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Winter 2007

Keeping in Touch

Welcome to the February edition of “Keeping in Touch”. This issue looks at the Real Estate potential in Lake Cowichan and other Island communities as well as the latest in sights, sounds and tastes from our contributing writers and a continuation of my fishing stories in “Tacks & Tales”. We have completely revamped my web site at www.davelynn.com. You can also find the past newsletters there. The next issue will cover some of the forecasts for 2007. Hope you all survived the wind, rain and snow that was thrown at us.

Dave Lynn

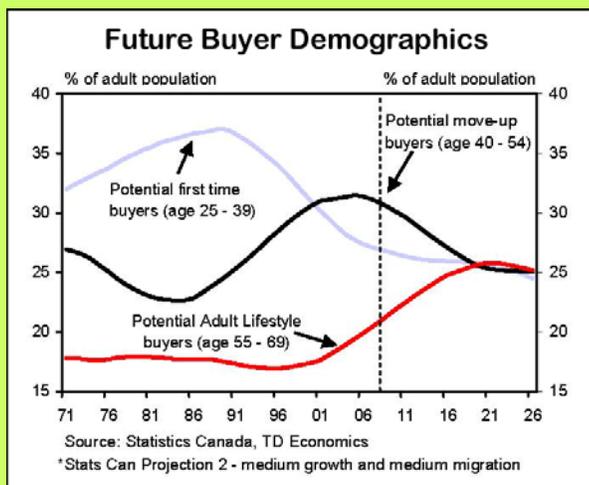
Lake Cowichan - Low Listings, High Prices And Big Potential

Lake Cowichan, once dependent on the logging industry, has seen startling price increases in the past two years, especially around the lake. Best buy appears to be in the town of around 6,000 where the rental vacancy rate is near zero and you can still find older houses under \$150,000 and older condominiums under \$100,000, despite very low listings.

A couple of years ago, lakefront houses were selling under \$370,000 and smaller old rental houses in town were in the \$100,000 range, many of them sold as the nearby Youbou sawmill shut down. The cheapest listing on the lake this summer was around \$600,000 and that would be an old cabin.

Youbou, in fact, is one of two prime development destinations on the lake. Timber West Properties sold the former Youbou mill site covering 612 acres with 4.3 km of lakefront two years ago and the Duncan-based buyers have plans for a hotel and residential development, though nothing is firmed up yet, probably four to five years out. In July, Victoria-

Changing demographics could significantly influence the price performance of various types of dwellings. Demand for entry level homes will moderate while demand for housing suited for older Canadians (not necessarily cheaper) will increase. The largest negative impact may be on the high end largest square footage houses.



based Merdyn Group was in the Youbou town hall drumming up support and ideas for a 440-acre site at Marble Bay on the lake. A plan for an 88-site housing subdivision on the same site by a different developer was previously shot down by local planners. While Merdyn said nothing has been finalized, handouts at the open house suggest the developer is looking at a mix of estate-sized residential lots, a marina condo project and townhomes and detached houses around the lakefront. No time frame has been set for development.

A key concern in the entire Lake Cowichan Regional District is sewer upgrading, particularly as it pertains to lakefront property.

Lake Cowichan is emerging as a prime recreational destination for southern Vancouver Island. It has potential for appreciation and opportunities for both residential investment and service industries, such as restaurants.

Port Alberni Prices Rose 25% In Last Year

The average price of a detached home in Port Alberni had increased 25% from February of 2005, yet remained

among the lowest on Vancouver Island at \$158,831. Across all of Vancouver Island, the average sale price increased 20 per cent from February 2005. Port Alberni may be at market now. Investors, be very cautious, as the tenant rental base is not nearly as strong as, say, Comox or other markets.

Port Hardy Project Gets Go Ahead

The hard-hit resource town of Port Hardy on northern Vancouver Island is not immune to the B.C. real estate boom. This summer, town council gave preliminary approval for a 94-acre residential waterfront development at Hardy Bay. Quarterdeck Marine Industries of Port Hardy, which operates a marina resort in the area, plans to sell large residential lots on the property. The first phase includes 28 single-family half-acre lots and a six-unit townhouse. There is also 15 acres zoned for commercial. Quarterdeck explained that, "We're going to have restrictions on what can be built and when they have to build it. There will be no trailers; no doublewides and plans have to be approved. There will be a minimum size for houses." No prices for the lots have yet been announced. Typical building lots in the area are listed in the \$39,900- \$59,000 range; ocean view lots from \$79,900 and oceanfront lots at or near \$200,000. House prices in Port Hardy have been rising and are up about 20% from two years ago. —Ozzie Jurrock

Agnes' Garden Tips



So you think this is a blah time of year in the garden? It doesn't have to be. You can have witch hazels that bloom in succession from late fall to early spring. It is especially important to buy witch hazel in flower as some varieties hold on to their old unattractive leaves. So get down to your local garden centre and see what surprises are waiting for you. Although the native Oregon grape doesn't bloom for a while yet, there are exotic varieties like 'Charity' and 'Winter Sun' which have been out all winter. There is a winter blooming honeysuckle that is very fragrant and even a winter blooming cherry tree. There is also a tall pink viburnum that blooms all winter that you may mistake for a flowering cherry tree. For something to keep the hummers happy, chose the Royal Victoria Grevillea with its intricate orange flowers that is at its peak right now. A more hard-to-find shrub is Wintersweet (Chimonanthus). UVic Gardens has one whose fragrance can be smelled long before you spot the odd yellow flowers. There are the sasanqua camellias which are winter blooming but even some regular ones are out now such as the pale pink 'Debutante'. Try an early rhododendron such as dauricum or 'Rosamundi'. If you don't want anything as substantial as shrubs, try some winter hellebores or buy a pot or two of snowdrops or crocus. Even pop a few primulas or pansies into a pot by the front door. Ah, the anticipation of spring just around the corner!

Strong Start to Year for Victoria Area

Victoria Real Estate Board

The Victoria area real estate market got off to a strong start to the year last month both in terms of sales and prices. There were 442 property sales through the Victoria Real Estate Board's Multiple Listing Service® (MLS®) in January, up from 385 sales in December. There were 496 sales in January of last year.

Victoria Real Estate Board President, Bev McIvor, noted that prices remained steady and the number of properties available for sale continues to increase, "There were 2,661 properties of all kinds available for sale at the end of last month - up 22 percent from the same month a year ago."

McIvor noted that nearly a quarter of all single family homes sold last month for under \$375,000 and 49 percent of condominiums last month sold for under \$250,000. "We recognize that affordability is a concern given the significant increases in prices over the past few years, but it's important to note that there are still many homes available for sale in more modest price ranges."

The average price for single family homes in Greater Victoria last month was \$511,192; the average for the last six-months was \$522,123. The median was lower at \$451,000. The average price for all condominiums sold in January was \$351,508; the average for the last six months was \$308,990. The median was again lower at \$254,500. The average price for all townhomes last month was \$357,308; the average for the last six months was \$369,236. The median was \$330,000.

MLS® sales last month included 242 single family homes, 119 condominiums, 40 townhomes and six manufactured homes

Dave's Tacks & Tales

Chapter 3: The West Coast

After surviving the trip to Sooke, it was time to get serious. Ron on the Lady Doris checked the weather (weather?) and announced we'd be leaving for the west coast in the morning at daylight (daylight?). The boat was all gassed up, provisioned, i.e. Kraft Dinners, and ready to go. Me not so much. After driving out to Sooke in what seemed like the middle of the night we arrived at the wharf as the sky was lightening. The Lady Doris was ready to go, engine running. So with a strange feeling in the pit of my stomach (it wasn't hunger) we said our goodbyes and I cast off the lines and fell in behind and headed out of the harbour and swung for Sheringham Point. The weather gods were smiling on us as it turned out to be a perfect day for traveling. We kept in touch via citizen band radio (CB, breaker, breaker 1-9er, you had to be there). I had that and a marine band radio for long range. You had more chance of talking to Seattle or Vancouver or a tug in the middle of the ocean with it than another actual fishing boat. By early afternoon we'd passed Port Renfrew, the weather was still good and we'd come upon a few trollers fishing. Ron radioed and said we'd try fishing here. Great, 'here' turned out to be Swiftsure Bank.. This was exciting, you could see fish on the surface, no idea what kind but who cares, there were fish in the ocean. I fooled around for the afternoon figuring out what to do with the gear and actually caught a few fish. About 6 pm I called Ron and asked where we would tie up that night. There was a pause then a chuckle (that should have been my first clue). "Tie up? I'm anchoring on the grounds tonight" came the reply. Oh really! (maybe not my exact words). Having never anchored a boat before I figured this was probably not the best spot to learn. After discussing options with Ron, like "Where's the nearest wharf to tie to?" we decided Bamfield would be best. So the gear came on board and it was full speed to Bamfield for me. I still had a couple of hours of daylight left. It would be a year before I fished Swiftsure again. I passed Pachena Light at dusk and, by the time I was at Cape Beale, it was dark. This had to be the turn, right? There's no other lights around, are there?? Rounding Beale uneventfully, Vic had reminded me of rocks in close, I kept to the middle of the channel and hoped I wouldn't go past the entrance to Bamfield. About an hour and a half later I came to the narrow opening into Bamfield and headed in and was greeted by the settlements lights reflecting off the water the length of the harbour. It reminded me of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" only I was definitely not on the Black Pearl. I tied to the first spot I could find. After waking in the morning (late morning), I had a look around. I'd tied to a wharf attached to the McCallums fish camp. The camp was run by a friendly fellow named Don and his family. They lived in a small house on shore across the path from the camp. The camp its self consisted of a small barge with an office on one end and the fish house on the other, all under a tin roof. The fish would be

off loaded from the boats, weighed in a big scoop hanging from a scale then packed into totes with ice (1000 lbs/ tote) and stored in the ice house until the packer came in to take them to town. Don had a lot of patience for this greenhorn so this would become home base for the next 3 summers. Next: Fishing 101

Tara's Scene

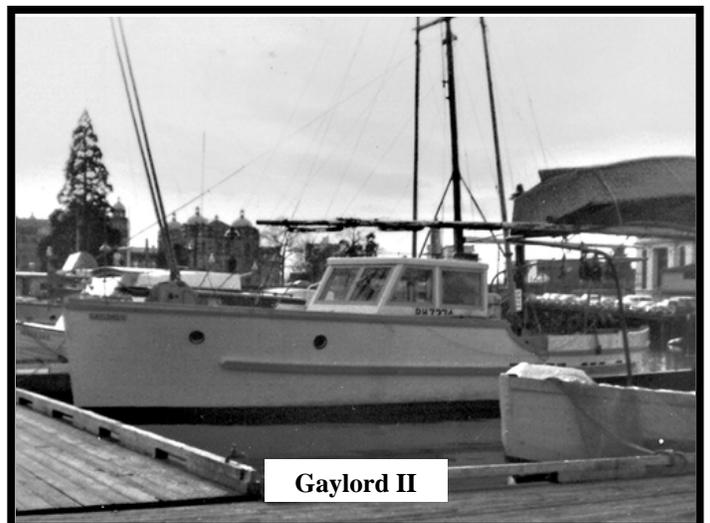


A lot has happened for Victoria bands since the beginning of 2007.

The Seven Year Old Poets are on a roll. They just released their debut album "*Blank Tape*". The young poets were also "The Zone 91.3 Band of the Month" for January. This was the best received "Band of the Month" show yet.

Opening for the Poets was **Fineas Gage**. This was their debut show. You can check them out at myspace.com/fineasgage.

Jets Overhead have had a great New Year already with a JUNO nomination for New Group of the Year. They are also going on a Western Canada tour with Golden Dogs. Their tour kickoff is in Victoria @ Sugar Night Club, Feb 23rd.



Gaylord II

Rate Watch

From Prime Mortgage Works Inc
As of Feb 16, 2007

Term	Best Rate	Bank Rate
6 Month Open	6.40%	6.55%
6 Month Closed	5.40%	6.40%
1 Year	5.20%	6.50%
2 Year	5.25%	6.50%
3 Year	5.24%	6.55%
4 Year	5.21 %	6.55%
5 Year	5.20%	6.75%
6 Year	5.40%	6.85%
7 Year	5.43%	7.00%
8 Year	5.60%	7.10%
9 Year	5.63%	6.75%
10 Year	5.64%	6.29%
15 Year	6.04%	6.64%
18 Year	6.12%	6.72%
25 Year	6.23%	6.83%
Prime Rate	6.00%	

Darcy's Gourmet Corner



Review: PIG BBQ Joint
749 View St. Ph: 381-4677

When it comes to dining out, Victorians are very lucky to have so much variety. The problem is, for every restaurant that opens, it seems another closes. I think the key to success for a restaurateur is to pick something they are good at and passionate about and go with it. **Jeff Heatherington** did just that. A former Chef at Temple and Rosemead, Jeff took his love of barbeque on a tour of the southern United States including Kansas, Missouri, Illinois and Tennessee. He came back, found a great little location on View Street and started cookin' southern style barbeque. Every item on the menu is executed perfectly. Even the home made self-serve bbq sauces, like the mustard based "old yella", are fantastic. If you like pulled pork or brisket sandwiches, Victoria finally has the real deal. Coleslaw, beans, cornbread and a kosher pickle on a stick are all part of the experience at **Pig**. Although small, the location is great for lunch or after a movie. The prices are very reasonable and it is counter service only.

Pig is open 11am-4pm Mon to Fri
And 11pm to 3am Fri Sat Sun

Need a cooking tip? Email me at
darcyladret@hotmail.com

For the Birds



We all enjoy the birds if we have a birdfeeder or as we walk around the neighbourhood but where do these feathered friends like to hang out at this time of year? There are over 100 locations recommended in the Victoria area that are good for viewing birds but let's generalize. It's the habitat that you are looking for. If you want the typical dickie birds, check out your local woods, usually Douglas Fir forest. Here you'll likely find Winter Wrens, Chickadees, Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Kinglets and perhaps a Woodpecker. A treat this year is that we have lots of British Columbia's bird, the Steller's Jay, around. If you want to see some of the winter ducks, check out the local ponds or take a walk around one of the lakes. Typical at this time of year are Hooded Mergansers, Bufflehead, Wood Ducks, Pied-billed Grebes, Wigeons, Coots and the old standby Mallards. For Long-tailed Ducks, Horned Grebes, Scoters, Harlequin Ducks, Goldeneyes and Loons, you'll need to find some ocean front. The other rich habitat over the winter in the Victoria area is the flooded fields. Fortunately they are rarely frozen so you should be able to enjoy these areas almost all winter long. The Canada Geese are not hard to find but the Trumpeter Swans are the ones that we enjoy the most. Regrettably, despite the small distance from Vancouver, we rarely get any Snow Goose whereas they get thousands of them over there. The open fields are also a good place to see Hawks and Eagles. In the areas between the forest and fields, including the deciduous Garry Oak meadows, you can also find lots of Sparrows, Finches, Towhees, Juncos, Bewick's Wrens and Anna's Hummingbirds. For specific locations in Victoria, check out the following link <http://www.birding.bc.ca/regions/victoria/hotspots/index.php> or check out birds of Victoria by Bovey, Campbell & Gates.

I Referrals

Better than a Free Lunch? A Free Dinner!

Marketing for new clients cost me a lot of time and money. Time I'd rather spend with friends and clients. A major part of my business is built on referrals from friends and satisfied clients. So here's the deal.

If you know of somebody thinking of buying or selling, ask if you can pass their name on to me. I'll look after them promptly and professionally, I won't let you down. They are under no pressure or obligation to work with me.

If the referral results in a sale, I would like to treat you to a dinner for two at your favorite restaurant as a token of my appreciation.