils you use most often.

The sink is one of the fastest areas for clutter and mess. Add a tip-out on the sink cabinet drawer front to hold items like scouring pads or a toothbrush for cleaning jewelry. It offers easy access and organization, and a set with hinges and trays can be found online for around $20 and takes less than an hour to install. Add a suction sink basket to hold a sponge and dish brush.

Under the sink, add a wire door organizer on one side of the cabinet to hold dishwasher cleaning pods, scouring powder and counter cleaners. On the other side, install a two-tier under-sink drawer that can be screwed into the cabinet base. You'll get easy, double storage for around $50 in the time it takes to put in four screws. On this side, also add a swing arm towel rack to hold cloths and dish towels.

CLEAR DIVISION

Make sure that you have some hard-working dividers in your kitchen to keep it in shape. Add storage racks to separate cookie sheets and trays. Some dividers can be used both vertically and horizontally. The vertical side holds cookie sheets; when placed horizontally, they hold skillets. To make lids easy to find, keep them in a drawer next to the stove. Add shelf stackers to cabinets to double your dish and cup storage.

To store knives and other utensils, measure your drawer width and depth and add dividers that fit exactly or look for dividers that expand. Add dividers in all your kitchen drawers, not just in the cutlery drawer. Make three dividers solely for knives. Have one for large knives, one for small knives, and one for specialty knives like a bread knife.

STORAGE

Other sources of clutter are the many small countertop appliances. Work to clear out a shelf in your pantry or cabinet, designate this spot as your appliance shelf, and relocate food processors, blenders and slow cookers here. Your counters will be clear, and you'll find the items quickly. Only leave the appliances on the counter that you use daily, such as a toaster or coffeemaker.

Add a Lazy Susan to a pantry shelf for bottles, try step stackers for cans, and consider stacking baskets to hold mixes, packaged noodles and envelopes. Create a baking center with a heavy duty baking tray. Add containers of flour, sugar, baking soda and baking powder here, so when it's time to bake, you only take one tray off the shelf to get started. ■

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GET YOUR GRILL IN GEAR

by Kathryn Weber

One important and hardworking appliance you need to have at the ready for this time of year? The grill. After a winter of sitting idly by, it might be time to clean it and get it ready for the cookouts to come. Giving your grill a good cleaning will get it ready for summer, make your grill cook better and prolong its life.

GET CLEANING

Start by cleaning your grill thoroughly on the inside. If you have stainless steel or porcelain-covered grill grates, a simple approach to cleaning the grates is to spray them with standard oven cleaner and place inside a large trash bag. Leave the trash bag out in the sun all day. The heat of the sun and the black trash bag will work like an oven to heat up grime and bake it off. Follow by rinsing in water and scouring with a sponge or scouring pad. Wash and rinse the grates thoroughly.

If your cooking grates are cast iron, you should not use oven cleaner. Cast iron is porous and can absorb some of the cleaner, which besides being toxic can affect the taste of your food. Instead, thoroughly scrub the grates with a wire brush to remove residue. Using a wadded piece of aluminum foil, scrub the grates until no residue can be seen on either side.

Inside the grill, use a paint scraper to scrape up any accumulated grease and grime. Wipe out with wadded newspaper followed by paper towels and warm water with a mild detergent. Wipe down the inside thoroughly with paper towels wet with clear water to remove any soapy residue. Using a paper towel, apply a light rubbing of shortening or vegetable oil on your grates to protect them from rust and prevent food from sticking.

Be sure to clean off the exterior of the grill with a commercial cleaner or degreaser. Wipe off with wet paper towels and wipe dry. If the exterior of your grill is stainless, apply a light coat of stainless steel polish, then wipe and polish with a microfiber towel or paper towel to shine. Be sure to clean off knobs; and if your grill has wheels, give them a shot of automotive silicone protectant spray to make them look fresh too.

GRILL PROTECTION

Rust and grime are the two most common problems with grills. When grates rust, food often sticks and can ruin your meal; rust can also affect the taste and quality of your food. For that reason, make sure your grill has a good cover so that rust doesn't develop.

When it comes to grill covers, go for quality. A good-quality grill cover is heavier and won't blow off the grill. Better still, it'll last longer and be a better barrier to the elements.

For cleaning your grill, make sure you also invest in a heavy-duty grill brush. Here again, a quality brush is worth the money. Check your local grill and fireplace store for recommendations on a brush that will get the job done. ■

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New Cottage Style Brings Casual Comfortable Elegance



by Kathryn Weber

There are few decorating designs that can match the appeal of cottage style. But what really defines cottage style? Maybe it's the cozy charm of porch rockers or crisp white trim inside or a white picket fence. While in the past these have been textbook marks of cottage style, today's cottage style homes are undergoing a change.

Today's cottage look still retains that comfortable appeal but now offers some sophistication as well. This new look relies heavily on its surrounding locale, repurposing and reusing what's available. That's today's cottage style.

FURNISHINGS

To create a cottage style that's so popular now thanks to television decorating shows, the look is less about chintz fabric and floral wallpaper and is more focused on doing away with the frou-frou and adopting a style of clean lines and furnishings that are far from fussy. A great example would be a simple farm-style dining table with a long bench for seating, paired with wingback end chairs in a check pattern. On top of the table might be a large crock or an antique dough bowl filled with green apples.



Upholstered furnishings will eschew formal designs and have a more casual appeal. Consider a club chair covered in a muslin fabric with antiqued brass nail head trim. Or, it might use a casual toile pattern. In the living room, a duck fabric covered sofa would be positioned to enjoy a view, TV, or fireplace with a casual mantel and surround.

Wood furniture is often painted or shows signs of wear, and it's those imperfections that become part of the appeal. And rustic, hand-scraped, reclaimed or painted wood floors typify the new cottage look.

WHITE AND BRIGHT

White reigns supreme in almost all decorating, but it is especially big in cottage style decor. Whether it is the color of slipcovered furniture, bright walls or sharp trim, white is a hallmark of cottage style. But cottage style doesn't shy away from color necessarily.

A country red kitchen or even charcoal gray painted cabinets will be paired with large, rustic pendant lighting. In the bedroom, colors can range from tans and beige to the deepest navy. But white (on trim, walls or furnishings) often become the color anchor for this style.

COTTAGE VS. FARMHOUSE

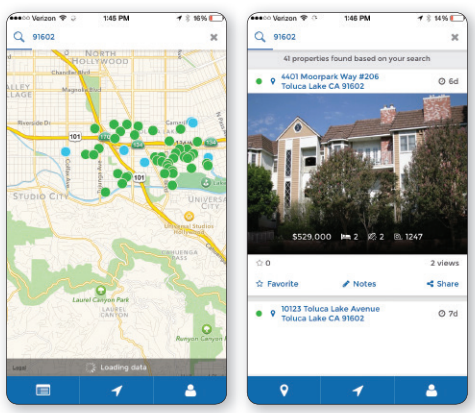
Another burgeoning style today is the farmhouse look. However, the lines of farmhouse and cottage can sometimes be blurred. While the dainty style of yesteryear's cottage decor is still called cottage, today's cottage look is a bit crisper but still just as comfortable and approachable. It now has an edge of urbane casualness.

A major change to the cottage style has been texture. One of the most popular textures is shiplap and wood-covered walls. This look has emerged as part of the cottage style's trend toward reusing, recycling and simplicity. Salvaged architectural accents can be used decoratively as accent pieces, and the use of what's on hand and found objects that are repurposed are now keystones of cottage style today. Tying the look to the locale and the area is another design touchpoint that marks a transition from frippery to a look that's a simple, yet elegant and casual. ■

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There's a New App in Town: **Strong Realtor**

Realtor Craig Strong has released a new app to make home shopping easier, more fun, and available with the touch of your finger! The app, titled Strong Realtor, not only allows you to search, select favorites, and make notes on the homes you're interested in, but you can also use it to stay up to date on the market, and contact us at Strong Realtor!



Some other features:

- Direct link to MLS: new listings and updates available within one minute
- Smart Search: advanced filters to narrow your search
- Explore homes with status of Active, Pending/Backup, Sold and For Lease
- Scheduled Open Houses identified separately for easy touring
- Elegant edge-to-edge photo viewing
- Plenty of room to make detailed notes on all properties
- Easily share listings with friends through text or email
- Available for Android and Apple devices

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STUDIO CITY FARMER'S MARKET

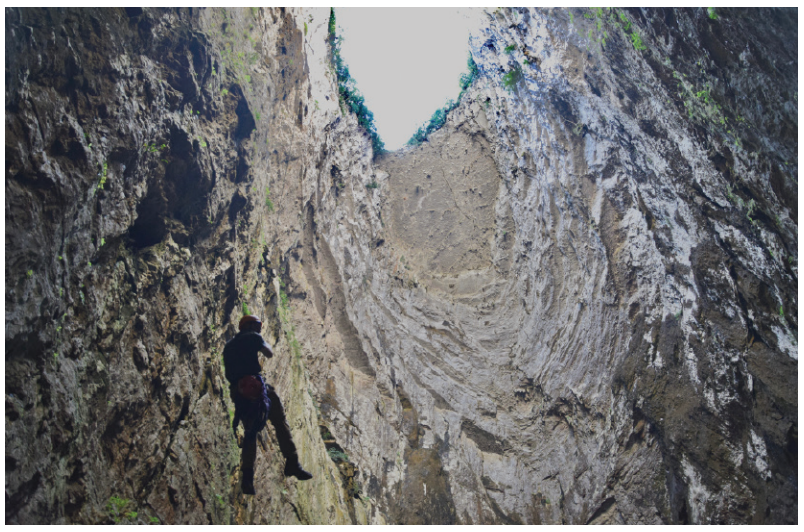
Located on Ventura Place, the Studio City Farmer's Market is open on Sundays from 8 am to 2 pm., rain or shine, and will remain open on Easter Sunday.

STUDIO CITY farmers market

CANOES, CAVES AND INDIGENOUS CULTURE: ADVENTURE AWAITS IN MEXICO'S SAN LUIS POTOSI









By Mark Johnson

Imagine if you took a giant bottle of Champagne, shook it up, popped the cork and let the bubbles rush all over your body. Now imagine you're 60 feet beneath the surface and strapped into scuba gear when it happens. That, in essence, is the riotous joy one experiences when floating above a geothermal spring.

I've discovered this while swimming past one of the six springs that feeds a little-known prehistoric lagoon in Mexico called Media Luna. Lost in its whirlpool of bubbles, I watch in awe as they tickle their way around my skin, rising to the surface and popping in the midday heat.

Swimming through Media Luna's crystal-clear waters, I pass a petrified forest and cavernous subterranean corridors en route to a spot where, in the 1970s, underwater archaeologists discovered the fossilized remains of a mammoth. Its head lay on the bottom alongside hundreds of pre-Hispanic offerings deposited in this crescent-shaped oasis by the region's ancient settlers, who used it as a center of worship.

Not only is Media Luna one of the most intriguing underwater archaeology sites in Mexico; it's also a haven for beginner divers. Ossiel Martinez of Dive School Media Luna tells me after our dive that the famed explorer Jacques Cousteau once named this lagoon among the best spots on the planet to learn the basic techniques of cave diving. I can see why.

What I can't understand is why I'm one of the only foreigners here. Perhaps it's because this spectacular undersea labyrinth is nowhere near Mexico's famed coastline.

Most tourists visit the United States' southern neighbor for its lavish beach resorts and towering Mayan ruins. I've come for adventure. I've based myself in the long-overlooked central state of San Luis Potosi, halfway between Mexico City and Monterrey. It has neither beaches nor Mayan ruins. Instead, it boasts untouched turquoise rivers, still-thriving Wixaritari and Teenek cultures, and a terrain riddled with deep sinkholes, like a block of Swiss cheese.

San Luis Potosi has been a fast-growing destination among domestic tourists for several years. The U.S. State Department advises Americans to "reconsider travel" to this part of Mexico, citing crime and gang activity "in parts of San Luis Potosi state." However, the global think tank Institute for Economics and Peace rates the state well above more touristed areas such as Mexico City, Oaxaca and Baja California Sur on its latest Mexico Peace Index. Having traveled extensively in Mexico, there was nothing in San Luis Potosi that put me on edge.

The region has atmospheric places to stay, such as the colonial-style Hilton (rooms from $115). Three dozen more hotels are in development. Tourism officials predict an additional terminal at the international airport in the state's namesake capital will more than double annual arrivals from 500,000 to 1.2 million once it's finished later this year.

My journey through this burgeoning adventure travel hub began, in earnest, two days ago in a totally different landscape: the vast wilds of the Wirikuta desert. I hiked five hours from the small colonial town of San Antonio de Coronados, past a peyote-riddled scrubland and up to a hilltop sanctuary known as Ameyaltonal, held sacred by the local Wixaritari community. When I arrived, a shaman cleansed my body with smoke and aromatic herbs in a ceremony where we honored the four cardinal directions, the earth below and the sky above.

I also took a harrowing ride on the roof of a 1961 Jeep Willys high into the Sierra de Catorce mountain range to visit the once-glorious 18th century silver mining outpost of Real de Catorce. This former ghost town has been repopulated in recent decades and revitalized for the tourist industry, drawn to its crumbling colonial churches and charming cobbled streets.

Now, I've traded the arid high plains of the state's western corridors for the subtropical forests and sinkholes of the Zona Media, home to the Media Luna lagoon.

I'm traveling with Miguel Galarraga, one of the founders of Corazon de Xoconostle Tours, a new agency that's made a big name for itself pioneering novel adventures across San Luis Potosi. The offerings include everything from half-day visits in abandoned mining towns to multiday hiking and rock climbing expeditions.

A former economist, Galarraga got into tourism as a way to share his love of climbing. He even met his two co-founders (an ex-banker and an ex-chef) in San Luis Potosi's close-knit climbing community. So perhaps it was only a matter of time before we'd find ourselves peering over the edge of a 1,500-foot sinkhole known as Sotano de las Huahuas ("cellar of the macaws").

Hundreds of parrots, parakeets and swifts swirl around its perimeter in a tornado of squawking wings. We wait for them to finish their mesmerizing morning show and then take a leap of faith over the edge.

I have no prior rappelling experience, but Galarraga insists it isn't necessary. Overcoming anxiety proves the biggest challenge as he and his team lower me like a swinging tea bag into a giant earthen cup.

Some 600 feet below, we reach the cave's first chamber: a primordial world of moss-covered rocks, fanning ferns and thickening air. We walk along its slippery, spongy terrain to peek into the depths of the second chamber. It's a good two hours before we're pulled to the top, just in time to catch the birds returning to their subterranean homes.

My final day in San Luis Potosi is spent in the tropical rainforests and turquoise river canyons of the Huasteca Potosina region. This easternmost section of the state is home to the Teenek dancers Voladores de Tamaletom, who "fly" around a pole while suspended upside down. It's also where you'll find a surreal sculpture garden by the late eccentric British poet and artist Edward James. But my main objective is to take a wooden canoe into the even more surreal Tampaon River, whose milky green waters radiate in the Mexican sun. My destination: the 345-foot Tamul Waterfall.

It takes nearly two hours of paddling to reach the base of this towering cascade. I break up the journey with stops at water holes along the edge, including one where you can swim into the pitch-black darkness of a limestone cave. I also ditch the canoe on my return journey and instead float back (thanks to my safety vest) through its small—though body-jostling—white-water rapids.

It's hard to believe that just a few days ago—and just a few hours away—I was in the middle of a sun-baked desert and amid the bubbles of a sacred spring. It's a testament to the diversity San Luis Potosi packs into its compact borders.

Mexican tourists already know this. It's about time the rest of us caught on. ■

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Realtor
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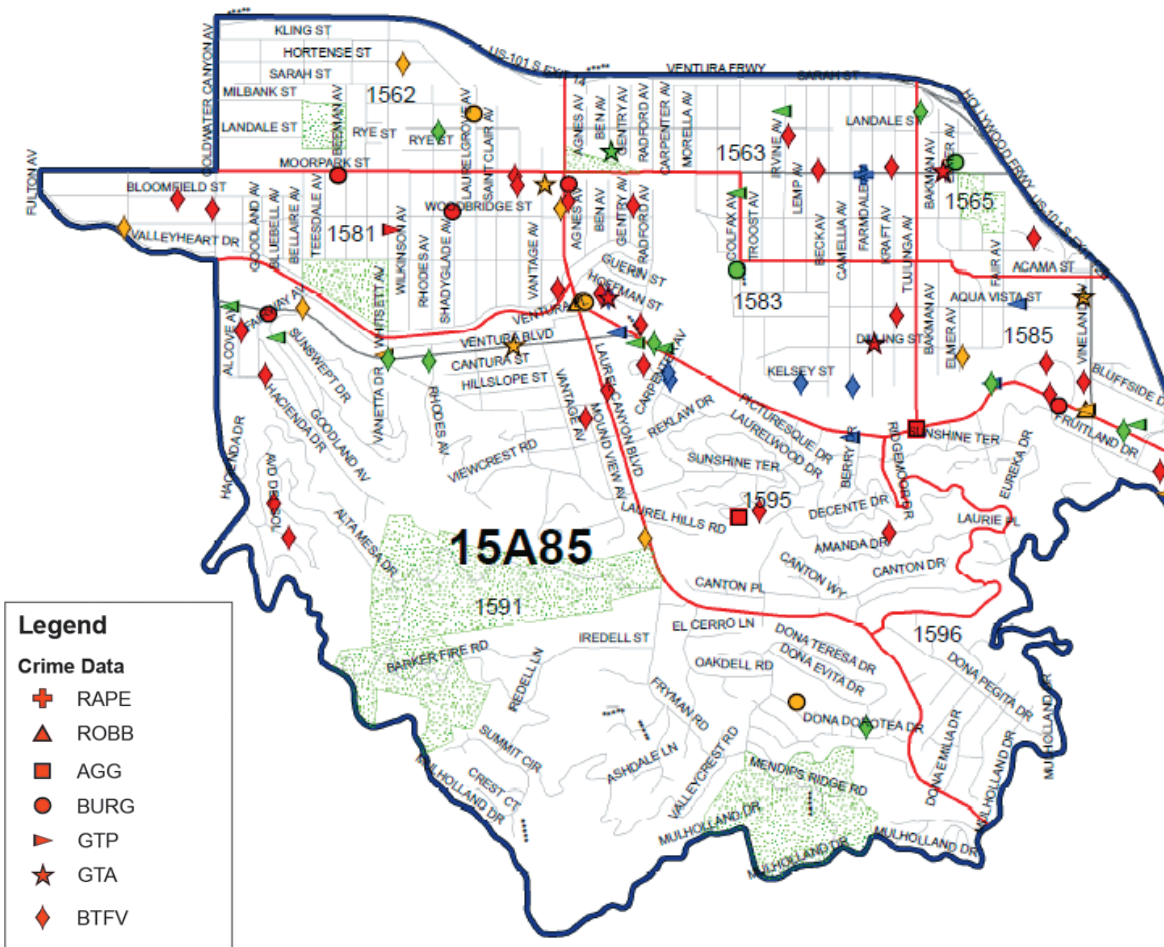
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Studio City January Crime Report

This Period 87 • Last Period 102



Legend

Crime Data

- RAPE
- ROBB
- AGG
- BURG
- GTP
- GTA
- BTFV
- THEFT

Watch 2 = AM2/PM1 = 0600 to 1759 Watch 3 = PM2/AM1 = 1800 to 0559
AM1 = 0000 to 0559 AM2 = 0600 to 1159 PM1 = 1200 to 1759 PM2 = 1800 to 2359

AGG = Aggravated assaults, battery, domestic violence etc. • BTFV = Burglary/Theft from Motor Vehicles (car break-ins) • BURG = Burglaries, residences and commercial businesses being broken into • GTA = Grand Theft Auto (Stolen cars) • ROBB = Robbery (a theft committed by force or fear) • THEFT = Petty theft.

Activity in Studio City as of April 17, 2018

SOLD

3442 LAUREL CANYON BLVD	$897,750
4225 TEESDALE AVE	$1,243,000
12722 SARAH ST	$1,149,000
3608 AVENIDA DEL SOL	$1,130,000
12719 MILBANK ST	$1,130,000
4448 IRVINE AVE	$1,210,000
3892 BERRY DR	$1,100,000
12149 VIEWCREST RD	$1,200,000
3767 WILLOWCREST AVE	$1,250,000
12514 RYE ST	$1,200,000
4122 RHODES AVE	$1,250,000
4255 LAURELGROVE AVE	$1,300,000
12061 MOUND VIEW PL	$1,290,000
3835 MOUND VIEW AVE	$1,272,912
4431 FARMDALE AVE	$1,375,000
4538 VAN NOORD AVE	$1,385,000
11411 SUNSHINE TER	$1,446,000
4145 KRAFT AVE	$1,340,000
12031 MOUND VIEW PL	$1,375,000
4097 ELMER AVE	$1,650,000
3673 WRIGHTWOOD DR	$1,515,000
3421 BERRY DR	$1,560,000
11464 DONA EVITA DR	$1,500,000
4164 KRAFT AVE	$1,525,000
4322 WILKINSON AVE	$1,573,725
3659 LANKERSHIM BLVD	$1,580,000
12522 SARAH ST	$1,630,000
3641 WILLOWCREST AVE	$1,775,000
3325 CANTON WAY	$1,675,000
12047 MOUND VIEW PL	$2,100,000
12050 LAUREL TERRACE DR	$2,175,000
3712 BERRY DR	$1,700,000
4450 GENTRY AVE	$1,900,000
11363 DONA TERESA DR	$2,218,000
4444 LEMP AVE	$2,295,000
4161 KRAFT AVE	$2,335,000
10911 WRIGHTWOOD LN	$2,337,500
4538 BEEMAN AVE	$2,435,000
4443 BABCOCK AVE	$2,485,000
4160 LAURELGROVE AVE	$2,582,000
4233 RHODES AVE	$2,679,000
11401 DONA LOLA DR	$3,000,000
13031 BLOOMFIELD ST	$2,795,000
12217 VALLEYHEART DR	$3,205,000
3830 RHODES AVE	$3,050,000
4227 LEMP AVE	$2,950,000
13020 GREENLEAF ST	$3,600,000

Home loan options for higher-value homes



Ask me about our range of jumbo loans.

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- **A lower down payment for loans up to $1 million** — a 15% down payment option with no mortgage insurance for qualified borrowers on owner-occupied properties.[2]

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[1]For jumbo loan amounts used to purchase a single family residence on a loan amount of less than $1 million, borrower must provide documentation totaling a minimum reserve of 6 months of principal, interest, taxes, homeowners/hazard insurance and assessments (homeowner's association fees/dues/special assessments) – ("PITIA") related to subject loan/property. For loan amounts greater than $1 million, documentation totaling a minimum reserve of 12 months of PITIA is required. Interest-only payment option, property and/or occupancy type may require a higher level of reserves, please ask for details. For loan amounts greater than $2 million and less than or equal to $3 million, borrower must provide documentation of reserves totaling a minimum of 24 months of principal, interest, taxes, homeowners/hazard insurance and assessments (homeowners association fees/dues/special assessments) related to subject loan/property. For loan amounts greater than $3 million, the same reserves are required and must be held in a Bank of America and/or its affiliates (Merrill Lynch and/or U.S. Trust) account. Two separate full appraisals are required. Excellent credit required, including proof of recent consistent mortgage payment history. Loan to value and property type restrictions apply, ask for details. Not available on all loan programs. Other restrictions apply.

[2]Investment properties and second homes are ineligible. Not available in certain markets. Buyers must have excellent credit and 12 months reserves. Certain restrictions may apply for first-time homebuyers. Other restrictions apply.

Credit and collateral are subject to approval. Terms and conditions apply. This is not a commitment to lend. Programs, rates, terms and conditions are subject to change without notice.

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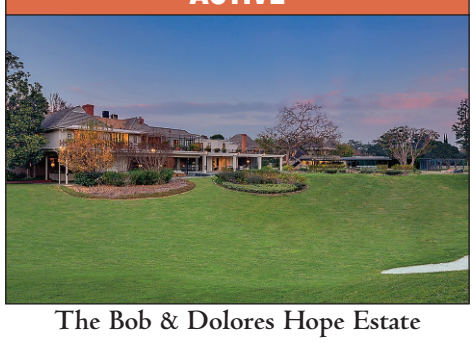


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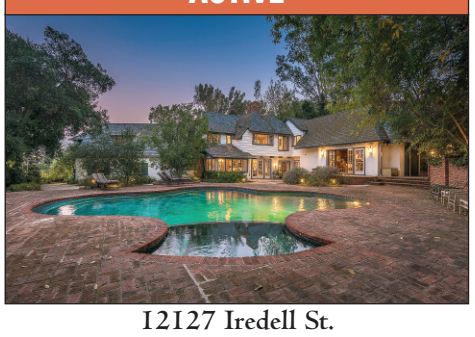
MY RECENT MARKET ACTIVITY

ACTIVE



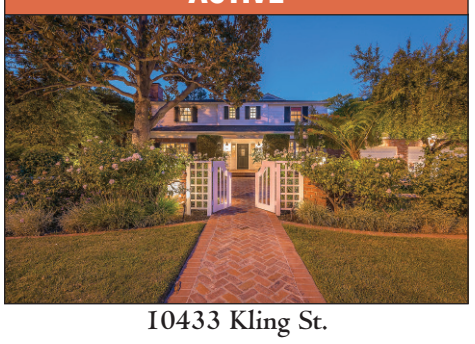
The Bob & Dolores Hope Estate
10346 Moorpark St. • Toluca Lake, CA
$22,000,000

ACTIVE



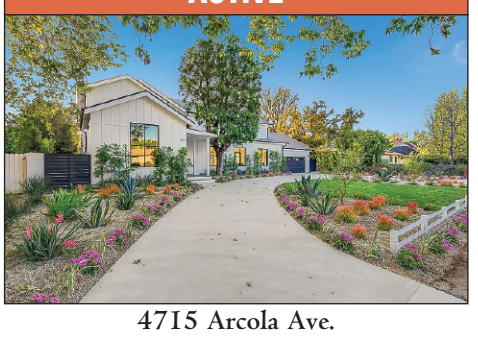
12127 Iredell St.
Fryman Estates, CA • 91604
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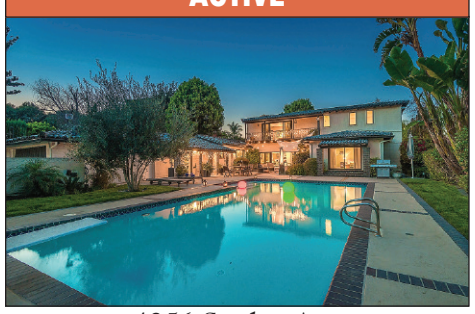
10433 Kling St.
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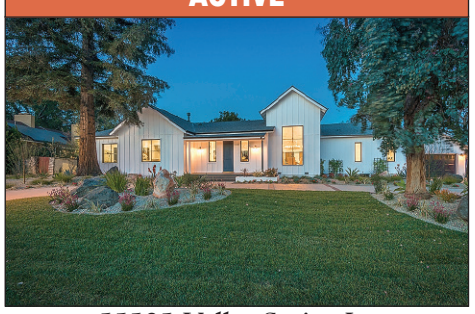
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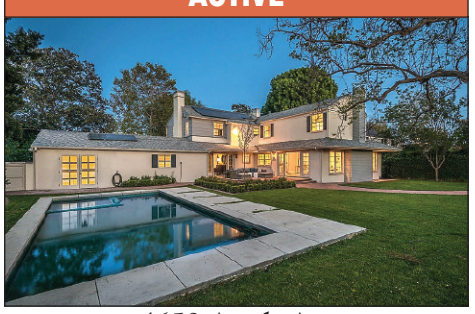
4256 Strohm Ave.
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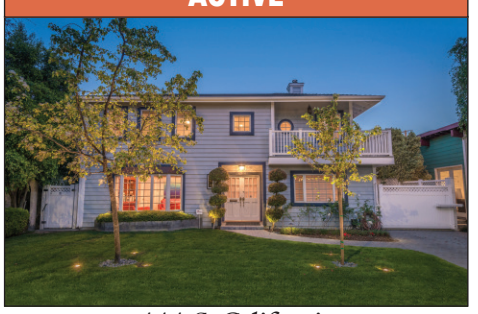
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CA • 91604
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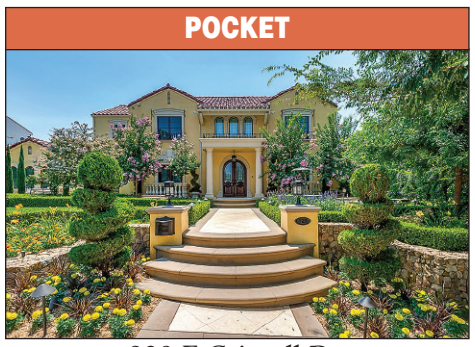
4619 Arcola Ave
Toluca Lake, CA • 91602
$2,350,000

ACTIVE



444 S. California
Burbank, CA • 91505
$1,995,000

POCKET



820 E Grinnell Dr.
Burbank CA • 91505
$4,700,000

POCKET



4258 Forman Ave.
Toluca Lake, CA • 91602
$2,950,000

POCKET



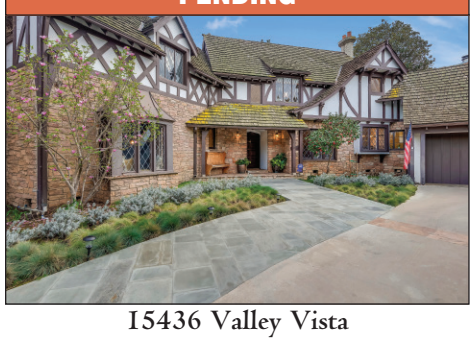
4432 Forman Ave.
Toluca Lake CA • 91602
$2,085,000

PENDING



13838 Weddington St.
Sherman Oaks CA • 91401
$2,849,000

PENDING



15436 Valley Vista
Sherman Oaks, CA • 91403
$2,345,000

PENDING



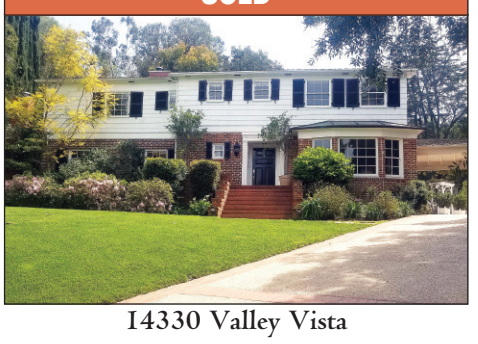
3617 Shannon Rd
Los Angeles, CA • 90027
$1,895,000

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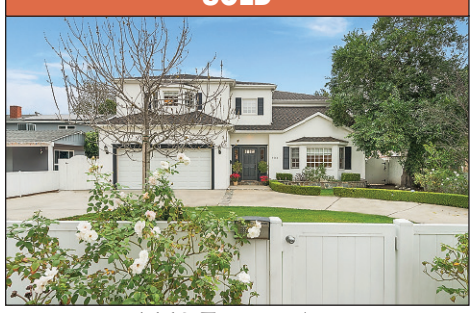
10744 Valley Spring
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SOLD



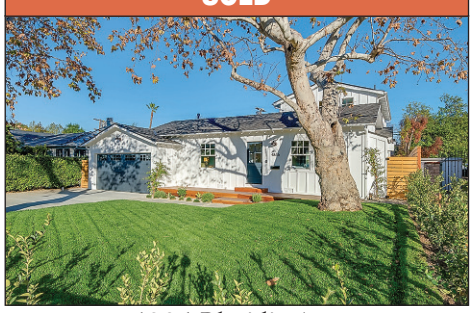
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SOLD



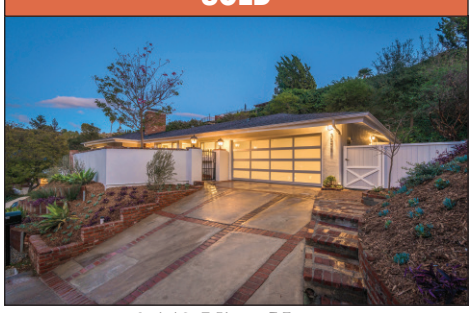
4668 Forman Ave.
Toluca Lake CA, • 91602
$2,599,000

SOLD



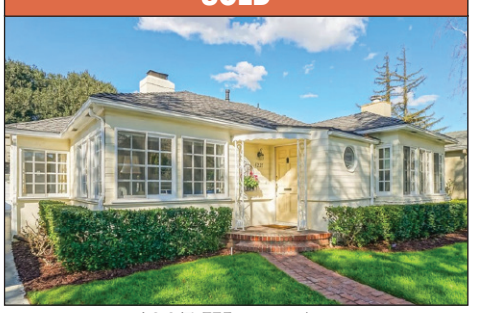
4836 Placidia Ave.
Toluca Lake, CA • 91601
$1,610,000

SOLD



3558 Vista Haven
Sherman Oaks, CA • 91403
$1,489,000

SOLD



4227 Warner Ave
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$1,149,000

Studio City Crime Report, Featured Property, and Comps located on page 10.

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