

THE SOUTH SOUNDER

www.TheSouthSounder.com... cont'd

Click on the home page tab *The Insiders* and you'll find lots of info, including:

TrendGraphix charts – On or about the 10th of every month, NW real estate data is released on market performance and is interesting reading. These figures are based on the MLS, supported by county records, and are reasonably accurate.

Each month, we look at:

- How much of our current inventory of listings has "sold" or are "Pending"
- Calculation to determine the average time it takes for a house to sell
- Calculations to determine the average price per square foot of sold homes

Remember, calculations do not tell the whole story. They speak nothing about the many intangibles that no doubt determine the success of any transaction. They are, however,

the numbers that every real estate investor should know.

Local service registry – This is our "Angie's List", a list of tried and tested professionals, craftsmen, and tradesmen that you can rely upon to do good work at a reasonable price.

Boaters Only – For you boaters, we have compiled a collection of marine resources – like marinas and boat launches, where to get fuel or repair facilities.

Septics – Our Green Issue: For those on or near water, we encourage you to reduce your impact on our streams and waterways. A major issue, both ecologically and financially, is poorly maintained or failing septic systems. Septic systems are fairly standard in these parts and understanding them is key to a healthy ecosystem. We encourage you to be an active participant in our community's effort to keep our water clean. We provide you with everything you need to know.

Predictions – Modern realtors don't have crystal balls to look into the future. We depend upon statistics collected by professionals who continually update their findings. Find out where we get our info and why we think the way we do.

The South Sounder

The South Sound Real Estate Journal

Windermere
REAL ESTATE



PREPARING FOR SPRING...

My name is Mike Mostyn and my friends refer to me as "The South Sounder." It's a nickname I got when I moved here a dozen years ago. I guess I talked up the area too much, but the nickname seemed to work as a moniker.

It's been my vision to offer our community a real estate option previously available only in the tech corridors. Liberal use of technology mixed with old-school personal service and a touch of innovation – it's something I got use to in the computer business and have brought here to the Canal, the Grapeview Islands, and south along Pickering Passage.

This newsletter is my attempt to keep you connected with that effort. Real estate is changing here and I don't want you to be the last to know.

TheSouthSounder.com Our Website Is Up and Running

What this newsletter is to quarterly information, our website is to hot-off-the-press news. With the help of your computer, you can read information less than 24 hours old. Here's some of what you'll find:

Active waterfront listings – Every day, we scan the MLS in our 5 zip codes—98524, 98528, 98546, 98584, and 98592. We then publish in the "Homes For Sale" all the listings with saltwater frontage.

Customized search tools – If you're interested in a particular area of the South Sound, a certain size or type of property, or specific price range, we can set up an automatic search that will notify you by email of any new, recently sold, or change in price of properties within your parameters. Just email your requests to us and we'll get you connected at no cost or obligation to you.

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What to expect from your broker

If you haven't bought or sold a house in a while, you'll find that the real estate market has changed. Why the change? Over 90% of homes sold last year were first found on the Internet. The bottom line, selling a home today requires technology with a well-financed marketing plan.

Windermere is the largest regional brokerage house in the NW and with their help, brokers have a complete arsenal of technical tools to make this 21st century transition. Here are some of the tools and what you can expect from a modern, tech-savvy broker.

Interactive website. At the hub of a good broker is a modern interactive website. A good website runs automated MLS searches every day to make information available on every listing, every price change, and on every property regardless of who listed it.

Current housing statistics. The same clearly charted information published in The South Sounder every quarter is available to brokers every month and should be available to you. Brokers are also given the average time homes are on the market and average price per foot of homes that have sold. This information should be available online for you to access.

Targeted MLS searches. With today's technology, a broker can offer a personalized automatic search for you, focused on exactly what you are interested in. These are targeted MLS searches with the results emailed directly to your computer. As soon as a property is listed, sold, or reduced in price, a broker's website can send you an automated email as soon as it happens with pictures of the home, specs, and a short history. This gives you the advantage of being among the first to know what's new. The same is true when you list your home. You will receive automatic emails updating you on the status of other homes that are competing with your property. It's a free service with no obligations.



Property website. With so much real estate activity now dependent upon the Internet, every property being sold gets a "single-property website", complete with its own domain name, i.e., www.123mainstreet.com. It's a digital web-based strategy that gets better results by increasing a home's internet exposure. To get the attention of search engines, it will use search engine optimization guidelines. The property website is then submitted every two weeks to the 400 worldwide search engines, 80 directories, and other indexing sites for added exposure.

QR coding. New technology like QR codes is also a good idea that leverages the smart phone revolution (see Techie Tips sidebar for details). These two dimensional barcodes are applied to your "Home for Sale" street sign, brochures and alike, and enables a potential buyer to easily access the property website for details. It is simple-to-use technology for a little extra edge with a sophisticated demographic buyer.

Professional services. The advantage in today's real estate market belongs to the buyer and a good broker will use their experience to make a property more marketable. Services like professional cleaning, staging, repairs, painting, and landscaping should be available at attractive prices from licensed tradesmen. If you are an absentee owner, ask if housekeeping and yard maintenance services are available, so you don't have to travel every week to keep your property in top shape.

Pre-sales inspection. When a buyer and a seller have agreed to a price and are under contract, the last thing either wants to discover are unexpected problems that need repairing. This can lead to the sale falling through. A pre-sale inspection should be done before a property is offered for sale. In this way problems can be handled before they become an issue. Plus, potential buyers appreciate seeing a pre-inspection certificate when they tour a property and sellers are more assured their sale will go through without so much drama.

Well-financed marketing. With everything brokers are now asked to do, they must also be adequately financed. In these challenging days, when you list your property with a broker, it's not enough to just list the property, to know the technology, or make an effort, it's also being in a position to finance an actively marketed property. There are many upfront costs even before a home is put on the market. Eventually the commission will reimburse a broker for their expenses, but the investment must first be made for the sale to happen. Too often, a poorly financed effort delays a property from selling and with the days of the "hot market" behind us, make sure your broker has the wherewithal to do the job.

Not all brokers are the same. Your broker could be the difference between a good or bad experience. Expect more from your broker. They are the expert. They are your advisor and a good one will take the burden of buying and selling real estate off your shoulders... and you'll get better results more quickly.

Questions, comments, or need more information?

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Techie Tidbits...

Two dimensional barcodes – If you haven't heard about QR Code technology, you soon will! QR codes are taking off, mainly because of smart phones and their built-in scan software.



QR codes were developed in Japan to track car parts but now iPhones, Blackberrys, and Droids have the ability to read these codes, opening the possibility for all kinds of communications and marketing.

How does it work? A user simply points the built-in camera of their smart phone at a QR code. The phone captures the image, decodes the embedded data and asks the user what he or she wants to do with the information it now has.

It can connect a smart phone to a website, provide instructions complete with graphics and photographs, or even play a video. Because of its inner-connectivity and the amount of information a QR code can convey, the possibilities are nearly endless. Applications for this technology will soon be everywhere.

For example, a QR code on the side of a ferry could give you the boat's sailing schedule. A yard sign for a political candidate could display their website on your phone, a tee-shirt could express an opinion, an fiction writer could load a 15,000 character short story into a reader's phone, or scanning an ad in the yellow pages could give you a map with driving instructions to their location.

Take business cards for example, in the past, we saved business cards in a Rolodex. But today, using a QR code printed on your card, you can automatically transfer a business card directly into a customer's smart phone address book without the user having to enter the data. It's called "mobile tagging"... it's fast, easy, and much more accurate than typing.

Although much more popular in Asia, its popularity in the U.S. has risen dramatically. It's all part of the quickly growing cell phone revolution, and like the computer revolution in the 80's, it's changing the way the world communicates.