

BENCHMARK NEWS

OUR NEW CORPORATE LOCATION

BY CAROL M. SCHECTER, PRESIDENT & CEO,
CMCA®, AMS™, PCAM®, CM

Benchmark has expanded! We are excited and very pleased that our move to our new corporate headquarters is completed and that our new office space has turned out so well! We moved into our new space and officially opened for business on Monday, May 2nd.



After 20 years at our East Tropicana location, we are now located in the Northport Office Complex at 3675 West Cheyenne Avenue. For those of you familiar with the North Las Vegas Airport, we are on the north side of the airport at the Cheyenne Avenue and Allen Road intersection, hence the name, Northport!

Our new facility is approximately 14,000 square feet, has three conference rooms and a training room that seats 60 people. We are able to accommodate several community association board meetings at the same time and provide comfortable, professional space for our boards to meet with their homeowners.

We have also opened a satellite office at 3340 E. Russell Road in the southeast portion of the valley to service our clients on that side of town. Our West office has moved to the next building at 8687 W. Sahara Avenue, Suite 150. Our three offices will now provide a wider range of locations for our associations and also provide board meeting rooms and service locations in three different areas of the Las Vegas Valley.



If you are in the area, stop in and see us. We would be happy to give you a tour of our new offices!

Best wishes for a safe and carefree summer!

Carol

- IN THIS ISSUE**
- PG 2 | ASSOCIA SUPPORTS KIDS
 - PG 2 | ASSOCIALIVING
 - PG 3 | LAS VEGAS PROPERTY IS ON SALE
 - PG 3 | WELCOME NEW COMMUNITIES
 - PG 4 | HOA COMPLIANCE
 - PG 5 | FORECLOSURES
 - PG 6 | CAPRESE SALAD RECIPE
 - PG 6 | LAS VEGAS FUN FACTS
 - PG 7 | EMPLOYEE NEWS
 - PG 7 | SAVE YOUR COMMUNITY TIME AND MONEY
 - PG 8 | EMPLOYEE NOMINATIONS

3675 W. Cheyenne Avenue,
Suite 100

North Las Vegas, NV 89032

Tel: (702) 795-3344

Web: www.benchmarkproperties.net

ASSOCIA SUPPORTS KIDS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

In February, Associa launched nationally the Associa Supports Kids (ASK) program in communities across the U.S. The program is Associa's way to show its support for the health and safety of our children in and around the home. "Thousands of children live and play in Associa-managed communities, and we have an opportunity to make a difference," said John Carona, President and CEO of Associa. "Through the Associa Supports Kids program, we are helping protect our kids and helping them grow into well-rounded people."

Safety: One focus of ASK is to educate parents and kids about safety through our brochure and on the ASK website: www.associasupportskids.org, which features fun downloadable tips and facts for kids, and a variety of Safety Tips and Statistics for parents and grandparents. At neighborhood events, Scout, our lovable golden retriever mascot, hands out Safety Tip Coloring books and plush Scout toys to each child in attendance. Parents receive an Associa Supports Kids safety

brochure and a ChildPrint identification kit for each of their children.

Sports and Fitness Sponsorships: ASK is also focused on keeping kids strong and healthy by promoting physical activity. Studies show that the average American child spends more than seven and a half hours a day watching TV or movies, or using phones or video games. Scout wants to lend a helping paw by assisting in kids passions to stay strong. To help, ASK offers a kids' health and fitness brochure that details how parents may request sponsorships for their children's team sports activities, up to \$250 annually, for teams associated with a community managed by an Associa company.

Safe and strong kids: Associa Supports Kids demonstrates Associa's firm commitment to safe communities and safe, healthy kids. Plus, the program makes a great addition to any Associa community looking to enhance a positive community experience for their residents. To find out more about Associa Supports Kids, visit our website at www.associasupportskids.org or contact your community manager.



AssociaLiving

THE RETURN OF PRESERVING FOOD | By Kristy Alpert

Some say it's the continued rise of the local food movement that brought about the return of preserving food. Others claim it's due to the increased popularity of cooking. And still others claim preserving is back in style simply due to the allure of quality control (i.e., healthier foods, organic produce, etc.). Any way you look at it, preserving is back; and it's hotter than ever.

"A lot of what I've learned about preserving came from my relatives," says Amy Love, owner, operator, and farmer of Love Farm Organics. Though Love agrees with all the possible motivators listed, she also thinks people are getting into preserving now because they "want to see if they can create a better flavor than what they can buy."

Popular foods than can be preserved

Love's favorite preserved items:

- Berry jams and pepper jellies
- Plum, pear, and marinara sauces
- Pickled dill spears and cucumbers
- Fermented kimchi and sauerkraut

Preserving is an age-old tradition, dating back to the 18th century and the days of Napoleon Bonaparte. Although nothing

much has changed in the process, more and more people are beginning to opt out of store-bought cans to try their skills at making healthier versions themselves ... at home.

Love began taking preserving more seriously when she became a parent. "When I started having children, I didn't want to have to buy baby food all the time, so I started making my own," she says. "It's pretty darn easy to mash up beets and carrots and stuff from my garden to make baby food. And that way there was no added pesticides or sugar."

Learn how to preserve

Books and websites are great resources to learn how to preserve food and enjoy more contemporary recipes. Still, though, you also want to rely upon a time-honored tradition: Ask older family members, loved ones, and neighbors for their recipes and techniques.

Canning with the community

The other aspect of preserving she loves? Community canning. "I love that sense of home and community," she says. "I always have friends or family helping me peel or doing any one of the various processes, so

very rarely am I alone in the kitchen." And Love is seldom short of helping hands; especially since her helpers never go home empty-handed. She loves giving her creations as gifts to friends and neighbors

Part of the community-building comes also from Love's farm ventures. She and her husband began offering a community supported agriculture (CSA) program to allow people the chance to buy farm-fresh food and get to know the source of their meals personally. For people looking to better control the ingredients of their preserved foods, Love definitely recommends they join a CSA. "That way, you definitely get to know how your food was raised and where it comes from," Love adds.

Visit our online magazine, AssociaLiving at www.associaliving.com.



LAS VEGAS PROPERTY IS ON SALE!

By Mandy Hiatt,

Benchmark Escrow Manager

Las Vegas property is on sale. Not just for sale, but on SALE. I'm talking Target at 3:00 a.m. Black Friday on sale. We are seeing Las Vegas property sell below prices from the 80's!!! The suckers are flying off the shelf.

A two-bedroom, two-bath condominium purchased for \$165,000 in July 2006 sold for a mere \$25,000 at auction in July 2009. A three-bedroom, three-bath single-family home purchased for \$269,810 sold as a normal resale for \$70,000 in March 2010. A local Las Vegas 232-unit Apartment Community purchased for \$23,350,000 in 2005 sold for a mere \$5,000,000 at auction in December 2010.

This makes for not only a cash buyers' dream, but a perfect buyers' market for Las Vegas families. Although the new home market won't match last year's total sales of \$4,750,000 boosted by the government's homebuyer tax credit, which drove up sales, the incredible sales prices are sure to.

The number of Las Vegas home sales rose in March, and prices are continuing to decline. The Las Vegas

based housing research firm counted 293 new home sales during the month and 4,187 resales. It's the third consecutive monthly increase for resales.

The new home median price dropped to \$189,099, a seven and a half percent decrease from a year ago. The average price per square foot of \$91.17 is down 12.4 percent. Even after three years, builders are saying, "Let's drop the prices and get them off the books in order to compete with the low prices of foreclosed homes".

SalesTraq showed 822 short sales, or lender approved sales for less than the mortgage owed, at an average price of \$120,000; 785 trustee auction sales at an average of \$90,000; 1,973 bank-owned sales at an average of \$105,000; and 1,390 no distressed home sales at an average of \$110,000.

Las Vegas is moving properties even though it may be month-by-month, and we've got a ways to go. At the very least we can say it is definitely moving!



Welcome New Communities...

By Harry Benzvi,
Marketing Director, CM

Benchmark is proud to welcome **Steeplechase Estates II** to our family effective May 1, 2011. Located in Northwest Las Vegas, right in the middle of "horse country", Steeplechase Estates II is a beautiful community comprised of 60 single-family homes, and is truly a family and neighbor friendly community. The large lots provide owners with

the option of storing recreational vehicles or other "toys". The board of directors for Steeplechase Estates II is committed to maintaining the value, quality and peacefulness of this beautiful community.

Benchmark is also proud to welcome **Rock Springs at Eldora Ten**, its newest community, beginning May 12, 2011. Rock Spring is a gated community of 180 condominiums located on the west side of Las Vegas. This mature,

well maintained community was developed in 1990 and is centrally located near Sahara Avenue and Durango Drive.

We are pleased to welcome these two new business partners into the Benchmark Family of professionally managed communities.



HOA Compliance

By Bryan Hatfield, Provisional CM

Homeowner associations offer many advantages to the homeowner. They greatly reduce the cost burden on the local and state governments as well as promote a sense of community. How does the homeowners association do this? The Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions, also known as the CC&R's. These recorded documents are the backing for all aspects and operations of the homeowners association. From voting rights to common area maintenance, the CC&R's establish the rules that govern the community. But as any community manager or board member can tell you, enforcement of the CC&R's can be one of the most challenging things any HOA will face.

Receiving a violation notice from the association can be devastating to a homeowner especially if they take great pride in the appearance of their home. Many homeowners do not know how to react to them, often ignoring the letter all together, resulting in the homeowner being called to a hearing and fined. But, there are steps that a homeowner and the board can take to ensure homeowner compliance and prevent fines from being assessed.

Communicate!

There is not one more important thing a homeowner or board member can do. Communication is the most effective tool for anyone involved in the homeowners association. For the board, it is very important for the violation letter to be clear. It should offer precise information relating to the violation and how to correct it, as well as, the article and section of the CC&R's to which the violation applies.

For the homeowner, responding in writing is key. Be clear, and concise. Most boards are not "out to get you" and often



have third party inspectors performing inspections of the community. Letting the board know how you are going to handle the violation will improve how the board responds to your thoughts and concerns. Take a dated picture of the alleged violation, (many management companies are implementing software that will include a dated photo with the violation). This will offer proof of the violation being corrected or provide proof that the violation is false.

Be Proactive!

For the board, be consistent! Look at the overall benefit of enforcement. Not fining or delaying the fine process can be as harmful as not having an HOA. It is vital that the violation process be handled in a consistent and timely fashion.

For the homeowner, try to see violations as the HOA sees them, and get to know your CC&R's! Look at your house as a whole. Is it neat in appearance? Properly maintained? Is the landscaping free of trash and debris? If you are selling your home, offer to provide a compliance inspection, or a "CCI," from the management company. This can help the new homeowner understand the standards and direction of the board as well as take care of any existing violations on the property. Taking proactive steps to maintain your home will greatly reduce the chances of receiving a violation letter and/or a violation fine.

Attend your Board meetings!

This seems to be a GIVEN for the board, however, It is important that the board understand their role in the HOA. The board of directors leads and applies the CC&R's. Without them the HOA can't function.

For the homeowner, attending the meetings will help put the board's thoughts and choices into perspective. The homeowner can offer accountability as well as motivation and understanding. It will help put a face to the HOA and ensure that the board is making accurate choices for the HOA.

While not all Homeowners will comply with the CC&R's, understanding the circumstances and people involved can greatly reduce the number of violations seen throughout the community. As the community grows and ages, compliance will become more important. Having a good working knowledge of the CC&R's, the board of directors, and the homeowner base will improve relationships in the community. After all, the goal of any association is to preserve, maintain and enhance, and by following basic common sense, the HOA can exist in harmony with it's homeowners and ensure the community will be a great place for years and years to come.

Foreclosures affect every community both financially and aesthetically. The recent decline in foreclosures is mostly due to a delay or a deferral by the lending institutions, not by homeowners paying their mortgages. Banks maximize profits with the measured release of foreclosed homes. Releasing too many foreclosed homes at one time will further depress the price they can obtain for the property.

As a homeowner is faced with foreclosure, maintenance on their homes becomes a low priority. Pools are not serviced properly, lawns turn brown, weeds sprout, shrubs become overgrown and at times newspapers and junk mail accumulate on the property. A foreclosed house can mean an empty house which can be a target for vandals. A foreclosed house affects the neighbors who continue to pay their association dues. They become frustrated about their neighbor's delinquency and the lack of maintenance. They also worry how the foreclosure will impact the value of their property.

During these trying financial times there are steps that can be taken to strengthen the financial position of the association and minimize the risk. Some things that boards can consider are:

- **Review your collection policy** – tighten up the association's procedures. Are the collection notices being sent out in a timely manner and delinquencies referred to the collection agency promptly? Research governing documents and state law to verify that all possible collection activities are taking place.
- **Evaluate the reserves** – review the status of your association's reserve account. Are they adequately funded to make it through the downturn in the economy?

- **Look at the association's service contracts** – perhaps there are discretionary services that can be temporarily eliminated that will not cause long-term damage to the association's assets.
- **Cost saving ideas** – eliminating necessary services obviously does not support the mission of the association to preserve and protect property values. However, you may need to implement some short-term fixes to ensure the sustainability of the association.
- **Making the most of your money** – are your associations getting the best yield while still complying with investment requirements detailed in the governing documents and state statutes?
- **Raising assessments or implementing a special assessment** – while these options will not be appealing to owners, they may be required. The board should consider all available options and remember that they do have a fiduciary duty to the association. Raising assessments or implementing a special assessment may be the only remedy to offset increased costs and/or declining collections.
- **Accurate budget preparation** – it is important to recognize that all assessments will not be collected. Budgeting monthly for bad debt will create an allowance that future charges can be written off against. While it will not impact the cash of the association it will assist in more accurate financial reporting.

Being prepared to make it through these tough financial times will greatly improve the financial position of the association and will assist in dealing with the homeowners that pay their assessments.



Caprese Salad

From *Eating Well* Magazine

Summer-ripe tomatoes and fresh mozzarella need only a sprinkling of fresh herbs, salt and pepper to shine in this simple summer salad.

4 servings, about 1 1/4 cups each

Active Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 medium red tomatoes, cut into wedges
- 2 medium yellow tomatoes, cut into wedges
- 3/4 cup diced fresh mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste



Preparation

Gently toss tomatoes, mozzarella, parsley, basil and salt together in a large bowl. Season with pepper.

Nutrition

Per serving: 88 calories; 5g fat (3g sat, 0g mono); 17mg cholesterol; 6g carbohydrates; 5g protein; 2g fiber; 187mg sodium; 444mg potassium

Nutrition Bonus: Vitamin C (40% daily value), Calcium & Vitamin A (20% dv)

Las Vegas FUN FACTS:

- The city of Las Vegas celebrated its **100th birthday** on May 15, 2005. The event celebrated the May 15, 1905 land auction when 110 acres of land in downtown Las Vegas were auctioned off.
- A 1910 law made it **illegal to gamble** in Las Vegas.
- The Nevada Legislature later approved a legalized gambling bill in 1931.
- The first hotel and casino to open in Las Vegas was the **Golden Gate Hotel** and Casino in 1906.
- The Hoover Dam just outside Las Vegas was completed in 1935.
- The **Hoover Dam** took a total of 21,000 men and five years to complete the structure.
- The Moulin Rouge, Las Vegas' first racially integrated hotel, opened in 1955.
- In 1957, topless showgirls debuted on the Las Vegas Strip in "Minsky's Follies" at the Dunes.
- The famous "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign was created in 1959 by **Betty Willis**.
- More than 5,000 people move into the Las Vegas valley on a monthly basis.
- The famous **Las Vegas Strip** is for the most part, not within the city limits of Las Vegas. The majority of the strip is located within Clark County.
- The Stratosphere Hotel and Tower, at more than 1,100 feet, is the tallest building west of the Mississippi and the fifth tallest building in the United States.
- A **marriage license costs \$55** in Nevada. Many couples choose to marry in Nevada because there is no blood test or waiting period.
- Fremont Street in downtown Las Vegas was closed to traffic in 1994.
- The **Fremont Street Experience** in the heart of downtown Las Vegas opened in December 1995.

Sources: Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority and the Clark County School District

EMPLOYEE NEWS

WELCOME! Benchmark is pleased to welcome two new Supervising Community Managers:

- *Brian Molina*, Supervising Community Manager, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®, SCM, joined Benchmark on April 4, 2011.
- *Christopher Neuhauser*, Supervising Community Manager, SCM, joined Benchmark on May 9, 2011.

We are happy to welcome both of you to our organization and look forward to working with you!

EMPLOYEE ANNIVERSARIES!

May

Sandy Watts	05/03/2004	7 yrs
Diane Austin	05/07/2007	4 yrs
Mary Wolfrom	05/14/2008	3 yrs
Deborah Genato	05/03/2010	1 yr

July

Pamela Tigert	07/27/2009	2 yrs
Mel Lucy	07/01/2010	1 yr
Rachel Freeman	07/28/2010	1 yr

June

Christian Diamandis	06/26/2007	4 yrs
Helen Marshall	06/14/2010	1 yr
Harry Benzvi	06/28/2010	1 yr

MEMORIAL DAY 2011!

As a kick-off to the three-day Memorial Day weekend, Benchmark held an employee luncheon in their new corporate offices on West Cheyenne Avenue in North Las Vegas. The employees were treated to pizza, soda and cupcakes. A good time was had by all!

PROMOTIONS!

We are pleased to announce the following promotions:

Harry Benzvi has been promoted to Marketing Director. He has also just recently earned his full Community Manager designation.

Michael Cornwell has been promoted to Director of the CAM Division.

Congratulations Harry and Michael!

SAVE YOUR COMMUNITY TIME AND MONEY!

Our maintenance services are exclusive for Benchmark Association properties and offer substantially reduced rates when compared to other vendors in the area.

Benchmark Association Services has been providing quality and dependable service to the greater Las Vegas area for 20 years.



WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING MAINTENANCE SERVICES:

General

- Carpentry, drywall, general repair
- Carpet cleaning
- Painting
- Preventive maintenance inspections
- Stucco and masonry work
- Minor gate repairs
- Repair and install locks
- Make key copies
- Power washing (windows, driveways, walls, buildings)
- Cleaning/janitorial
- Minor plumbing
- Playground cleaning
- Fence repairs
- Gutter cleaning
- Concrete repairs

- Decoration installation
- Preventive maintenance
- Graffiti removal
- Curb painting
- Door replacement

Electrical

- Ceiling and exhaust fan installation
- Hi-level light inspections and bulb replacement
- Electrical light switch/socket replacement

General "Handyman" Services

Receive

10% off

EXPIRES: 08/31/2011

Your first Benchmark maintenance service order

1515 E. Tropicana Avenue, Suite 350
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Benchmark Association is proud to announce that the following employees have been recognized with the following nominations:

CHRISTIAN DIAMANDIS, *Community Manager*, has been nominated for Membership in the Associa Ambassador's Circle.

MANDY HIATT, *Escrow Manager*, **IRA DAUER**, *Collection Liaison* and **LENORE SCOTT**, *Staff Accountant*, have all been nominated for an Associa Financial Forum Membership.

SANDRA WATTS, *Administrative Assistant*, has been nominated for an Associa A-Team Award.



*We wish you all the best of luck!
Stay tuned for the results which
will be published in our
Fall Newsletter!*



EXECUTIVE AND MANAGEMENT TEAM

Carol M. Schecter	<i>President & CEO</i>
Liz Alzina	<i>Vice President</i>
Mary Ann Hubbard	<i>Controller</i>
Pamela Tigert	<i>Senior Director CAM Division</i>
Michael Cornwell	<i>Director of CAM Division</i>
Harry Benzvi	<i>Marketing Director</i>
Mandy Hiatt	<i>Escrow Manager</i>

 **Associa®**
Benchmark Association Services

3675 W. Cheyenne Avenue, Suite 100
North Las Vegas, NV 89032

Tel: (702) 795-3344 | **Web:** www.benchmarkproperties.net