

## REAL ESTATE

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The Real Estate and Home Guide sections in the Sunday editions are produced by Sentinel Media Services, a content provider, specifically for The Chronicle.

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## INSIDE

**Real Estate**  
Sound Off ..... **J2**  
Price Point ..... **J4**  
Just Approved ..... **J4**  
Cover Story ..... **J6**  
Homes Sold ..... **J10**

**Home Guide**  
Getaway ..... **J19**  
Home Improvement..... **J21**

## SOUND OFF

## How do you find reliable tradespeople and craftspeople for yourselves and clients?



**A:** As a Realtor, it's valuable to be able to provide my clients with access to reputable vendors, whom I've found through:

**Personal Experience:** Over my years in real estate, I've built relationships with vendors and tradespeople through first-hand collaboration. Working alongside them, I've witnessed their professionalism, attention to detail, and reliability. This first-hand experience allows me to confidently recommend them to my clients, knowing they consistently meet the high standards I expect.

**Thorough Vetting:** Before adding anyone to my referral list, I look into their track record for reliability and quality, as well as review their past projects and customer testimonials.

It's also important to me to interview the vendor to assess their communication skills, responsiveness and whether they're aligned with my client-first approach. If possible, I make it a point to check out their work in person to ensure it meets high quality standards.

**Personal Referrals:** When looking for someone I haven't had first-hand experience with yet, I turn to personal referrals from fellow real estate professionals, industry experts and satisfied clients.

These referrals not only provide insight into a vendor's capabilities but also offer peace of mind knowing they come with a stamp of approval from those whose opinions I value most.

**Leo Peak, Peak Family Real Estate Group at REAL Broker, 415-816-1469, leo@leopeak.com.**



**A:** It's old-fashioned, but word-of-mouth referrals are the best sources for getting good people to work for you and also finding out who "not to hire" for a job.

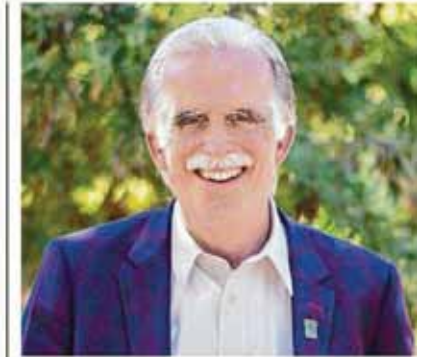
The majority of agents and brokerages have a database with an arsenal of trades people and vendors we can refer to our clients. People we know and have used their services previously, or who have clients who can give them good recommendations are highly recommended.

Personally, I have found websites like Nextdoor or Angi to be helpful, looking at websites under the topic of the type of work needed, and checking the Better Business Bureau for information. Even contacting a company from seeing their truck on the road or at a job, and then making a call to them, has made for some great connections — but that can go either way.

Most broker/agents prefer to give two or three names, and getting estimates is always encouraged since charges for a job can run the gamut nowadays; it seems that prices have increased for both labor and materials.

It's definitely worth your time and effort to investigate for yourself who's doing the work for any job in today's market.

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**A:** While there are websites that you can search to find tradespeople, that is not how I found my fabulous team. My team consists of a licensed contractor, a painter, an electrician, a landscaper as well as a professional stager.

After almost four decades of working as a real estate broker, I have come across several excellent tradespeople and have added them to my team. My current general contractor I met working on a client's home, my painter I met at a paint store, my electrician was introduced to me by my wife, and my stager and landscaper were recommended to me by co-workers at my brokerage firm. I've worked with all of them for several years and I trust them.

My team is one of the many resources that I offer to my clients to maximize the sale price of their home when we go to the marketplace.

Over the years I have developed a very good eye for improvement projects that increase the wow appeal and sale price of homes in a very cost effective way. I also offer this resource to my buyer clients who have bought homes that need remodeling.

**Jeff LaMont, Coldwell Banker Realty, 650-740-8808, jeff@jefflamont.com.**

## Long-term mortgage rates retreat for second straight week

By Matt Ott  
AP BUSINESS WRITER

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage in the U.S. fell for the second straight week, giving some relief to home shoppers already facing sky-high prices and a shortage of supply.

The average 30-year rate fell to 7.02% from 7.09% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. A year ago, the rate averaged 6.39%.

The recent pullbacks followed a five-week string of increases that pushed the average rate to its highest level since November 30. Higher mortgage rates can add hundreds of dollars a month in costs for borrowers, limiting homebuyers' purchasing options.

"The decrease in rates, albeit small, may provide a bit more wiggle room in the budgets of prospec-

tive homebuyers," said Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist.

Borrowing costs on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, popular with homeowners refinancing their home loans, also declined this week, trimming the average rate to 6.28% from 6.38% last week. A year ago, it averaged 5.75%, Freddie Mac said.

Mortgage rates are influenced by several factors, including how the bond market reacts to the Federal Reserve's interest rate policy and the moves in the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to pricing home loans.

Treasury yields have largely been easing since Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said earlier this month that the central bank remains closer to cutting its main interest rate than hiking it.

## WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO SOUND OFF?

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