



# DEEDS & DON'T'S

THE INSIDE SCOOP ON BAY AREA REAL ESTATE | BY LYDIA LEE

## Wonderfully Walkable

What is the biggest luxury these days? We're hearing over and over again from top Realtors in the area that it's all about walkability. "It's a return to the village," explains Janet Feinberg Schindler with Sotheby's in San Francisco. "People really want to be within a few blocks so they can walk to coffee." In San Francisco, one of the most desirable areas is Pacific Heights near Alta Plaza; it's reasonably flat and close to all the numerous delights of Fillmore Street, which include the gourmet outposts of Delfina and SPQR. Meanwhile, Sea Cliff, which boasts impressive ocean views and splendid estates, also has a lot of steep streets and a dearth of restaurants, making it a somewhat harder sell.

To help determine walkability for a given house, Ira Serkes with Pacific Union/Christie's in Berkeley has it down to a science. In addition to a house's Walk Score, he also figures out the elevation gain for a typical route around the house, which might include a stop at the French Hotel for coffee and the Cheese Board for bread and pastries. He uses an exercise app called RunKeeper (see sidebar, right) to calculate the change in grade. "I like to see a Walk Score of 80 or more and an elevation gain of no more than a couple hundred feet," says Serkes.

Further north, Ross in Marin County is hugely popular with families because of the small-town atmosphere that's coupled with exceptional public schools. "It's the kind of place where kids can bike to town and Eddie's—the local grocery store—still has charge accounts," says Carey Hagglund Condy with Pacific Union/Christie's in Marin. She handled the



Delfina



SPQR



Cafe La Haye

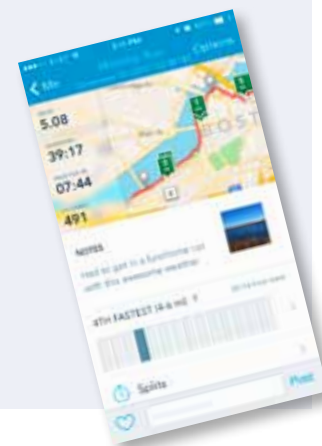
second-biggest sale in the county last year, a \$15 million traditional home with park-like acreage in Ross; one of the big attractions was that it was "dead flat and walking distance to everything, while offering complete privacy," according to Condy.

In Wine Country, Sonoma still has its original

### A PLEASANT STROLL



Launched in 2007, **Walk Score** looks at how many amenities are within a quarter-mile and other data to assign an address a score between 1 and 100 (90–100 indicates that daily errands shouldn't require a car). The scores are now part of listings on popular real-estate sites such as Zillow and Trulia. **RunKeeper** is designed to help people track their workouts—you enter in a route and it will tell you the distance traveled and the elevation gain in the course of your run.



charm, but with sports amenities that are on par with those in the city, which is a mere 50 minutes away. A key calculation for any property here is its distance from the historic central plaza, featuring eateries such as the popular Cafe La Haye and Basque Boulangerie. “At the east end of town,” according to Donald Van de Mark with Sotheby’s in Sonoma, “you can walk to the plaza and take part in town activities without getting in the car, which is quite a rarity.”

PRIVATE EYES

With such low inventory and raging demand, it’s no surprise to hear that agents are seeing record numbers of private sales, in which the homes never go on a public MLS (Multiple Listing Service). This is especially true for homes at the very high end of the market, where the sellers may wish to keep a sale discreet for any number of reasons. For instance, out of the 116 homes that sold for more than \$2 million in Pac Heights, Presidio Heights and Cow Hollow last year, 30 were private sales, according to the 2013 Schindler Report. “There’s a lot of stuff happening off-market, which drives people crazy,” says one Realtor. In lieu of the MLS, agents talk among themselves to find potential buyers. For buyers, it’s all the more reason to find a good Realtor who knows what you are looking for and can network on your behalf.



**From Artthaus To Your House** This \$3,995,000 Pac Heights four-bedroom/three-and-a-half bathroom condo was transformed into a sophisticated loft by designer Riaz Taplin of Artthaus. [sfproperties.com](http://sfproperties.com).



IN-FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

Ken DeLeon calls his realty on the Peninsula a startup, but it’s a startup that has done quite well, doing \$335 million in sales last year. His agents are salaried instead of working on commission, a structure he believes results in greater customer satisfaction. His latest disruptive technology: a custom Cirrus SR20 GTS plane. Starting in the summer, he will be able to give select clients, such as executives who are relocating to the area, a bird’s-eye view. To see the properties at ground level, they can catch a ride on the DeLeon bus—a 14-seater Mercedes. [kendaleon.com](http://kendaleon.com).

SOMA STYLE IN PAC HEIGHTS

Contemporary design has infiltrated the city’s most traditional neighborhoods. Offered for just under \$4 million, 2253 Broderick in Pac Heights is a four-bedroom/three-bathroom (and one half bathroom) condominium that was transformed into a sophisticated loft by designer Riaz Taplin of Artthaus. The high-tech touches include windows that never need shades or curtains, since they darken to provide privacy (using cutting-edge View





**Hello, Cow Hollow!** This three-bedroom house has a gourmet kitchen with stainless steel counters and gorgeous indoor/outdoor spaces. It's privately listed with Janet Feinberg Schindler for \$4.23 million; [sfownhome.com](http://sfownhome.com).



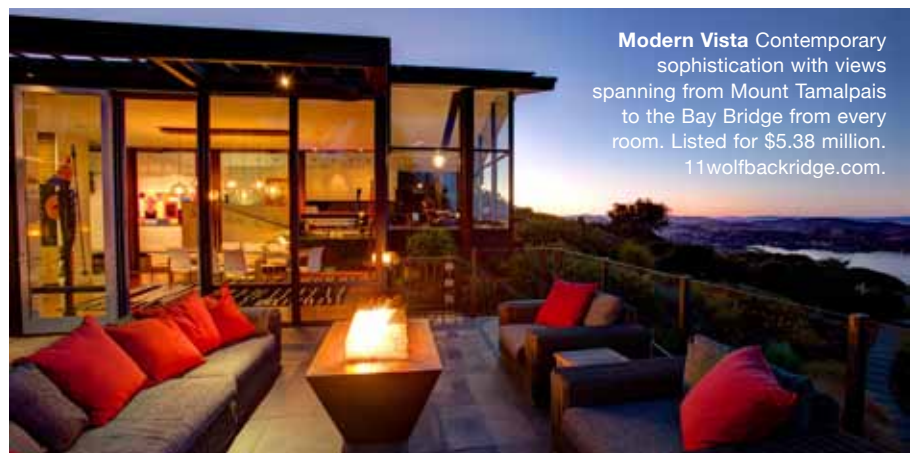
Dynamic Glass technology). The pent-house master suite has a great outdoor terrace and sweeping city views, but you might have trouble tearing your gaze away from the disco-fabulous stainless-steel fireplace to notice. Check out all the modern eye candy at [sfproperties.com](http://sfproperties.com).

#### GARDEN PARTY IN COW HOLLOW

Indoor/outdoor living is such a nice idea, but nobody wants to shiver in the wind and fog. A recent listing in Cow Hollow caught our eye with its gorgeous outdoor room. The rustic space, lined in redwood, opens onto to a garden that has a sunny southwest exposure. The three-bedroom/two-and-a-half-bath house was designed as a relaxing retreat for a *New York Times* best-selling author who wanted a West Coast pied-à-terre. There are calming expanses of limestone throughout, a gourmet kitchen with stainless-steel counters and Wenge-wood cabinets, and a spa bath with a retractable roof over the shower. It's privately listed with Janet Feinberg Schindler for \$4.23 million. [sfownhome.com](http://sfownhome.com).

#### MIDCENTURY MODERN IN SAUSALITO

Tucked away throughout the Bay Area are works of midcentury design with a ton of personality. The architects may not be "name-brands," but they were definitely doing their own thing. In 1961, architect Reece Clark Jr. designed 11 Wolfback Ridge with an indoor koi pond in the foyer; he had a wonderful sense of openness and materiality, combining redwood beams and adobe brick with large expanses of glass. The three-bedroom/three-and-a-half-bath house has been modernized by architect Scott Couture, who brought it up to the peak of current design with elements such as a sculptural soaking tub in the master bathroom. It's special, and the asking price reflects that: \$5.38 million. Have a look at [11wolfbackridge.com](http://11wolfbackridge.com).



**Modern Vista** Contemporary sophistication with views spanning from Mount Tamalpais to the Bay Bridge from every room. Listed for \$5.38 million. [11wolfbackridge.com](http://11wolfbackridge.com).